

*Shigen Hong Kong Perth:
An Odyssey in Culture*

By SC Pang

PROLOGUE

“Shigen Hong Kong Perth: An Odyssey in Culture” is more than my autobiography. It is an honest record about a family of seven, and how they abandoned their native village, Shigen, for Hong Kong and beyond, Perth being the final destination for three of them. The title of the book itself is unique in that it contains three different dialects of Putonghua, Cantonese and English respectively.

I emigrated from Hong Kong to Australia in 1978 at the age of thirty-nine years for two main reasons, firstly to provide what I considered a better education to my two sons and secondly to run away from what I imagined a likely dictatorial regime after 1997. A lot of fellow Hong Kong citizens would not agree but I have no regret for the decision. The family entered a new life at a time when Australia was beginning to evolve into a multicultural society and we could say we have not been disappointed until 2023, when the nation was deeply divided by the Indigenous Voice Referendum. A minor setback though is the loss of the Chinese language from my future generations as I watch helplessly even mine too is gradually deteriorating from infrequent use. To make up, I feel a strong obligation to provide a proper record of our family history, which they can understand and would otherwise be totally ignorant of, if and when they so desire to know in the future.

Basically this means I have to write it in English but at the same time there would be an inevitable emphasis on the Chinese culture and our ancestral heritage instead of the dramatisation of events. A little problem arose when I came to translate certain Chinese names of people and places. Up to the present Hong Kong still maintains the Cantonese dialect as official whereas the whole of China is speaking Putonghua (Mandarin) and using a standardised Pinyin system for English spelling and pronunciation. To take my name as an example, the original traditional Chinese characters are written as 彭 (surname) 盛臻 (first name), but in Cantonese it was recorded as Pang Shing Tsun in some documents, and Pang Shing Chun in others both in and outside Hong Kong. The difference resulted from the fact that there was no uniform system of English spelling in the Cantonese dialect at the time. Furthermore, in Putonghua Pinyin it becomes Peng Shengzhen! That is confusing but there seems to be nothing I can do about it. The Hong Kong government does not adopt Putonghua as the sole official language and the records have been too entrenched to rectify. The name on the cover of the book is the one I am commonly known in Australia and in all my scientific publications.

In this context I choose Putonghua Pinyin for the majority of Chinese names in the book as far as permissible. When it comes to places in Hong Kong or notable proper names, I have kept the official Cantonese spelling to avoid further confusions. Otherwise the well-

known city of “Hong Kong” would become the less familiar “Xiang Gang”. In any case the original Chinese characters are included in parentheses when they appear for the first time in the main text, and one can easily tell whether the translation is in Putonghua or in Cantonese. Furthermore I have kept the Chinese tradition of putting one’s surname before the first name unless the latter is Christian or are initials.

Poetry is my life passion and I started writing simple poems since early high school years. In the beginning I wrote them in plain Chinese (新詩) but soon became hooked onto the classical Tang (唐詩) and Song (宋詞) styles. In later years I ventured into other forms of old Chinese literary writings and even tried a few English poems. They run parallel in time sequence with my life events but are put together separately as Appendix II at the end. The spirit of Chinese classical poetry and indeed any old Chinese literature is difficult to translate without a tedious process of explanation. I have therefore skipped the process in the majority of them and reserved them as a reference for those who can understand and appreciate. Nevertheless, as examples, I did undertake a complete English translation in a few of them.

My late father, Jiankun started writing his autobiography {Appendix I¹} when he was eighty years old and passed away after being knocked down by a bicycle less than three years later. He had hardly reached the quarter mark of his life story but had included enough materials for me to apprehend the early period of our family in the native village of Shigen in the province of Guangdong, Southern China. He hence provided me with a valuable insight and reference not only into our ancestry but also what a great lady my grandmother was. Unfortunately she passed away when I was eight years of age. Others that have helped in confirming or validating some events and dates included my brother, Anthony Shengduan, and sisters, Susan Zhihua and Susanna Zhiling as well as my wife Vivian. To all of them I am grateful.

The closest person to me in my first ten years of life as a village boy in a working family in Southern China was my mother. Dad was occupied most of the time either in Hong Kong, at the farms or tending to village affairs as a deputy head. If there is any truth in the Chinese saying that a person’s character is set by the upbringing in one’s first three years of life, my mother would be solely responsible for my characters, be they of strength or weakness. She never had a single day of formal education, as we now know it. She was illiterate, had no concept about childcare but committed all her body and soul in providing her children with what she believed to be the best. Her famous saying, “If you lack intelligence, make it up with diligence” has stuck permanently inside my head since she told me the first time in my primary school years.

This book, be there any merits in it, is dedicated to my grandmother and my parents.

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CHAPTER I: BIRTH

Life is not meant to be fair or easy and I have never asked mine to be. Nevertheless, I was certainly given a poor start. Still, like every one else, I had my fair share of good and bad fortunes all my life.

I was born in the early morning (between 3.00 and 5.00 am, 寅時 by Chinese tradition) on the second day of January 1939, less than six months after the Nationalist Chinese government declared war on Japan and several years after the latter had actually invaded China. In fact the imperial army of Japan had reached Guangzhou (廣州) in 1938 and the family was fleeing the home village to Hong Kong, then a British colony. My mother was bearing me in the treacherous journey. In later years Mum told me many times that during the flight the family members were crowded on board a boat sailing quietly at night. The sky was clear and the moonlight bright but she had no idea where she was. For reasons unknown to her, Mum thought that they were travelling on land. She felt stuffy and wanted to walk herself. She was about to get off the carriage she imagined she was in. Every time she told me this, she trembled, adding, “We both would not be here if I succeeded.” They were fleeing the Japanese and the other passengers would not allow the boat to waste time to search for her. My first fortune came when my Mum’s brother-in-law who happened to be nearby, reached out quickly enough to grab hold of her and saved two lives in a second! It never occurred to me to ask Mum where my Dad was at the time. Perhaps I was too young when she told me this the first time. When the story was repeated later on, my curiosity could have waned.

After arriving in Hong Kong my parents had no time or knowledge to attend a clinic for check-up and only looked for a doctor’s surgery after my Mum went into labour on New Year’s night. They were turned away from every surgery that was open until the taxi driver suggested the Charity Clinic at the Tung Wah Hospital (東華醫院) in the Western District (西區). We arrived just in time for me to say “Hello!” to the world. By then my parents had covered hours of seek and despair through the very first night in the Year of the Tiger.

Dad either did not have the money to keep the family in Hong Kong for long, or he believed that Japan was going to attack the colony. So we returned home in September 1939 well before the Japanese invasion on December 8, 1941. Dad, however, stayed on because of his work. There is an old family picture taken in the summer of 1939 at the England Studio in Wanchai (灣仔英倫照像館). From this I am able to tell who were in Hong Kong when I was born.

Origin and Ancestry

According to the “Hongzhai Genealogy (洪齋房譜)” {Appendix I2}, or more aptly, “The Shigen Peng Bank Genealogy (石碕彭岸坊族譜)” our first traceable ancestor originated from Luling (廬陵), now called Jian (吉安) in the province of Jiangxi (江西), literally meaning ‘west of the river’ but actually southwest to the last part of Changjiang (長江), otherwise known as the Yangtze River (楊子江). His name was omitted; it is an old Chinese custom of showing respect to our ancestors by not calling or writing their given names. He was an imperial officer to the rank of the emperor’s counsellor (諫議大夫) in the dying years of the Tang dynasty (唐朝 617-907 AD). He moved to Nanxiong (南雄) in the province of Guangdong (廣東) in 905 AD and resided in Zhuji Lane (珠璣巷), Shashui Village (沙水村) in the Baochang District (保昌縣). The reason for the move was not mentioned but it was likely either to escape from the turmoils of a dying dynasty or at the emperor’s order as a punishment and equivalent to a demotion. He married a lady surnamed Yin (尹) who bore him a son by the name of Jian (簡) who begot Yuncheng (雲程). Yuncheng had two sons, Jiamou (嘉謀) and Jiayou (嘉猷). In 999 AD, then in the Song dynasty (宋朝), a concubine of the local prince, suspected to be insane, was drowned in Nanxiong. In fear of possible reprisal, the brothers followed other residents of the village and fled by the Northern Tributary (北江) of the Pearl River (珠江). It was late winter and no boats were available. They made a raft with bamboo stems and sailed south on the river. On the way a severe storm broke up the raft and the brothers were swept ashore to Dali (大歷) in Guangzhou (廣州) where they settled.

The flight of the residents from Nanxiong was not a small event and formed part of the story in a novel called “The Swallow Returned to Zhuji Lane (珠璣巷口燕歸來)”. Legend has it that in the stampede the feet of our ancestors were run over by others repeatedly. As a result their small toes were crushed. This was used to explain why the small toes of their descendants have ridged or cracked nails! True or not, I do have them.

Jiayou, the younger brother, had a son, Qida (啟達) who also succeeded to be an imperial officer (朝奉大夫). Qida married a lady with the surname of Xu (徐) and they had four sons, named Guangxin (廣信), Guangzhong (廣仲), Guangzuo (廣佐) and Guangyou (廣佑) in descending order of their age. The second son found work in the Village of Shigen (石碕), more literarily known as Wenjiang (文江), at the age of 31 years. This was in the Shunde District (順德縣) at a fair distance from Guangzhou; so he took residence by a creek and the place came to be known as the Peng Bank (彭岸坊) or Peng by the Creek (涌口彭). Twelve generations later when Shijia (士欖) obtained the status of Jinshi (進士)

after having passed the provincial examination (會試), the place was also called Jinshili (進士里). Guangzhong hence became the first ancestor of the Peng tribe in Shigen. He married a local lady surnamed Lin (林) and they had three sons. He lived to the good age of 82 years (1206-1287) and his wife to 78 years (1208-1285). They were buried together in the Fenglin Mound (鳳林崗) which was located in Daqingshui (大清水) in the Nanhai District (南海縣).

To summarise the lineage of our immediate family into a table, I shall use the Roman numerals to denote the generations beginning with the first traceable and definite ancestor from Luling whom I shall call Luling Zu (盧陵祖) in the absence of his real name, and the Arabic numerals to indicate the order of the member among the sons from their fathers. Thus Luling Zu will be (I, *) since he was the first ancestor but the order among his father's sons was unknown. The list would be as follows:

(I, *) Luling Zu 盧陵祖	(II, 1) Jian 簡	(III, 1) Yuncheng 雲程
(IV, 2) Jiayou 嘉猷	(V, 1) Qida 啟達	(VI, 2) Guangzhong 廣仲
(VII, 3) Zhaochang 兆昌	(VIII, 1) Yuanying 元英	(IX, 2) Zhenshou 真受
(X, *) Shiguang 世廣	(XI, 3) Zuxu 祖敘	(XII, 3 [^]) Shunxiang 順鄉
(XIII, 1) Lien 聯	(XIV, 1) Shaoyuan 紹遠	(XV, 1) Yingtong 應同
(XVI, 1) Dazhi 大治	XVII, 1) Guanbi 觀璧	(XVIII, 1) Chengzhi 承志
(XIX, 1) Rugang 汝剛	(XX, 1) Xigao 希誥	XXI, 3) Zhigao 之高
(XXII, 3) Shejie 社接	(XXIII, 1) Chaomei 潮梅	(XXIV, 1) Shaoji 紹濟
(XXV, 2) Liji 理佳	(XXVI, 2) Jiankun 建坤	(XXVII, 1) Shengzhen 盛臻
(XXVIII, 1) Zizhen 子楨	(XXIX, 1) Yixian 亦賢	

*Position in the family uncertain

^Adopted heir by Zuxu who only had three daughters; he was the son of the third daughter.

The 29 generations covered a total of over 1095 years (905-1999 AD) from the year Luling Zu moved to Guangdong until the birth of Yixian, my first grandson. The period ran from the Tang dynasty (唐朝 617-907 AD) through the Wudai Era (五代十一國 907-960 AD), Song dynasty (宋朝 960-1279 AD), Yuan dynasty (元朝 1279-1368 AD), Ming

dynasty (明朝 1369-1644 AD), Qing dynasty (清朝 1644-1911 AD), and Nationalist China (中華民國 1911-1949 AD) to the present People's Republic of China (中華人民共和國 1949 AD onwards). I believe the copy of the “Hongzhai Genealogy” to be accurate although incomplete and unclear in certain entries. Since early childhood my Dad had brought me to visit the graveyards of many ancestors in the annual Qingming Festival (清明節). Unfortunately I was too young to remember or recognise the various places except some of the ancestral names.

The Native Village

Wenjiang was a beautiful village. Although more commonly called Shigen, I personally prefer the first name, not because it has a literary taste but because the second character in “Shigen” is not found in traditional Chinese dictionaries; it was unique but a local invention. The village, according to folklore, had eight famous spectacles (文江八景) in eight different small suburbs. They were:

1. 廟前曲水 (The meandering brook fronts the Big Temple)
2. 興賢晚唱 (Singing at sunset)
3. 彭岸書聲 (Loud study in the Peng Bank)
4. 石橋飛雪 (Snowflakes dancing over the Stone Bridge)
5. 涌園獨荔 (The lone lizhi fruit in Chongyuan)
6. 長塘夜月 (Embracing the moon in the long lagoon)
7. 九龍入洞 (Enter the nine dragons)
8. 獨松繼舟 (The boat by the lone pine tree)

Unfortunately I was able to witness only the Big Temple and the long lagoon. The Temple was always the place to celebrate religious events or festivals until the arrival of the communist government when it was destroyed for being a place of superstition. The large courtyard in front of the Temple was a hawkers' market on other days. The lagoon was in the Liang's Middle Village and provided a nice water view for the houses on one side of the lake with green trees and fields on the opposite.

Peng Bank is a tiny area in Wenjiang occupied by the Pengs since 1236 AD when the first ancestor, Guangzhong, found work and resided there. It was broadly elliptical in shape, bounded by a small creek on the south and the Zhang's Lane (張巷) on the north. An arch inscribed with the writing “進士里” (Jinshili) on the cross bar above and situated next to the Chief Commander's Temple (主帥廟) guarded the western entrance. The passage led northward to the Central Business Area of the Village including the Village

Hall and the Big Temple. Continuing westward and across a bridge, a lane with fields, river and ponds on its sides, led to the Liang's area. The road along the creek, the widest in the area, ran from the Arch to the eastern exit, which joined the Chen's Area (陳地) after passing another temple. Before that and crossing a bridge to the southeast was Lun's New Area (倫氏新基). Four ancestral memorial halls were erected along the road facing the creek. From west to east they were named Gengyin Gong (耕隱公), Hongzhai Gong (洪齋公), Yiya Gong (逸崖公) and Yongxing Gong (永興公) respectively. They were the posthumous titles honoured to Zude (祖德, a cousin of Zuxu), Shiguang, Shezhen (社振, a cousin of Shejie) and Xigao correspondingly. The greatest diameter of the elliptical suburb was through the Big Lane (大巷) with the sports' field of the Shigen Central Primary School adjacent to its northern end. The school itself lied further north across the Zhang's Lane and occupied the back half of the Village Hall.

The Family

My grandfather, Liji (理佳), was the second son of Shaoji (紹濟) who also had two daughters that lived to be married. The older son died at the age of 16 years. There was no record of Granddad's date of birth but the year was 1878. Grandma's name was Huo Shandi (霍善嫡) {Appendix B} and she came from a neighbouring village called Tangbiaofang (唐表坊). She was born in 1877. After marriage Granddad had his alias (字), Yifa (宜發) to indicate his genealogical position in the family tree. It was also common to give oneself another alias (號) after starting school. For this he chose Jianwen (簡文). Granddad had three sons and a daughter. The eldest son was Jianyuan (建源), followed by the daughter, Jinlan (錦蘭) and the other two sons, Jiankun (建坤) and Jianliao (建燎), from Grandma's fourth and seventh pregnancies respectively. Only four of seven babies survived their childhood.

Coming from a poor family, Granddad had to begin work as a teenager. He became a blacksmith in a neighbouring district called Lecong (樂從) because this industry was not popular in his home district, Shunde. It was famous for its good food, handicraft and the silk weaving industry. His working career was cut short by chronic ill health and he had to close his shop to return home for rest. His health never improved and in fact got worse. He coughed up blood and died on April 5, 1910 at the age of 31 years. His youngest son was only three months old.

The death brought distraught and despair to the family, for other than a small place to get covered Granddad practically left his young wife nothing but four mouths to feed. My Dad was too young to understand and never asked how Grandma managed. After the

funeral and burial services, the family, by Chinese custom, had to observe seven religious ceremonies of respect and remembrance once every seven days to a total of forty-nine days. During those ceremonial proceedings every one had to wear coarse white hemp clothes from head to toe. Nobody was allowed to talk louder than a whisper or to laugh; they must show grief when friends and relatives came to offer their respect and condolences.

On the morning after the seventh and the last ceremony, Grandma gathered together her four children and announced, "From today we have no one but ourselves to look after our livelihood and every one has a job to do. Jianyuan, you will go to a metal retailing shop in Guangzhou as a manual labourer. Jinlan, you will help me with the housework and learn to make metal sieves. Jiansun, you will be responsible for looking after your baby brother; you are allowed to carry him as far away as the end of the lane." The orders were followed to the letter. From then on the livelihood of four of the five family members depended on the slender fingers of two small women with four tiny bound feet. They were no taller than five feet and their bodies extremely slim from under-nourishment. The eldest son's employment would provide him with daily meals and a bed at night. This lasted only for a short time when Jianyuan got sick, returned home to recuperate and did not go back to Guangzhou. When he was well enough to restart work, he got an accounting/secretarial job with another metal retailer in Lecong. He was good with the abacus and Chinese calligraphy.

Since her marriage to a poor family Grandma had been making metal sieves for a firm that took orders firstly from silk thread factories and later from overseas. The sieves were essential for workers getting the silk threads from the cocoons in boiling water but they were and are still handy tools in the kitchen. Their uses include straining, deep-frying and steam-bowl serving. To make them is not difficult but to make all openings of the same shape and sizes with nothing but fingers and a pair of pliers needs plenty of skill and practice. The two little women succeeded just that at the same time as they took care of the daily living of two more growing boys. Grandma was at her early thirties and Jinlan had not even reached teenage.

Tragedy, however, would not leave them alone for long. After five years of relative stability, during which my Dad had a chance to start his education (at the age of 11 years), Jianyuan was sent home from work one day. He was struck with the same illness as his father. Grandma was devastated when he died some months later at the tender age of 18 years. No one really knew how she got over the shock but she did and did well all by herself.

After the death of Jianyuan it was my Dad's turn to help the family to survive. In 1918 he had to cease his study at 15 years of age and began work as an apprentice blacksmith in

Guangzhou. This did not last long because of his small size and he was sent to a trade school to learn knitting towels. During the summer holiday in the same year and through Grandma's brother, Huo Jiandong (霍潤東), my Dad was accepted by the Fuli (福利) Metal Retailer in Hong Kong as a menial labourer. As he was short (no more than five feet two inches when grown up) and slim he had difficulty in handling the heavy loads required by the job. So he took an interest in cooking, first as the cook's assistant and eventually the sole cook of the firm for 16 years. About the same time Jinlan was married to Deng Daosheng (鄧道生), a tailor in Foshan City (佛山市). With two members working to feed three mouths life started to pick up. Dad's salary increased from the original three Hong Kong dollars a month to fifteen with a year-end bonus of \$150 to \$200. Finally he saved enough money to have a wife when he was twenty-two years old, which was considered late in those days. With the help of a lady go-between he was introduced to a girl of sixteen from another village, Panyang (番陽鄉). They married on November 14, 1926.

My Dad, Jiankun, first alias Liyi (勵益), second alias Xiaoyun (嘯雲), was born in Shigen on December 25, 1903. My Mum's name was Zhou Liumei (周六妹) which literally means the "sixth sister" in the Zhou family. She was born on September 17, 1910. Her mother had a total of eleven births. As far as I could remember, five girls and one son (from the tenth pregnancy) reached adulthood. Mum brought me to visit her "second sister" once but I had no recollection of the details. Ximei (四妹), the "fourth sister" in the Zhou family was married to a farmer in the Liang's Middle Village (梁氏中村) nearby and I knew her quite well. She had two boys, both older than me, and a girl about my age. The boys were big and the older one rough as well. The girl was small and timid; she was not well all the time in my memory and died from a swelling in the loin as a toddler. Bamei (八妹), the "eighth sister" was married to Liang Shansong (梁善松), who saved my Mum and me from being drowned in 1938 but that was much later. They lived in Liang's Village End (尊美坊). The last daughter, Tian (甜 meaning "sweet"), was born in 1918. She remained single until she died in 2005. Mum's only brother was called Bingtong (炳桐) but all the older sisters called him Shi (十 meaning "ten") and Tian addressed him as Brother Shi (十哥). He had two sons. The older one, Licong (禮從), was one year younger than me and the second Lixing (禮行).

Mum worked in a silk factory, weaving the silk thread from cocoons in boiling water. She stopped after marrying Dad and took up the full time occupation left by Jinlan. Mum was born in 1910, the last year of the Qing dynasty (清朝) and therefore escaped the mutilation of feet binding. In fact both Grandma and Jinlan had freed their feet from bandaging in 1912 although this could not alter the deformity. Life was peaceful and continued to improve. In 1928 Dad had saved enough money to buy a larger house with

three sections. One section was reserved as a farm- or store- house, the second for Grandma, and the main one for the two brothers. Jianliao, now eighteen years of age, who had started work with Yian (宜安) Metal Company in Hong Kong, was about to get married and had his first alias Mianyi (勉益). He had given himself the second alias of Zhengdou (正斗). Two years later Dad bought in stages a four-acre rice field across the creek opposite the Chief Commander's Temple in Peng Bank, which he rented out. Uncle Jianliao followed suit and he also bought a rice field of four acres for rent. His wife, He Xiaoying (何曉鶯) was the first to conceive but the baby did not survive. The reason was not something to be talked about or mentioned before youngsters. To those who knew, it was a big disappointment as it was a boy.

My sister, Zhiyi (秩儀), was born on May 24, 1933. This brought great joy to the family especially Grandma, so much so that my sister spent the greater part of her childhood with her grandmother than with Mum. Being a new mother, Mum was more than willing to relinquish her role to her in-law. After all her daughter was being dearly loved and cared for by two mothers instead of one. In the same year Fuli closed down and Dad lost his secure job. He returned to Shigen, buying kitchenwares from Foshan and hawking them in Hong Kong. He also managed to “purchase” a maid for Grandma as an adopted daughter to help out the housework. Although such transactions were legal at the time, it must be stated that Dad did not actively ask for it. Instead he was requested by the maid's parents as a favour to ease their burden. She was named Yayin (亞銀), meaning “silver” but the children addressed her as “Big Sis (大姐)”. In 1936 Dad bought another two-acre rice field in Wenhaiwei (文海圍) under his name but apparently with Grandma's savings. Later in the year he got a menial labourer's job in the Dean (德安) Metal Retail shop and so he went back to Hong Kong.

In 1938 Aunt Xiaoying and Mum again got pregnant at about the same time. By then the Japanese army had reached Guangzhou with the intention of conquering the whole region. The news was bad and that was when the decision was made for the families to flee to Hong Kong. From the photograph {Appendix I⁴} taken in Hong Kong when I was about six months old, it is certain that Grandma and her three married children as well as my sister and Yayin went. It was also clear that Dad did not get away from his work and waited in Hong Kong. This explained why Shansong, Mum's brother-in-law, was in the boat. He must be the guide and the guard, and left soon after taking them safely to their destination. I discovered later that Shansong was also working in Hong Kong when my Dad was with Fuli. What I am not sure but have a suspicion is that Dad might have something to do with the marriage between Shansong and Mum's eighth sister, Bamei.

CHAPTER II: FIRST DECADE 1939-1948

Early Childhood

After the rest of the family left Hong Kong in 1939, Dad stayed on his job with Dean but was assigned to collect certain kitchenware from Foshan, which were in demand in Hong Kong at the time. This lasted until December 1941 when the Japanese invaded and occupied Hong Kong. Dad got stuck in Foshan and could not go back. Business was bad because of the rapid depreciation of the Chinese Yuan and inflation. So he returned home to join us in Peng Bank and farmed the ten acres of rice fields of the family. That turned out to be a good decision and the livelihood of the whole family was well catered for in spite of the war. Dad was clever and skilful in his farming. He was the first in the village to produce two crops a year in the rice fields. From spring to autumn he planted rice and in the winter months he grew potatoes. The yield was excellent but according to Dad there are two essentials for this to succeed. Firstly it is the type and amount of fertilisers to use for the two rotating crops and secondly, one must know how to store potatoes properly for long periods without rotting or sprouting. It was obvious that Dad could not manage ten acres of farm this way all by himself. Uncle Jianliao was not interested at all in farming and I had not seen him in the fields. Grandma was too old, Mum was fully occupied by housework and my sister was only about eight years old. Hiring villagers periodically was inevitable but this still proved too much. Eventually Dad had to confine himself to his own four acres of land and let out the other six acres. The move seemed reasonable and innocuous but unknowingly a time bomb was planted.

I have little recollection of what actually happened during this period. There were isolated events that I could remotely remember and even so the timing might not be totally accurate. Firstly it is my estimation that when we came back in 1939 the Japanese had not reached the village. There was the usual Guangdong Opera performance in the Chinese New Year. I remembered toddling to the back stage, carrying a small basket with a pomegranate in it, and being enchanted by the actress with her pretty makeup. My Grandma was very proud when some one spotted me and told her that her one-year old grandson had walked by himself all the way from home to the performing stage. The distance must be over 100 metres. Mum and Grandma took every chance of repeating the story to their friends and relatives.

Secondly my younger sister, Zihua (秩華), was born on March 21, 1941 and two years later Mum gave birth at seven months of pregnancy to my first brother who had a harelip. Unfortunately he could not survive in the absence of any medical knowledge or surgical repair. He was not given a name since he did not survive the first month. By Chinese tradition babies are named at their one-month ceremony. I had no memory

about the events or the reactions from the older members of the family. It was something they considered as fate and preferred to forget. I learned some of the facts from Mum many years later.

Thirdly at the age of three or four years old I was given the “enlightening ceremony (啓蒙)” to start schooling. The day was chosen from the Chinese almanac. Early that morning I was well dressed, handed a satchel containing a brush, an ink stone, a book called “The Three-word Bible” (三字經) and a pancake made from glutinous rice. The pancake symbolised “sticking the bottom to the chair”, urging me to study and learn diligently. At the right moment Uncle Jianliao sat me down, held my hand with the brush and wrote a few characters on the paper. He then started teaching me the verses from “The Three-word Bible” to complete the ceremony. After a few days Dad taught me something he wrote in old style Chinese, which I could not understand but managed to recall the first sentence. It ran, “People cannot live without water and fire” (民非水火不能生). He did not explain, and if he did I was unable to comprehend. He would ask me to recite the complete passage the next day from memory. When I got it wrong I got scolded and often cried. Grandma and Mum felt sorry and they at times wept quietly too but nothing could move Dad. He also taught me abacus and this was even worse. Fortunately he could only spare an hour or so on teaching each day. Then he would take me to the field. I was too young to help out but not my sister. In the beginning I slipped and fell frequently in the mud paths but I picked up the skills quickly. Soon I was able not only to walk as well as my sister but also to mount the water wheel with her and we had good fun racing on it. It is possible that my love of gardening in the late years of my life started from there. Dad finally relinquished his role as a teacher and sent me and my sister to a class set up with the Peng’s ancestral fund. This lasted less than a month; we had to stop because of constant bullying from the big boys.

The Village under Japanese Control

The Japanese army finally arrived in the village one or two years later and I could remember only two incidents in this period. The first was a Japanese soldier taking a chicken from our shed and this made me cry. The second was Dad with an armband leading a Japanese Officer around the village. I learned later that Dad was forced to become one of the three village deputies under the village head. This raised two opposing views from the villagers. One group said that Dad was a traitor and the other praised him for his courage to face the Japanese, hence reducing the damage to the village. None, however, really got the right facts.

When the Japanese soldiers first arrived they wanted co-operation from the village leaders to carry out their military plans. The existing head and his assistants, however,

were too scared to come out. This angered the Japanese who ran around and caused a lot of troubles to the residents, all in the name of searching for Chinese guerrillas. At the same time night burglary increased. Finally elders of the Liang clan appointed a new village head by the name of Liang Kuan (梁寬) who was at that time working with the Guangzhou Police Department. After taking up the post Mr Liang established a policing squad and reorganised the administration. As he came from the Liang clan, he asked to have three deputies to represent the Peng (彭), Lun (倫) and Pang (龐) clans respectively. Their appointment, nevertheless, was not so much to share the load of work but to ease the rivalry between the clans. Still Dad bought a handgun and carried it around a few times when he had to take the Japanese around. Here unknowingly again he laid a second time bomb.

We never knew how Dad felt about the job and no one asked. One thing I was sure though and that was he named our dog Showa (昭和), the reign name of the then Japanese emperor. That by Chinese custom was a great insult to the ruler. Other than these minor events, I had no memory of any real hardships during the short period of Japanese occupation of the village. In fact my second brother, Shengduan (盛端) was born on May 9, 1945, less than four months before Japan unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Forces. Early in the same year Aunt Xiaoying also gave birth to her second son, Shengkang (盛康). Later in the year Zhihua got seriously sick and this lasted for months. As usual no one understood what the illness was and both Grandma and Mum thought that they were going to lose her. Miraculously she recovered after many herbal medications given by a local traditional practitioner. Looking back she probably had a kind of viral infection, such as hepatitis that had run its own course without any obvious residual damage.

I had no idea about any effect on the village from the Japanese defeat either but when the war ended, an overnight heavy downpour totally destroyed Dad's crop of potato, ginger and yam. In despair he went to Hong Kong and then Guangzhou to look for a job, only to be disappointed. Jobs were scarce everywhere immediately after the war. So he came back to his farm until March 1946 when he decided he had enough and sold all his farming equipment including the water buffalo. Two months later he returned to Hong Kong and subsequently found a brokering job with a British company called William Jacks, which imported and exported construction materials. The starting salary was HK\$200 a month plus a variable amount of allowance. He paid \$30 per month to the Yili (億利) Metal Retailing Shop for his lodging which was essentially just a bunk bed as in those days showers were taken in the kitchen. Life was back on track once again.

My Primary Education Years

Meanwhile in Shigen a primary school named the Shigen Central Primary School (石碛中心小學) was established in the annex of the village hall very near to the northern end of the Big Lane (大巷) where we lived. So we all went to school together and that meant my two sisters, Jianliao's two daughters and me. Uncle Jianliao had two daughters, the elder one a little older than me and the younger one a little younger than Zhihua. They were called Zhilun (秩綸) and Zhituan (秩團) respectively. We enjoyed those school days as we did well academically and were always at the top end of the classes in examinations. We had no talent in sports but joined in many extracurricular activities such as scouts {Appendix I⁵} and excursions to neighbouring districts and schools. The government had replaced the old style Chinese with plain language, making learning really effortless. I read many books not included in the school curriculum and they were mostly written in modified old style language. With this advantage I stayed at the top of the class throughout although I was poor in drawing, handicraft and Chinese calligraphy.

The creek, from which the name Peng Bank {Appendix I⁶} originated, was on the southern end of the Big Lane and less than thirty metres from our house. It provided the residents with water for cooking and washing. People also fished or swam there at times. The kids in the family had never swum before and admired our peers who did. In the summer of 1946 we could not resist the temptation. So four of us, Zhilun, me, Zhihua and Zhituan went down the water without letting anybody know. For a few moments we were having a good time. Suddenly I noticed that Zhituan was moving towards the middle of the stream with the top of her head barely visible. Luckily I was able to reach her and pulled her ashore. She only drank a few mouthfuls of water and was crying all the way home. The accident spoilt the fun and we got a good scolding from Uncle Jianliao. A few days later Zhilun became ill, which got worse rapidly and was taken and admitted into a hospital in Foshan. I did not know what was wrong and no children were allowed to visit her. A short time later we were told that she passed away from tetanus. Apparently she had a cut in her foot from the swim and the wound got infected from contaminated soil. She was seven years old and Aunt Xiaoying was shattered, having lost her two oldest children in succession.

Grandma's Death

The following year when we thought that we had got over the loss of Zhilun it was Grandma's turn to become sick. I had no idea how it started and by the time I was aware of it she had lost weight, lost appetite and developed a swollen belly, which gradually got worse. She had various treatments including herbs, powders, tablets, acupuncture and heat. I was not sure whether a Western medical practitioner was ever consulted. She had a

past history of a lump being removed surgically from the side of her breast in 1913 but no one knew its exact nature. Taking the two together and adding them to the deaths of Granddad and Uncle Jianyuan, it was quite likely that Grandma also had tuberculosis, first in the lymph node and then in the peritoneum thirty-four years later. It was, however, equally possible that she had cancer in the liver. She passed away in May 1947. Dad was not able to come home for her funeral and I had to take his position as the eldest grandson of the eldest son in spite of Uncle Jianliao's presence. She was buried in a graveyard in Xilishan (西林山) followed by the 49-day mourning ceremony in the family.

About three months later all the family members went to consult a "witch lady" called locally the Relating Elder (問米婆) who posed as Grandma in a trance so that the family could talk to her. This took place in the lady's home some distance away and I was the only one staying behind. I am not sure why I did that although from an early age I tended to be rebellious against superstitious beliefs. Another likely reason was that, in deciding not to go, I would be looked after by Aunt Bamei who would cook me a delicious lunch of my choice. She was Mum's eighth sister and married to Shansong who saved Mum and me from drowning. They were not in good terms with each other and I was the only one that could mediate their relationship without being deemed intrusive. When the party returned home Mum told me that Grandma was very well and happy with her life in the other world.

Late that year or early the following, Uncle Jianliao built a new two-storey house directly opposite ours. Up to then the land housed a front shed and a back garden of fruit trees. The shed kept many farming gears, old household stuffs and a few cages of chicken. When it was pulled down, most of the old bricks were reused. This gave the older kids a chance to earn some pocket money in shaving the old bricks. It was built by a local man called Quan Hu (全湖) whom we addressed as "Uncle of the second degree (表叔)". Jianliao was working in Hong Kong and spent very little time in the new house. Subsequently they rent part of it to a young couple with a little daughter. The husband, Cheng Dao (程道) was a new teacher of the school. The two families did not get on well for reasons unclear to me. The Chengs left after a few months.

During the school summer holiday of 1948, we went to Hong Kong to have a short vacation with Dad. We stayed in the house of a distant relative of Grandma in a flat in Tung Choi Street (通菜街), Monkong (旺角) in the Kowloon Peninsula. His name was Huo Peisun (霍佩孫) and he owned a Metal Retail Shop, Tongdeli (同德利) in Hong Kong. He was not only rich but also a well-respected old Chinese scholar. I suspect that we were there at his invitation and not Dad's own volition. I did not remember much except getting to know his family and a night visit to the Lai Chi Kok Amusement Park (荔

枝角遊樂場)。All had a great time, as everything was new, modern, and beyond our imagination. Night was particularly attractive because of the colourful electric and neon lights when we only had small oil lamps at home. Unfortunately the good time lasted just a week.

Change of Government

On our return there was increasing instability in Southern China. The nationalist and the communist fractions of the country had been fighting continuously since the end of the Second World War. Now the communist, with its legendary People's Liberation Army (PLA) had swept over the greater part of China and the nationalist government seemed helpless to avoid defeat. At the school there were obvious signs of preparation for a change in government. The new national flag and the portrait of Chairman Mao started to appear and a few teachers openly preached communism. Then changes came, first to the teaching staff and a little later, to the curricula. As the existing textbooks could not be used, learning now consisted of information and discussions, supplemented with gatherings, songs and dances to greet the new era.

Finally towards the end of 1948 the first troop of the PLA arrived at the village. It was a cold cloudy winter evening. A small group of soldiers suddenly walked into the Big Lane and requested politely to the residents for a night's lodging. We were all scared but their good manners kept us calm. Mum took the kids into the inner part of our house and spared the rest including the kitchen to the soldiers. I was uncertain how many stayed in our house probably about three or four at the most. I did not have nightmares and in fact slept well as usual. I did not know what the soldiers did in the night but next morning Mum found out that they had cooked a meal and left behind some money. They were out of the house but still sitting against the walls in the Lane. They even waved to us when we went to school that morning, not knowing that more soldiers had occupied the school over night. There was no school for several days until the soldiers left. There were, however, rumours that a few former teachers had been arrested for being spies of the nationalist government.

CHAPTER III: SECOND DECADE 1949-1958

The Privilege of being the Firstborn Son

Most Chinese have two birthdays, one by the Gregorian calendar and the other, the traditional Chinese lunisolar system. Although I did not reach my actual tenth birthday until January 2, 1949, I had the celebration on December 12 1948, which was the 12th day of the 11th lunar month, my Chinese birthday. On that morning Mum greeted me with a red packet of money (利是) and a hardboiled egg which was coloured red on the shell. This was the usual way village parents celebrated their sons' birthdays in Southern China. The red colour signifies a happy event. The packet with money means luck and prosperity while the egg symbolises propagation of the family.

Chinese New Year fell on January 29, 1949 but the celebration was much subdued because of the political turmoil. When school reopened after the winter break there was a large decrease in the number of students. I was in Year 5 of my primary education and the class had only four students including myself and one was a girl. There was not much in the way of learning or studying; so, the teacher taught us neutral subjects such as abacus and basic poetry. This turned out to be the most rewarding part of all my primary school years in the village.

The inevitable at last occurred in April 1949 when the communist party conquered the whole of Mainland China and the nationalist government fled to the island of Taiwan. In spite of daily rumours that the communist armies were about to cross the Strait of Taiwan or the nationalist forces were preparing for a counter-attack at the mainland, school continued as usual. My elder sister was graduated in that year but I did not remember her receiving any certificate or attending any graduation ceremony. I don't think she had any plan for her future either, although a common career choice for girls in those days was the teachers' training college.

When I returned to school in September after the summer holiday, our class was halved to just two boys. Still we carried on although with little in the way of studies. A lot of the time was spent in adjusting to the new political regime. We had a march through the village with drums, cymbals and trumpets to show the school's support of the new government, about which the students practically knew nothing except from propaganda or rumours. The teachers also directed a play on the corruption and defeat of the nationalist government. The boy who took the part of General Chiang Kai Sheik (蔣介石) was applauded into balding his head, much to his reluctance. Overtly the whole village remained calm and peaceful but I suspected there must be families that were making preparations to leave.

On October the first 1949 Chairman Mao celebrated the first national day of his government on top of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, or Tiananmen (天安門). Around February the following year Dad came home quite unexpectedly, to me at least. That night I was wakened up from my usually sound sleep and Mum was not in her bed. I walked out of the bedroom and found Dad stooping in the side room moulding a square cement block and talking to Mum and Zhiyi. I was signalled to keep quiet. It took me some time to understand that Dad was burying his gun in a concrete block. I had no idea why he did this at the time and where he subsequently disposed of the block. He left soon afterwards but must have discussed with Mum on the future of the family.

A few months later I completed my primary education quietly as Zhiyi did hers. Soon after I was put in the care of a lady known locally as a “water courier” (水客). Her name was Yayun (亞雲) and her usual job involved transporting, buying and selling goods between two places for people who paid her a commission. This time she was paid, in addition, to take a boy from Shigen to Hong Kong, a two-day journey. For the first day I had to walk to Foshan and then took the train to Guangzhou where we stayed overnight in her friend’s place. We got up at six o’clock the next morning and lined up in the long queue outside the railway station when it was still dark. We waited for hours and were under constant guards from officials in army uniform. Yayun was tense and regularly told me to be silent and behave. I was not sure whether this was because of the goods she carried or because this was her first trip following the change of government. We finally boarded the train which took us to Shenzhen (深圳) where we had to go through restricted passages and another custom check in Lowu (羅湖) on the Hong Kong side. We took another train and arrived at the Kowloon terminal uneventfully in the late afternoon. We went straight to a variety goods shop in Lower Lascar Row on the Hong Kong side, which was owned by another of Yayun’s acquaintances. I stayed in the cockloft until Dad came and picked me up in the evening.

The Billet Years

I stayed at Dad’s place in the first floor of the Yili Metal Retailer at 4 Hillier Street, Sheung Wan (上環) for a few days to get my personal things ready. I was then taken to the residence of a distant uncle who was also a descendant from the Peng Bank ancestor and had a two-storey house in the Big Lane. His name was Shengping (昇平). He owned the Yuananxiang (源安祥) Metal Retailing Shop at 10 Wing Lok Street East (永樂東街), Sheung Wan, where Mum’s young brother worked. Peng Shengping, the boss, had his office in the mezzanine of the building. The second floor was his family residence and had a terrace on the roof. The first floor was used to provide a sleeping area for guests

and the three single employees, all men, including the cook. The kitchen was situated in this floor and the toilet at the ground floor behind the shop.

Shengping had two wives. The first one lived with him in Hong Kong and the second one stayed in the house in Big Lane as a sort of caretaker. I knew his second wife pretty well because she was gentle and kind but I had not met his first wife before. He had two sons, Shengqiang (勝強), Shengtang (勝棠), and a daughter, Huizhu (慧珠), all by his first wife. His mother, whom I addressed as the Seventh Grandma (七婆), would be over seventy years of age and had a hunched back. A daytime housemaid did all the cooking and washings for the family. I was given a bunk bed and shared a table with other lodgers in the first floor but I had my meals with Shengping's family in the second floor. I had to hand wash my own clothes; showers were taken in the kitchen after the cook had finished his job.

I started lodging with the Shengping family around August 1950. Shengqiang was about my elder sister's age while Shengtang and Huizhu could not be much older than me. After I came to know them better, they were all eager to help me with my English. At that stage all I had learned were the 26 alphabets; so they taught me what they thought would be the best way to begin – basic pronunciations. They made cards with short groups of the alphabets such as DA, DE, DI, DO, DU, etc., shuffled them and dealt them out face down on the table. I was then asked to turn them over, one at a time, and read. I do not know whether I benefited or not from their teaching but one thing I am always sure is that I never succeeded in applying this to read English texts correctly.

As I did not possess any Hong Kong primary school record, Dad had to actually “buy” me a place in a secondary school. The education system at the time consisted of six years in primary school from Year 1 to Year 6, and eight years in secondary school from Class 8 to Class 1. When I finally got enrolled into the Wah Yan College (華仁書院) in Caine Road (堅道) Hong Kong, the school term had started for a few weeks. Being a prestigious school, places were always in demand; so even when my Dad was willing to pay an extra amount of money, I still had to wait until the school finished its normal intake through entrance examinations and introduction from influential people. In schools like this one, there were several classes in each grade designated A, B, C, etc. in order of the presumed standards of the students. I was logically placed in the lowest Class of 8-D.

A Long Break due to Illness

For the first time in my life I found it depressing to attend school. Everything was new to me and all lessons except Chinese were taught in English. I just could not understand a

word or follow what the teacher was saying in the class. Worst of all, a teacher-student relationship was non-existent. I could not catch up after several weeks in spite of my great efforts trying to make it up at home. Then I got sick with a fever. Dad at first consulted his friend-herbalist called Li Dasan (李達三) and I was taking herbal medicine for a while without any effect. A week later I was taken to see Western general practitioners but again with no improvement. In fact I gradually got worse and went into a delirious state. Dad had no choice but to take me to a Medical Specialist by the name of Ye Dazhen (葉大楨) who admitted me at once into the Hong Kong Central Specialist Hospital (港中分科醫院). I did not know what actually happened and could not tell how long I was in a confused state. I only remembered that I had nightmares after nightmares for what appeared to be eternity.

When I finally regained consciousness, it was a beautiful sunny morning. For the first time since admission I was able to look around the room that was like a palace to me, with all its clean and simple but modern furniture. There was of course the unmistakable scent of Lysol filling up all the empty spaces. Outside the large window next to the bed was the slope of a hillside full of luxuriantly green trees. Pleasant chirps could be clearly heard now and then although I hardly saw the birds. I did not see Dr Ye until that afternoon when Dad had time to visit me. He was kind, polite and gentle, telling Dad and me that the worse was over; I only needed time to recover. He then told me a number of things, to do and not to do, the most important of which was diet. I needed to start with liquid food and very gradually changed to semi-liquid, semi-solid and then solid diet. I learned later from Dad that I had typhoid fever and should have died but for the timely availability of Chloramphenicol in Hong Kong. The private hospital stay, the new drug and the service of a private medical consultant must have cost Dad dearly. He never mentioned anything about this and I figured that he was doing or started to do well with his business as the Hong Kong economy boomed with the movement of enormous human and financial resources from Mainland China into the colony.

After discharge from the hospital, I was put into a room in the Dadong Travel Lodge (大東旅店) to recuperate because I had an infectious and quarantinable disease. I was babysat first by Aunt Jinlan and then Mum who was pregnant with my youngest sister, Zhiling (秩齡) at the time. When the quarantine period was over, they returned to Shigen. Mum was reluctant to leave as I remained weak and thin, but she could not object. Zhiling was born on December 16th 1950, not long after Mum's return.

After she left, I went back to stay with Dad and his Yili bunk bed. I began to improve quickly and was hungry all the time. By then I was taking semi-solid food that was obviously not enough for my growing appetite. So in the evening when the shop people were dining downstairs, I sneaked into the kitchen and ate the rice crust from the bottom

of the cooker. When I did this the first time, it was the most delicious food I had ever tasted! So I just could not resist the temptation and after a week or ten days I developed bowel complications and was rigidly put back on liquid diet again. As a result my recovery was delayed to early 1951. When I finally recovered fully, I went back for a short stay in Shigen to show Mum that I was really good again.

The Luck of Restarting in a Primary School

On my return I continued to stay in Shengping's bunk but my place in Wah Yan College had gone and it was too late to get into any other school for the second term. So I attended a small class of private tuition for English in the nearby Wellington Street. The teacher, Mr Lu (盧先生), was good and his method suited me well. It was here that I first learned about the basic construction of the English sentence (as different from the Chinese) and how to analyse them grammatically. My English improved by leaps and bounds within a few months. I still have his image clearly in my memory. I regret though, that I am unable to recall his name.

That summer a new school called St John College advertised for students in the papers. Having missed the previous year due to illness, I applied for Class 8 again and passed the entrance examination. School and sundry fees were paid, textbooks purchased and uniform tailor made. In fact I already attended the school for two weeks when a new development propped up unexpectedly and destined my entire career and future.

At the same time when I was searching for a school, Dad was asking around for advice. He knew a lady by the name of Yazhu (亞珠) who also came from Shigen and was working in the Education Department. She had access to the vacancy list of all government primary schools. After the school term began, the list became final. She noticed a few vacancies in the Primary 6 class of the Yaumati Government A.M. School (油麻地官立上午小學) and told my Dad about it. That should be an excellent chance as the fees were token apart from the original sum to acquire the place but in accepting it I would be demoted by one year. Here my luck came in again. The Education Department had decided to change the pre-university school system and the new one would take effect from the following year, i.e. 1952. Primary education stayed much the same except that the schools had to prepare their students for the Government Joint Class Primary Six Examination to enter the secondary schools of the students' own choice. Essentially this was just between schools with either English or Chinese as their first language. The main changes were in the secondary education that would be consisting of five plus two years (instead of the existing total of eight). The first five years ranged from Form 1 to Form 5, ending with a joint Hong Kong School Certificate Examination under the Education Department. In passing this examination students would be awarded a certificate that

allowed them greater access to better jobs. Those intending to enter the Hong Kong University had to carry on to Form 6 where they sat Matriculation Examinations to obtain the required pass subjects in advanced level for their chosen faculty. This might take one or more years but usually two; hence it was common to divide them into the Lower and Upper 6 Classes.

With the introduction of the new system, I actually regained my lost year by moving to Yaumati School at Primary 6. I was late by over a month when I joined the class at last. Since then I never looked back. I had set my foundation in English and my Chinese was always one step ahead of my classmates. Mathematics was my pet subject and science was elementary. Handicraft, music, drawing and sports remained a drag on me but they were not counted where it mattered. I was sixth in the class at half term and jumped to be the first not only in my class but also in the Joint Examination for the whole colony. I was nonchalant about the whole thing as it happened so quickly; only ten months ago I was nothing more than a reject. Dad, on the other hand, was elated, as the result was totally beyond his expectations. Ever since I recovered from the typhoid fever and following the family tradition, he had considered getting me an apprenticeship that would provide me with meals and lodging in addition to learning a trade. His favourite was the Hong Kong Sea School and I could end up a seafarer if I had stayed in St John College.

There were two minor upsets relating to my little personal glory. The first was that I was assigned to La Salle College, which at the time was not a preferred high school for the Hong Kong Chinese. I was told that my first choice was not a good one. To be honest I knew nothing about the schools and I could not remember what I actually put down in the application form. Then there was also the possibility that I was picked by the College rather than the other way round. The second mishap was the passing away of Shengping's mother during the year. There was a little anecdote on the morning when she suddenly developed a stroke. I was woken by Uncle Shi at about 6 am and asked to pass a sample of urine into a cup. I did as told without knowing the reason and went back to sleep immediately. It was hours later that I became aware of what happened that morning. Apparently by Chinese folklore the urine from a virgin boy was remedial in strokes. I suppose this may be similar to the use of smelling salt in an unconscious subject. In any case it did not work and she never regained consciousness and died ten days later in a private hospital.

The seven-week memorial services that followed her burial were of a grand scale and opened up my eyes to what the old Chinese custom really was. Frankly everybody had a good time when the memorial ceremony was taking place apart from the Buddhist monks and nuns who had to work hard through the twenty-four hour period in shifts for their money. Friends and relatives might attend at any time and took the opportunity to get

together and engage in idle or business talks. Naturally food and drinks were never short in supply.

The Family Sufferings in Shigen

While my lucky star was shining high and bright, dark clouds were hanging low over my family in the village. To make sense of the events I need retrace back to early 1950 before I left Shigen for Hong Kong. I was in school when a representative from the People's Liberation Army visited my Mum at home. He demanded to know the whereabouts of Dad's gun. This must have come from a village informer but we could never be sure whom this person was. Mum denied any knowledge but promised to ask Dad. That night Mum asked me to write to Dad about the unexpected visit. Dad replied promptly with a good fabricated story of having sold it to a security officer around May 1946. His name was Liu Hui (劉輝) who used to guard passenger ferries that ran in the Eastern River of Guangdong after World War II. The reply was submitted, and Dad came back around February to bury the gun in a concrete block. Nothing happened and months later I departed for Hong Kong. I had no knowledge of the events but in September and October 1950 Zhiyi wrote Dad two successive letters on the gun, adding that the family was under threat because of it. Dad reiterated the story, and the matter was again quiet to the extent that Mum was even allowed to leave and look after my recovery from typhoid fever in Hong Kong.

However on her return, the well publicised "land reform" (土改) began in the village. Our family was classified as a small landlord because the two farm lots were rented out. As such Mum had to appear before regular meetings to be questioned, humiliated and spit upon until she admitted the guilt of exploiting the poor farmers. The result was the inevitable confiscation of our farms to award those without. Towards the end of 1951 saw the arrival of the "three antis" (三反), anti-corruption, anti-wastage and anti-bureaucracy, followed by the "five antis" (五反), anti-bribery, anti-tax evasion, anti-embezzlement of public money, anti-substitution of poor materials and anti-spying of financial information. Literally these should not concern the ordinary people but the officials continued to encourage the villagers to put forward accusations against their fellow-villagers on any issues, true or fictitious.

This was a period of chaos, hatred and paybacks. Somehow and as a result, the gun affair resurfaced; this time it was pursued relentlessly by a Peng clansman who also lived in the Peng Bank. His name was Shaoshi (少石); he once had a bitter argument with Dad when they were in charge of the Peng's ancestral fund. He was obviously bluffing as he got everything wrong including the time when Dad had the gun and its type. Still Mum got more sufferings so much so that she had considered taking her own life a few times. Only

the love for her three young children had stopped her. The “trial” gathered momentum and more villagers joined in the prosecution. Dad was once again asked to make a confession of his life including his dealings with the gun. Dad persisted and did not give in, lending more hardships to the family. Suddenly the whole village turned against everybody in the family, including our close neighbours in the Big Lane. They pointed their fingers and shouted at Mum in the public meetings and treated all family members as lepers on the street. There were no more than a handful of exceptions; they were Shansong, Aunt Xiaoying’s sister who looked after Jianliao’s two oldest children in the new house, Jinlan, Shengping’s second wife and Quan Hu the builder.

In spite of all the pressure from the government officials and their apparent knowledge about the gun there was no physical torture. Merits must be given to Zhiyi who during this very difficult period had been working as a teacher in the village school. She was subservient, diligent and co-operative. At the last moment she even denounced her relationship with Dad. In this way she was hailed as a hero and able to delay harsh decisions from the government and help them when no one was around. Another great help came from Shansong who was classified in the “have-nots” and therefore had privileges. His words also carried weight and were more likely to be accepted. I cannot imagine the fate of the family without Zhiyi and Shansong.

Finally in 1952 the government lost patience and was about to take draconian measures. Zhiyi and Shansong sensed the imminent crisis and succeeded in convincing Dad to submit. He then confessed to the fabrication and admitted his foolishness in cheating not only on his family but also on the government. He revealed that the concrete block with the gun was buried next to the manure tank of his farm by the creek. Once the gun was retrieved everything seemed to be forgiven and the family was taken off the anti-revolution blacklist. Although I was not aware of these events at the time, I was certain the psychological trauma to Mum and my sisters and brother must be enormous. I have seen them jumping up when someone knocked on the door or tapped heavily on a table. Years later Zhiyi revealed to me that she would have panic attacks whenever the weather looked like a storm is coming. After the dust settled down, her mind was set for the next move. The plan, however, took months to prepare and five years to complete. It also required the unselfish assistance from Shansong.

Secondary Education

In June 1952 after I was informed that I would be sent to La Salle College with a five-year government scholarship, I had to leave Shengping’s place. He decided to renovate his residence to a penthouse in two levels with modern facilities. His family was moving to a rented apartment for the period. A few weeks later Dad took me to another metal retail shop, called Weili (偉利) in 23 Tai Wo Street, Wanchai (灣仔太和街). The shop was

owned by a tall educated gentleman from Taishan (台山), whose name was Kuang Weifu (龐偉夫). He had seven children, four boys and three girls. His family lived in the first floor except his two eldest sons, Dingbo (定波), and Dinghuang (定晃); they stayed in the mezzanine with another boy from a distant relative. I was given the last bunk space in the mezzanine that was connected to the shop in front by a primitive wooden stair. The wash area was at the back of the ground floor. There was no kitchen and meals were served in the shop for the three employees from the family cook. The two lodgers had dinners with the employees but lunch and breakfast were on our own. The two Kuangs occupied a different section of the mezzanine with beds, tables and chairs. There was no table in the section for the lodgers. We had to sit on the bed to read and used the hard board of the bed to write while sitting on a low stool. The place was damp and dark as it opened only to the hall of the shop below and the lighting was inadequate. As a result I was infested with bed bugs for the first few months and became short sighted when I left almost three years later.

La Salle College was situated in Perth Street at the centre of the Kowloon Peninsula. To attend the school from Wanchai I had to take the ferry from the Wanchai Wharf to Monkok and then walked along Argyle Street until it crossed Waterloo Road. Turning right and another short walk would take me to the school, which consisted of rows of wooden sheds linked together by an open wide corridor at one end. The first row of sheds from the Street side was the administrative and teachers' area and the remaining classrooms, library, laboratories, demonstration halls and a canteen. On one side of this school complex was a concrete ground with a tennis and two basketball courts; on the other there was a large soccer field surrounded by high grounds on three of its sides. This, however, was not the original La Salle College which was a majestic Italian style construction situated in an elevated location and having a dome at the top not unlike that of a Roman church. It was taken over by the British Military Forces and the Government of Hong Kong built the replacement for the school. A lot of people complained about this "military capture" but I quite liked the place except in hot summer days because of the poor insulation and ventilation of the classrooms.

The College was run by Catholic brothers who lived in a modern concrete two-storey house on the other side of Perth Street. The house was large and could provide accommodation for about a dozen of boarding students. I was put in the Form 1C class, which was not bad because the first two classes were prioritised to those coming from their previously Form 7 and 8 students due to the change of the education system. I did well with the academic subjects but had a lot to catch up with Biblical Knowledge since this was the first time I read the Bible. Although this was a Catholic school, I was relieved that acceptance of the faith was optional. Bible study was, however, a compulsory

subject. School was half-day in summer because of the unbearable heat in the sheds but whole day for the rest of the year.

A Plan in Brewing

At the beginning of 1953 Zhiyi applied for a permit to further her studies in Guangzhou. To do this she would also need permission to move her place of residence. The application raised plenty of objections from local villagers alleging it to be a plan to run away. She firmly denied such an intention and explained that she needed higher education to better serve her students and the government. Finally with Shansong agreeing to be the guarantor for her return, the application was passed. Within a few months she found and rented a room in a large elegant house in a nice area (寶華路十二號) of the city. The house was of the old style northern Chinese design (四合院) and once the proud property of a wealthy man who was tried and purged during the “five antis” as a capitalist. The house was confiscated and rented out to the public. It had a big central courtyard with varieties of trees and decorative plants. The living areas were built around the open yard; so every room had access to the garden. The amenities, of course, had to be shared by the tenants. My sister settled down quickly but made frequent visits back to the village. The visits were not just keeping a close contact with the family but also exploring the timing of the second move, namely, to take Mum and the three remaining kids to Guangzhou. The animosity from the locals towards the family never really went away.

In the summer of 1953 after competing my first year in high school, I went back to visit them. I was old enough to take the two train trips to Guangzhou where Zhiyi picked me up at the station. I stayed for one night in her rented room. Early next morning we took another train journey to Foshan where we walked all the way to Shigen. It was raining heavily and windy and we only had one umbrella between us, which was in anyway next to useless. We were thoroughly soaked when we reached home in the evening. My feelings were numbed but Mum definitely had tears in her eyes among the joys of the family. The only words I can recall from her were: “Zhen, I thought I would never see you again!” We did not talk much and when we did we had to lower our voices; I could sense a tense and nervous atmosphere even within closed doors in the house. The horror experience was too deep in their minds to be shaken off easily and most villagers remained hostile. The next morning we all went to Zhiyi’s place in Guangzhou where we had a more free and leisured gathering. My sister had already rented a few more rooms in the house for the occasion. I departed for Hong Kong after five days. The farewell was sad but not intolerable as we could see a gleam of hope in the horizon.

Things were really brightening up. After my trip, Zhiyi took steps to shift the other members of the family to her place in Guangzhou. It was logical for Zhihua to leave first. She had finished her primary education, there was no secondary school in Shigen and her elder sister was studying in Guangzhou. The permit was easily granted. The case for Mum, Shengduan and Zhiling was trickier. The argument was that Mum was fragile, illiterate and had difficulty looking after the two young kids. The family had no means of livelihood in the village, having been disposed of the farms. Even so, things would not have worked out as planned without persistent petitions and the help of Shansong who had inside information on how the authority made the decisions. After they all left, the empty house was subsequently occupied by the son of Quan Hu as a tenant who was not required to pay any rent. The idea at the time was that we would retain ownership of the ancestral house, which was being looked after by a trustworthy tenant and friend.

Later in the same year, Zhiyi made a trial application with the Guangzhou authority for a visitor's permit to Hong Kong. There were twists and turns in the process but at the end she made it and arrived in time for the Christmas season. She was staying with Uncle Jianliao who rented a small unit in the Baolong Terrace (寶龍台), Kennedy Town. I do not know how they managed it as he was living with Aunt Xiaoying and three young children, Shengzhong (盛中), Zhiying (秩瑛) and Shengzhi (盛志) who were all born in Hong Kong. Their two elder children, Shengkang and Zhituan were left behind in their house in the Big Lane. Jianliao, like my Dad, was working in Hong Kong at the time when the communists took over Mainland China. Aunt Xiaoying had eye trouble and came to Hong Kong for treatment, leaving her two eldest children in the care of her spinster sister whom we called the Fourth Aunt (四姨姆). When the new government closed its border Aunt Xiaoying was stranded.

The Reckless Years

While plans were being played out in Shigen and Guangzhou, I was enjoying life to the full with the two Kuang brothers in the mezzanine of Weili Metal Retail Shop. Being all teens we quickly acquainted each other and found every possible way to explore our youthful energy. Obviously we engaged in sports, movies, sexually explicit books, magazines of naked girls, gambling and night dining. On the other hand we never went out of bounds nor did any violent stuff. In particular, alcohol, smoking, drugs and sex did not even come across our minds at any stage. The society as a whole had a high moral standard and juvenile crimes were very rare. Most important of all, we did not neglect our schoolwork. I had been living more or less independently since coming to Hong Kong and Dad's strict disciplines affected greatly my behaviours. His two famous sayings were: "Climbing up to the sky is difficult but not as difficult as asking people for help (登天難, 求人更難)" and "Indulgence in material pleasures kills our ambition whilst exploitation

of people destroys our integrity (玩物喪志, 玩人喪德)”. A little later our good life attracted two more youngsters. One was the cousin of the Kuangs (Dingke, 定科) and the other a next door neighbour (An, 安). With these additions our activities inevitably became wilder but we kept our restraints. As a result we often ran out of our pocket money and that was when gambling came in handy. We wisely chose our opponents and with a bit of beginner’s luck we got through a few times. Dingbo had a rich friend who occasionally helped out but still we were mostly stretched to the limit. Dad, of course, never learned about this dark side of my life. Just when the wildness was about to impact on my studies, my lucky star shone again and saved me from self-destruction.

The Great Escape

Right from the beginning the ultimate goal was always to get the whole family to Hong Kong. Whether Dad had sufficient money or not, there was no alternative if he still cared about them. I am sure this must have been brought up between Dad and Zhiyi when they met in December 1953. Somehow in just six or seven months, Zhiyi managed to obtain the necessary permits for everyone except Zhihua. The initial application was, of course, for the whole family but the officials in Guangzhou refused this, saying that they were not visiting but leaving for good. Zhiyi insisted that they were not; so at the end to show good faith from both sides, Zhihua was left behind and she was heartbroken. There was always the risk that once the others did not return, the authority might turn their anger on her. For the others they had no choice; it was far better to have four out of five out than none.

I was ignorant about the events and decisions all the time until Mum, Zhiyi, Shengduan and Zhiling arrived in Hong Kong at the end of June 1954. Dad must have known for some time, as they only needed to stay in a hotel for about a month. He in fact had bought a new flat on the second floor of 10A Davis Street, Kennedy Town, not far from where Jianliao lived. It was a Chinese style unit and therefore consisted of an empty shell. To save money the new arrivals moved in once water supply and electricity were connected. They more or less camped there for weeks while partitions, utensils and furniture were gradually added to the shell. When the flat was finally turned into a two-bedroom home, Dad and I joined in, and for me just in time to start the first term in my third-year high school. The two bedrooms were 2-metre square each, one occupied by Mum and Dad, and the other by Zhiyi and Zhiling, who would later share it with Zhihua. The remaining space was a combined living and dining area by day and a third bedroom for Shengduan and me at night. Other than these, there was an open balcony in front facing the street and a kitchen at the back. The kitchen was also a bathroom and opened into a tiny water closet. Elementary as it was, the apartment was paradise to all of us. It was our home!

No one forgot Zhihua. Regular letters indicated that she received no hassle from the government but she had difficulty to concentrate on her studies. About six to eight months later Zhiyi made a daring return to Guangzhou. I never knew how, but she did succeed in persuading the authority to allow Zhihua to leave as well. I do not believe this was a miracle or the result of Zhiyi's charm; to me it must be due to a change in government policy. By then the Communist Party had full control of the country with the nationalists powerless to return from Taiwan. The economy, however, had not recovered; it would be desirable to lessen the mouths to feed by allowing those with no assets or working abilities to leave the country. So Zhihua reunited with us in early 1955.

The smooth outcome let Jianliao to ask for assistance to get Zhituan and Shengkang out from Shigen. Dad was not happy on this as Jianliao approached Zhiyi directly without first speaking to him. When he learned about the trip it was too late for Zhiyi to change her mind. The time taken for her to accomplish the feat was longer and there were no regular updates. We were all very worried about her safety until she suddenly reappeared at the door. She had succeeded in bringing Zhituan out from the village. That was in late 1955 and in the following year she completed the mission impossible {Appendix I7} by getting Shengkang out as well! Jianliao was elated and soon moved to a bigger place in the 7th floor of 32 Belcher Street (卑路乍街) which was closer to us than the Baolong Terrace.

After the exciting moments finally cooled down reality began to bite. Dad was an old style traditional Chinese of the male chauvinistic type. Sons were more important and had priorities over daughters. Zhiyi might have missed any chance of formal education but Zhihua had not. However, both were put in a night school for English lessons, hoping that they would have a better chance to find a job. Naturally they were required to help Mum with most of the housework in the day. Zhihua especially hated the preparation of the family meals; it was not the cooking itself but the shopping in the market with a tiny budget that she disliked. A little later they were also required to take up knitting and sewing jobs in nearby factories. Shengduan and Zhiling were luckier. They entered the mainstream education system all right but Dad had no influence or status to get them decent schools. Yazhu who got me into Yaumati Primary School had retired. The only person who could help was Shengping; he was a board member of the Chung Sing Charitable Association (鐘聲慈善社) which ran a swimming pavilion several hundred metres from Kennedy Town and a few primary schools. He also had great influence on the Qinghua Primary School (菁華小學) where his three children previously studied. The quality of the teachers in these schools, however, was of a lower standard. Shengduan had to resit primary 3 for the third time in Qinghua, the first being in Shigen and the

second in Guangzhou. Zhiling was the first one in the family to start in kindergarten but had to settle for the Chung Sing Primary School later.

With more growing bodies to feed Dad was trying to find extra income to supplement his long-time broking job with William Jacks & Company. In 1956 he was introduced to a man called Liang Jingyun (梁景雲) who claimed that he knew of a market for a special kind of woven cotton in Thailand. The cost would be minimal because manual labour was cheap with the influx of people from China. Dad was convinced and started a small workshop in the nearby Mount Davies hillside where about half a dozen woman workers were employed on the production line. The tools were hand-spinning cartwheels and the cotton threads were treated by a special solution and hung to dry. Dad provided all the cash required and Jingyun supervised the operations. Zhihua and Zhitian worked there in their free times and Zhihua hated not only the work but also Jingyun because of his chained smoking of a strong hand-rolled tobacco. In the initial few months demand was great and the whole family had to help in packaging the product at home. This lasted for about nine months and for reasons unknown to everyone the order suddenly stopped. Dad lost all the money.

Disappointments

Around this time I got a scare on my health. Firstly I started to pass fresh blood every time when I emptied my bowels. This I knew was from bleeding piles but it took me a long time to realise that they resulted from prolonged sitting on hard surfaces. Even then I could do little to relieve my suffering, as there were no sofas or cushioned seats at home, only mahogany or marble ones. Secondly I developed the first attack of Ménière's Syndrome during my Form 4 final examination. I had to sleep it off in bed for three days. Since then I would have one or two episodes each year and these seemed to be provoked by insufficient rest and nothing could help except sleep. These two chronic problems put further pressures on my studies, particularly in the last year of my high school when I had to prepare for the School Certificate Examination in 1957. I understood the importance of the examination to my future and to Dad's expectation. It was therefore a great disappointment when I could only manage to have three distinction and two credit subjects out of a total of ten, but more significantly I missed out on a government scholarship. The results of the Examination were graded into distinction, credit, pass and failure with 50% as the score for a pass. A student's standing was calculated from the total marks attained divided by the number of subjects attempted.

In retrospect my result was inevitable and fair. I did not have the fortune of meeting a good teacher who would point out the fatal mistake in my way of learning. Ever since I read my first book, I discovered that I had an unusual memory. Thereafter I took the easy way out to acquire knowledge by committing everything to memory. This led to excellent

school results in my primary and early secondary educations, as the curricula were limited and the Chinese language still played a significant role. In the last two years of high school my weaknesses were exposed. Ten subjects mostly in English were too much to digest and retain by my memory capacity. I should have skipped history and geography, the two subjects depending heavily on facts and a good English base. In spite of all the hard work, my English is always second rate as it is not my mother tongue and I am too self-conscious of its complicated grammar. The last fault was forced upon me by the teachers in the first instance and perpetuated by my desire to speak perfect English in later life. Even now I am unable to totally rid off this habit.

Dad was quite satisfied with my results, and I was able to obtain a government bursarship (a sort of subsidy or grant) for the next two years in La Salle College. So I carried on and began to face the difficult decision of choosing my career. I was excellent in Chinese literature and mathematics, good in chemistry and weak in biology and social sciences. I knew that Dad would like me to do medicine but to enter this faculty I needed to pass biology, chemistry and physics in the advanced level. That was a big task when biology and physics were not my strong areas. On the other hand I did not have a preference and medicine was a sought after profession. So I gave up my own interest and made a daring decision to please Dad. My lucky star was looking after me once again and I never regretted the choice. As my Mum used to say, “If you lack intelligence, make it up with diligence (將勤補拙)”; to succeed I just needed to work harder and so I did. Nonetheless, my bleeding piles and the Ménière's disease always found a way to disrupt and slow me down.

I started the first term of my lower Form 6 leisurely. For the first time in my education I had free periods from lessons given for subjects that I did not take. Nevertheless I persisted with the same mistake I made in the School Certificate Examination. Instead of concentrating on the three major subjects I took on geography (advanced level) and Chinese literature (ordinary level) as well in Lower 6. I suppose this simply reflected a lack of self-confidence. By taking the two additions I would have much wider choices should I failed one or two of the three majors at the advanced level in the following year. Also as common in those days most students would cast the safety net of taking the examination for the British General Certificate of Education that was recognised by the University of Hong Kong as entrance requirements. I followed the trend and this further distracted my concentration.

Meanwhile Zhiyi was having other ideas about her future but showed no sign until one day when a handsome young man called at the house. His name was Wang Xiehe (王協和) whom my sister acquainted while living in the big house in Guangzhou. He came from a wealthy family in Foshan but was broke after being purged by the new regime. He

wrote good Chinese but was practically hopeless in English. He came to Hong Kong later than Zhiyi and was working as an accounts clerk in an enamel factory. Dad was not happy about the relationship but could only watch as they went out together more and more often. In a few occasions when Zhiyi returned home after 10 pm the whole house would be under a dark cloud for the whole night. To avoid more conflicts Zhiyi moved out in early 1958 to stay with Xiehe in a small room in Shek Kip Mei (石硤尾) which was one of the poor suburbs in Kowloon. They married in the same year on the 29th of October. Dad was unhappy all along but became very supportive after their marriage. I am not sure whether this was part of his “warm heart cold face” character or he felt indebted to her eldest daughter for single-handedly saving his family. Most likely it was both.

CHAPTER IV: THIRD DECADE 1959-1968

From Matriculation to University

Both the Hong Kong Matriculation and the British General Certificate Examinations took place in May and June in 1959. The results were known by July and Dad made an alteration to the flat by enclosing the balcony with window planes and knocking down its partition with the sitting area. In this way I had my own desk at one corner of the now bigger lounge room in time to start my university.

To save money in the small renovation Dad not only contracted an apprentice but also did a lot of installation himself. This proved too much for his small body and he developed a severe pain in the outer side of his right leg due to a pinched nerve in his low back (sciatica). In standard fashion he first consulted the herbalists and then tried all kinds of folk remedies suggested by his friends before seeking help from western practitioners. Even the last approach was ineffective. This lingered on for over a year and at last he was referred to an orthopaedic surgeon who after many x-rays came to the conclusion of a prolapsed disc in the lower spine. By then the pain became unbearable and Dad was admitted into the Canossa Private Hospital in early 1961, where he spent a few weeks through the Chinese New Year festival. That gave the family a bad start in the Year of the Bull.

Dad had leg traction for the acute pain as an in-patient and was then discharged with a body plaster cast from the mid-chest to the hips. The plaster was meant to stay for six weeks so that the prolapsed disc might recede. In the first week home he only complained about the inconvenience and discomfort from wearing the heavy cast but in the second, he started to loathe and blame the plaster for doing him more harm than good. At the end he could stand it no more and had it removed. By then the acute pain had gone and he could manage to walk around slowly with a limp. Without the rest enforced by the plaster cast recovery was prolonged, protracted and intermittent but no one would expect this to take more than two years. Even then he could never walk properly again and this might have contributed to his downfall twenty-five years later.

The results of my Matriculation examinations were, by my standard mediocre but the important thing was I passed all the subjects including the irrelevant ones. On top of that I got enough marks to be accepted into the Faculty of Medicine in September 1959. This gave Dad great satisfaction and pride in spite of my failure once again to get a scholarship to ease his financial burden. To compensate I decided to be a day student throughout the entire five-year course. As a result I missed out on an important part of my tertiary education, to live independently in a community setting (the student hostel).

Zhihua and Shengduan's First Career Move

With great determination, Zhihua got through the entrance hurdle and was accepted by the Grantham Hospital in 1960 as an auxiliary nurse in training. She had to stay in the hospital quarter and attend study classes in between her clinical duties. She could only come home for a few hours once every few weeks. So the responsibility of tending to Dad's needs including consultations and fetching various herbal and folk remedies fell on Shengduan's shoulders. To Dad the family's future depended entirely on me and under no circumstances should my studies be disturbed. He would not even allow me to visit him when he was in hospital or to take him home on discharge.

Like so many occasions in the past, once the family got over a misfortune, some sort of prosperity followed. In spite of the handicap, Dad somehow continued working throughout his illness and indeed was doing quite well. Mum managed to find some take-home handy work from local plastic factories. Zhiyi and Xiehe were trying several small businesses and appeared to have some success. Their first daughter, Helen Shumin (舒敏), was born on July 29th 1960. Zhihua was self-sufficient and began saving for herself. Shengduan, who had entered into a decent secondary school in 1959, was progressing well. The school, called the Buddhist Wong Fung Ling School (佛教黃鳳翎學校) was established by the Hong Kong Buddhist Society of which Huo Peisun, Dad's best friend and distant relative, was a founding member. I was not sure whether his influence was called upon to help but years later Shengduan assured me that he passed the entrance examination on his own merits. Zhiling was the unlucky one to miss out getting into an acceptable school. She had to stay the six years with the Chung Sing Primary School and as such, had no hope of going into a good secondary school. Dad was unlikely to repeat buying a place for a daughter as he did for me. Even if he had the will and the money, he would not be able to find the necessary "relation (關係)"

Education apart, the family was in good stead. Ten years ago it was broken up and facing disaster; even six years ago it was struggling at the poverty line. It was therefore a relief to everybody that at last we had passed the danger mark and could look forward to a brighter future. Around the middle of 1961, Dad's leg pain had largely gone leaving only numbness on the outer side and the limp on walking. A third bedroom was added in the lounge-dining area for Shengduan and me who would share a bunk bed and a work desk.

The Medicine Course in Hong Kong

My study at the Medical Faculty of the University of Hong Kong was stereotyped but not short of excitements and surprises. In the first three months we had a crash course in Organic Chemistry, which we must pass to continue. After this hurdle the focus was on

the three basic sciences, anatomy, physiology and biochemistry for the following 15 months, culminating at the first M.B.B.S. examination. Passing this would get the student to the clinical curriculum of pharmacology, pathology, medicine, surgery, gynaecology, obstetrics and their various sub-specialty subjects. Patient contacts began in the third year through so-called clinical clerkships at junior and senior levels while being rotated between the major specialties. The schedules were tight, the workload heavy and the facts to remember boundless. We had to visit different Clinics, Departments and even private surgeries for exposures to the many facets in the practice of medicine. At the end of the fifth year was the final M.B.B.S. examination and passing this would turn a medical student into a doctor, at least on paper with the double-degree of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (M.B.B.S.).

The first two years were spent in the pre-clinical building situated in the University's main complex at the mid-level Western District. The greater part of the work was on cadaveric dissection that was exciting in the beginning but turned tedious and boring towards the end. We had oral tests called "viva" every fortnight and the results were posted on a board with coloured squares after the student's name: green for distinction, blue for pass and red for failure. It was depressing to those who failed consecutive tests. I never got any green or red squares, and so were my first M.B.B.S. examination results, just plain sailing.

The third year started the clinical phase of the medical course; lectures and duties were shifted to the complex around the Queen Mary Hospital in Pokfulam Road. There was the relatively new Pathology Building on the eastern end, and below it, the Mortuary. The Hospital was an old seven-storey solid building with obvious British influence in its construction and façade. In addition to the standard hospital settings for treating patients, it also housed the University Departments of Medicine, General Surgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, Paediatrics, Gynaecology and Obstetrics. Lectures were held in both buildings, but bedside teachings and case tutorials were exclusively in the Hospital.

Life started to become more interesting and demanding. At the same time we had to endure great humiliations from our teachers. The worst was coming from the Professor of Medicine whose name was AJS McFadzean. He used to hold a class to combined third and fourth year medical students every Thursday after our lecture on Preventive Medicine. During this session he would ask difficult or tricky questions usually with an unexpected answer. If you were not one of his favourite students, you would be shouted at, demoralised or verbally abused when your answer was incorrect. In a few occasions, female students succumbed to the pressure and wept. One male student was reported to have developed a stammer following the event. For reasons we could not quite understand, he only put questions to the first two rows of students. So at the end of the previous lecture that took place in the Pathology Building, there would be a phenomenal

one hundred-metre race for the back row seats! This was of course for the average students including myself. The smart ones did not mind sitting in the front; it provided them a good chance to make themselves known to the professor. The same sort of events occurred in our clinical clerkships when patients were assigned to small groups of students and their histories and clinical findings were later presented to a lecturer. Only in the latter case the worst one could get was some sarcastic remarks. However, the psychological damage to some students could be irreparable. Those were the days!

In the summer of 1962, Shengping who had kindly provided me shelter twelve years ago, passed away suddenly. According to the news he was on his way to the beach with his family when he suffered a heart attack. He was pronounced dead by the time he was taken to the Queen Mary Hospital. Dad took Shengduan and me to the funeral parlour to pay our last respect on the day of his burial. I did not have any chance to catch up with his children and left with Dad but my brother was instructed to follow the procession and to attend the ceremony in the Tsuen Wan (荃灣) Cemetery. Dad could not go because Shengping was younger than he. Chinese customs dictate that persons older than the deceased do not observe the burial rituals. My excuse was, as usual, my study obligations. It was difficult to envisage then that I would not meet any one in his family again in Hong Kong.

Psychiatry was included in the fourth year curriculum where we had lectures and demonstrations at the High Street Out-patient Clinic in the Western District followed by a two-week residency at the Mental Hospital in Castle Peak (青山醫院) in the New Territory. After this we had a written test that we had to pass; if not, one needed to sit for it again. The practical experience of delivering babies was gained through a four-week residency at the Tsan Yuk Hospital (贊育醫院) in Sai Ying Poon (西營盤). This included lectures, tutorials, assistance in surgical procedures, rostered normal deliveries as well as pre- and post-natal cares. To complete the requirements for the specialty each student had to present a report on a minimum of forty deliveries directly under him or her. Mine contained a total of sixty-five cases and even that was well below the high numbers in the class. The eagerness was the result of our being treated, for the first time in our lives, as real doctors by the midwives of the hospital, with whom we kept a good working relationship.

On finishing the obstetrics clerkship I took the break and obtained my driver licence before sitting the final M.B.B.S. examination. I was in such a hurry that I used the white coat to lure the driving examiner to pass me before I was actually competent enough to control the car. I paid the price dearly for the mistake four years later.

The whole medical curriculum was completed by March 1964 and we had about six weeks of intensive studies and utmost stress in preparing for the examination of our life. In addition to burning the midnight oil and punishing our memory cells, we were allowed to attend any classes in the medical school or practise our clinical skills on patients in clinics and wards. The final examination took place in May and consisted of three parts, written, practical and oral, in each of Medicine, Surgery and Gynaecology/Obstetrics. Overseas examiners were invited by the University to reveal to the world the standard of the students and the quality of the Medical Faculty. The written examination was in essay format and held at the Loke Yew Hall (陸佑堂) in the University. The practical and oral examinations were held at the Queen Mary Hospital for Medicine and Surgery and the Tsan Yuk Hospital for Gynaecology. The delivery reports submitted earlier replaced the practical requirement for Obstetrics. Other than supplementing the areas covered by the written and practical tests, the oral interview actually played a very important secondary role; it determined whether a borderline student should be passed or failed, and whether top students should be awarded distinctions in the subject. Medal winners would need a kind of challenge in yet another interview. As always I was spared all the anguish and glories. To be fair to myself though, I have to say that it was my spoken English and taciturn personality, not my knowledge and skills, which prevented me from attaining a better result.

The result of the final examination was known a week after its completion and was posted on the notice board outside the faculty office. The joy of the successful students was expressed in many ways but all invariably joined up to celebrate in groups. I was in the group going for food, drink and a long session of bridge in a student hostel. The game lasted until after midnight and by the time I came home it was past 1 am the next morning. The whole family was still awake apparently waiting to hear the news. As we did not have a telephone line at home I had no way of informing them either of the results or about the delay. Naturally everything was forgotten and forgiven when they learned that I had realised Dad's dream. He was very much a proud father

The Intern Years

The celebration was brief as career decision and seeking house officer (intern) positions required urgent attention. By regulation medical graduates were required to undergo twelve months of supervised internship in designated departments, half in medical and related fields and half in surgical, before they could register with the Hong Kong Medical Council as qualified doctors. For the top graduates and those with connections, their positions had long been secured. For the rest they were required to put their names up with several departments and hoped for the best. I was among the latter group and disappointed as my top choices had invariably been filled by the time I enquired about

them. I could not imagine my luck when, out of desperation, I approached the University Department of Surgery and was told that there was a vacant house officer position.

That actually was not accidental or my lucky star at work. Like anywhere else, the University Departments of any specialty were deemed prestigious and graduates fought fiercely to get accepted. However in 1964 the Professor of Surgery had just retired and the newly appointed head, with a nickname of “Killer King” was notorious for his temper tantrums in the operating theatre, particularly worse towards interns. His surname was Ong (王) that in Chinese means “king” and he had international fame for innovative surgical techniques in treating cancer of the oesophagus, cholangitis and liver cirrhosis. The most acclaimed was the transposition of a segment of the colon to replace the resected oesophagus. He kept in the ward a patient who had undergone such a successful operation as a showcase to visiting professionals. That was the only time when the professor was in his highest spirits and appeared kind to everybody. The patient was happy too since he got free lodging, free meals and good care from all staff who called him “Yabao (亞寶)”, meaning “Mr Treasure”. Also in that year the head of the Government Thoracic Surgical Unit resigned. The Unit was overtaken by the University and put under Professor Ong who intended to change it into a cardiothoracic surgical division. The house officer vacancy was for this new unit and I got it by merit of my examination results in surgery among the few applicants.

Life as a house officer in those days was hard labour in general but being a house officer in the University Medical and Surgical Departments, it was like hell. Although the roster was three on-call days followed by one day off, I had to work at least from 7 am to 6 pm daily on weekdays and from 7 am to 1 pm on weekends and public holidays. That means if my day off fell on week days I could manage just to get back a little of the lost sleep from the call days. Yet for some strange reasons I never felt tired and would go to check my patients when I returned in the evening from my weekend off days. Needless to say I came home very infrequently and indeed did not pay much attention to how the rest of my family were getting on except that they were well.

In the hospital there was plenty to learn, to practise and to remember. At the same time there were instances that I felt scared, shocked and at times disgusted. Patients could be well one day and dead the next and death from simple illnesses such as appendicitis was not uncommon. I never forget one incident that occurred within my first month as an intern. It concerned a female patient in the thoracic ward, who was being operated by two recently qualified chest surgeons, one of whom later played an important part in running the Cardiothoracic Unit in the Grantham Hospital that pioneered the first open heart surgery in Hong Kong. I was waiting as usual in the ward to make the necessary arrangements for her post-operative care, when I was called to the surgical theatre to

escort her back to the ward. She was accompanied as well by the anaesthetist who was administering portable oxygen to her all the way. In the ward the nursing staff and I were not required to check the vital signs but to standby until the anaesthetist stopped the oxygen supply. The surgeon who was my direct senior then asked me to certify her death! I knew this was wrong but I thought I had no choice. I was sure the patient died on the operating table but the theatre nurses and the anaesthetist had colluded with the surgeons to document that she was alive at the end of the surgery. What could I achieve by contradicting my seniors apart from getting myself into deep waters if not being expelled? This haunted me throughout my entire medical career for not having the courage to stand up to principles. At the same time it taught me an important lesson that there is a dark side to everything including the so-called sacred profession of medical practice.

In the first few months of my internship I was totally committed to work and did not have much private life. When I received my first pay cheque of HK\$400, I spent half of it on an Exakta 35 mm SLR camera which I seldom had time to use. Towards the end of the year as I gradually settled down I slowly regained some control of my own life. The first change occurred during one of my usual evening rounds after a weekend day off when my attention was attracted to a young student nurse who was on night duties in the ward. She was not pretty in any sense but had a very pleasant smile and a lovely voice. Her handwriting was extra-ordinary and stood out from those of other nurses that I had come across. When I entered the ward every night she was always knitting something and appeared to have the situation in full control. She generally accompanied me in attending to the patients and I would chat to her for about 15 to 20 minutes after I finished what I needed to do. Her name is Vivian Huang Yingcai (黃英才). Strictly speaking, Vivian is a masculine name and that was exactly what her character was like.

The hierarchy of the nursing system in Hong Kong government hospitals at the time consisted of three levels: the student nurse, the staff nurse and the sister. The student nurses had regular lectures in addition to supervised practical trainings in the various wards by rotation. This lasted for three years, at the end of which they were required to sit for the nursing examination. Passing this, they became registered nurses and their uniform changed from red to blue in colour. They then had a choice to take up midwifery now, later or never but all would be in the grade of staff nurse. Promotion to the final grade of nursing sister, whose uniform was white, would depend on seniority and vacancy opportunities. Nursing sisters were further classified by their scope of responsibility as ward sister, floor sister and at the top, matron. The male counter parts were commonly called dressers at the lower end and nursing officers at the other. Their uniforms were all white.

Vivian's night shift ended after two weeks and so was our regular encounter. She was then rostered to another ward after a short break and rest. I was busily preparing for the next internship, which should now be one in the medical field. My confidence had built up during this period and I applied for the ambitious position in the University Medical Department. In the interview by the fierce Professor McFadzean, he appeared kind and gentle and did not lose his temper. He even assured me that my average examination results did not bother him. I was accepted right away. There was no miracle here. Having my first term of internship under Professor Ong was a clear advantage as the two professors had mutual respects towards each other.

With my career prospect settled I had an enjoyable Christmas festival season in 1964. The tradition was naturally British. All wards were decorated with the combined efforts of house officers, nurses and patients. Parties were held at different times or on different days to encourage the attendance of as many staff from other areas as possible. It was during this mad rush on Christmas day that I caught up with Vivian again. She was not on duty and was accompanied by many of her classmates from the nursing school.

The New Year celebration was a non-event for most house officers and a nightmare for those joining the University Medical Unit. There were pages of regulations, rules and duties to be familiarised, laboratory procedures to learn and thirty to forty patient records to study. The Unit was very different from others in many ways. Firstly call duties were at a rate of three out of four days. The roster would be emergency first call, emergency second call, ward call and day off. Because of the large number of cases, emergency first call usually meant 24-hour work and emergency second call a 16-hour shift. Even during ward calls I would be lucky to be woken up only once after midnight. Secondly patient history on admission needed to be in essay form and in great details. This was later neatly typed by the secretaries of the department. All procedures and examinations had to be recorded promptly and comprehensively. Patient progress must be kept up to date and a summary written on discharge. Thirdly standard blood, urine, sputum and stool tests were to be carried out by house officers on admission and as required thereafter after office hours. Results were to be entered and filed as soon as possible into their proper places. Fourthly the house officer in charge of the ward must be familiar with the clinical conditions of all patients as a senior member could appear suddenly and expect to be fully briefed on any patient of interest to him or her. This was no easy task when the ward had twenty-four patients in standard beds and another ten to twenty in floating camp beds. Lastly the standing of the house officer, in terms of respectability in the ward, was essentially no higher than that of the student nurse and at least half a level below that of the menial staff!

In the 1960's the Queen Mary Hospital was a seven-level structure built in the shape of a capital H with the central bar lying roughly in the east west direction. The ground level

was the administrative area housing the birth/death registration office, admission/discharge office, enquiry station, transport office, power (emergency) and linen rooms, etc. In the first floor situated offices for the senior staff of the Hospital including the Medical Superintendent and the Unit heads of the Government Departments. The Lewis Laboratory, a cardiac study and equipment storage room, was the odd one out. It belonged to the University Medical Unit and so was most of the second floor. The third and fourth levels were essentially Government Medical and Surgical sections, the fifth University Surgical and the sixth, Gynaecological and Obstetric Units. Within this oversimplified divisions there were single wards for Orthopaedics, Paediatrics and mixed wards for Neurosurgical, Respiratory surgical and private patients. The last group was located at the western upper arm of the H from the fourth to the sixth floors. The wards were all named after past medical identities from Britain. At the time the University Medical Department had five wards of public patients under its care. In order of their importance, they were Manson, Jenner, Addison and Mackenzie Ward respectively. The Abernethy Ward was added later to accommodate the increasing number of patients suffering from liver cirrhosis. It was situated at the eastern lower arm of the H in the third floor. I was assigned to the Mackenzie Ward for the first three months and the Abernethy for the second.

The workload in my medical internship was heavy but disciplined. Directly overhead was either a clinical assistant who was employed by the University or a medical officer if employed by the Government Medical and Health Department. They could vary from one to four years senior than the house officers whose work they were required to closely supervise. We obtained most of our basic trainings from them. On top of both was the physician in charge of the ward, who must possess higher qualifications. The house and medical officers carried out daily ward rounds to decide on the care of their patients. Physician's round was on the morning after an emergency roster when new admissions were presented and care plans were laid down. Professorial rounds took place weekly with the four medical wards in rotation when the clinical assistant or medical officer presented cases to the Professor and attending medical students for teaching purposes. As usual there were plenty of fireworks in these sessions but the interns were spared. The general notion was that the Professor made use of these teaching rounds to assess whether the clinical assistant or medical officer was ready to take the examination for higher qualifications overseas.

Mackenzie was a female medical ward and took part in admitting emergency patients once every three days. Since it was also my first medical intern roster, I was very busy in this period and could come home for a few hours every two or three weeks. As a result I had more chances of being invited by the nurses to join their gatherings such as night meals and barbecues. These functions generally involved staff from different wards and

therefore through them I inadvertently maintained some kind of occasional acquaintances with Vivian.

When I moved to the Abernethy Ward, in April 1965, the workload was almost halved. There was no emergency roster for the ward and admissions were usually through outpatient clinics or internal transfers including from the University Surgical Unit. Professor Ong was interested in the surgical treatment of bleeding oesophageal varices in cirrhotic patients. The shunting operation that he devised, however, increased the risk of hepatic coma, which would require long-term medical care. Patients with recurrent cholangitis, which was common in those days and might require surgical drainage, were also transferred there for post-operative management. Eventually patients with chronic or undiagnosed gastro-intestinal conditions were also admitted and Abernethy became a Gastroenterology Ward. With both the physician and clinical assistant having lost their touch in surgical skills, I suddenly became an important part of the treatment team. I picked up and developed good techniques in many manoeuvres such as insertion of the Sengstaken tube (for variceal bleeding in the gullet) and stomach tube, laryngoscopy, liver biopsy, proctoscopy and rectal biopsy.

Abernethy was a male ward and therefore had many male nurses at different levels. The senior ones had been working there for years and they helped me a lot in the beginning. As we got along we came to know each other well. Apart from clinical rounds we were more like friends and this made the last three months of my internship pretty relaxed. At this time another student nurse by the name of Amy HK Fan (范恆潔) attracted my attention. She had a very pretty face but was overly slim. She looked graceful and had gentle manners. I did not have any chance of talking to her alone and I was too shy to show my feelings. Somehow my friends spotted my fancy and they suggested that I played host of a movie party to a group of nursing staff in a roster when Amy was not on duty. In this way I could have a chance of sitting next to her and starting a conversation. The plan went on well and the movie we chose was a perfect fit for the occasion. It was Audrey Hepburn's "My Fair Lady"!

Nevertheless my first attempt to have a girl friend ended in total failure. We did have a conversation in the cinema and a few afterwards in the ward. The subjects, however, were general and professional rather than personal. At that time I was starting to search for a post-internship position and had concluded that my character was more suitable to be a physician. I had also made up my mind to go for a higher qualification in medicine. I did not like private practice despite its monetary attraction but at the same time felt that my family background would not allow me to accept the lowly paid position of a clinical assistant at the time. The compromise would be a medical officer job in an institution where I could get the necessary training and experience to get over the next hurdle. After

several enquiries I found two suitable places. One was the Medical Unit in the Tung Wah Hospital where I was born and the other the Government Tuberculosis Services that, I was told, might be reviewed and upgraded to Tuberculosis and Chest Services. The head of the Tung Wah Medical Unit, I later found out was Amy's brother. This led me to hesitate. My actions to befriend Amy might easily be taken as a contrivance to grab the position. After considering carefully over the matter I decided to go for the Tuberculosis Services. There were actually two more reasons for my choice. Firstly a doctor who recently passed the MRCP (commonly called the membership) examination in Britain had joined the Service, which had never happened before. Secondly the Tung Wah Group was an independent charitable organisation and quite separate from the government medical stream. It would be more difficult to obtain a scholarship for higher studies.

With my immediate future settled I returned to the happy times in Abernethy but not for long. Soon I learned that Amy already had a steady boy friend for some time and he was also a medical doctor. They were both devoted Christians and in this way I knew I did not stand a chance of going any further than social friends and so friends we remained. No affections germinated and no feelings hurt. Somehow I cannot totally erase the event from my memory. This is strange as I could hardly call this love, and the encounter was essentially a group function. Was this the sour grape effect or because I did not have the courage to face up to a challenge?

The Euphoria of a Qualified Medical Doctor

I joined the Government Tuberculosis Services on July 1, 1965 as a resident medical officer in the Grantham Hospital. At that time the Services were mainly manned by doctors who graduated from medical schools in Mainland China and were not qualified for full registration to do private practice in Hong Kong. As a result they were allowed to work in areas that could not attract enough local graduates and the Tuberculosis Clinics were one of them. The Grantham Hospital was originally built to accommodate the increasing number of people with pulmonary tuberculosis but by the time I was there, changes had been planned to turn it into a Cardiothoracic Centre. On the medical side, there were wards for tuberculosis patients mainly with resistant diseases, as well as wards for the rehabilitative care of paraplegic sufferers. The surgical side consisted of an orthopaedic unit for tuberculosis of the bones and joints and a thoracic unit, both being under the University. I had no trouble in getting the position, as most doctors in the Service did not like on-call duties. I did not mind as I was used to them and at the same time I got free lodging in the hospital quarters that had furnishings much better than those I had at home.

Life as a medical officer in the Grantham Hospital was like royalty compared to that of an intern in the University Medical Unit. Work was light and consisted of weekly

scheduled admissions and discharges, daily ward rounds and rostered call duties every four days. The roster was shared with all medical residents of the Hospital that had four floors of wards under its own administration. The hospital was first built to model and share the burden of the Ruttonjee Sanatorium in Wanchai, a renowned tuberculosis research centre in the 1960's to 1970's. By the time of my arrival tuberculosis had become essentially a disease of the outpatient clinic. Hospital treatment was reserved mainly for those with drug-resistant infections or requiring surgery. In other words the Grantham Hospital had steadily evolved from a sanatorium to a multi-disciplinary specialty institution.

Other than the leisurely duties, for the first time I felt truly respected by all the staff and enjoyed the privileges attached to a medical doctor in a traditional way, although I had yet to cure a single disease by myself. I had morning and afternoon tea with the senior nurses as well as free lunch, both with the compliments of the hospital. Dinners were also provided free if I was on call. Above all I could find the time and the right environment to concentrate on my studies. I also used the opportunity to attend the weekly evening seminars arranged by the University Medical Department as a training program for registrars. My life was peaceful and organised. It was disturbed only twice in my six-month residence there. The first was a visit from my old friends of the Abernethy days including Vivian and her friends but not Amy. This renewed my acquaintance with Vivian and probably lay the foundation of what were to develop later. The second happened on my last call day in the hospital when a patient with chronic resistant tuberculosis committed suicide by jumping off the balcony at the sixth floor. I was called to certify the death. Suicidal attempts were not uncommon in those days because of the advanced status of the disease and the adverse mental effects from Cycloserine, one of the drugs used for retreating patients whom the first line medications had failed.

After working as a medical officer for about three months it became obvious to me that my bank account was going up slowly and steadily since my family did not need my support. I had no knowledge of what I should do. I did not even know that I should consult someone for advice. Then one day a young man driving a Jaguar E-type sports car arrived at the hospital. He was obviously well trained as a salesperson and he convinced a few of the staff to buy into what he was there to sell. It was called Fund of Funds, which was new in Hong Kong but had been popular for some time elsewhere. The concept seemed to be good but the administrative charges were high. Having no experience in investments I was naive to take his "projected profits" for granted. I committed myself to monthly payments of HK\$400 by auto-pay (known nowadays as direct debit). Initially half of the amount was for the fees and the rest for buying units at the current pooled price into my account. The charges would be reduced after 12 months of uninterrupted payments. I could afford the extra expense since my salary at the time was HK\$2100 per month, compared to \$400 as an intern.

On my 27th birthday in 1966 I was rostered out to the Sai Ying Poon Chest Clinic (西營盤胸肺科診所) which was in the suburb adjacent to where my family lived. It was a “9 to 5” day job and without on-call duties. I had moved out from the medical officers’ quarter in the Grantham Hospital and reclaimed my bunk bed at home in the room I shared with my brother. Dr C. Ouyang (歐陽昌) was the senior doctor in charge of the Clinic and he was knowledgeable and helpful. It was he who first raised my interest in chest x-ray reading and demonstrated to me the diagnostic power of this simple examination. I was starting to become a genuine practitioner although heavily biased towards tuberculosis and chest diseases. For most of the time I was on my own, taking history, examining patients, performing tests, making diagnoses, prescribing medication, and in the case of tuberculosis, following up the progress. They were unfortunately semi-automatic procedures and provided very little challenge to my skills. As soon as the diagnosis was not tuberculosis or its complications, patients would be referred to other centres. My major source of knowledge therefore remained from self-education and attending medical meetings.

I was keeping a close watch on the University Medical Unit, which was at the time run essentially by the Reader, Dr (and very much later, Sir) David Todd, as the Professor was temporarily seconded to be the Faculty Dean. He was impressed by my regular attendance of their staff meetings and when I learned that a senior medical officer in training was leaving for his examination in England I requested to fill the vacancy. He did not promise me the position at once but said that he would support my application when the time came.

The Happy Days

Waiting for events that may affect my career was testing but I could do nothing about it. The visit from Vivian and her close classmates to the Clinic was therefore most welcome. This led to a picnic by ferry to the Lamma Island, organised by a group of nurses from the Queen Mary Hospital. On the return I found out for the first time that her family actually lived in the same suburb as mine and the revelation suddenly brought us closer together. We had our first date on the 25th of June 1966 in the Hong Kong Botanical Gardens. She was dressed in a traditional Chinese dress called changshan (長衫) which was white with a dark broad floral pattern. Her shoes were low heeled with matching white straps over the top of the feet. They were fashionable at the time. Her smile and voice were particularly pleasant on that day. I had a lovely time, so much so that I could not help writing a Chinese poem to commemorate the occasion:

贈英才并序

丙午年五月初七日予小恙新痊慵懶鬱抑復感前路之迷茫心懷耿耿承友英才不鄙同遊竟日雖乏高山流水鳥語花香難得知己解人妙語連珠其淺笑也則清心悅目其輕言也則春風煦人其舉手也則翩翩闔範其投足也則玉步金波於是予胸懷暢然萬慮盡洗感激之餘無以為謝謹贈七律乙首以表寸心豈敢言報聊博一哂耳

幾回凝望幾回尋	仙子凌波帶笑臨
淡淡清姿冰作影	娟娟倩魄玉為音
花能解語輸風範	月既怡情缺本心
瑤圃英才蘭蕙質	秀華飄逸勝南金

It is difficult to translate Chinese poems into English. The words or phrases may be literally convertible but not the spirit and style. However, to put it in English, it may run something like this:

*How many times I have gazed afar or searched near!
A graceful glide and an angelic smile announce she is here.
Her appearance, refreshingly plain, reflects on her soul crystal clear;
Her persona, uniquely pleasant, matches her voice, jade to the ear.
Flowers, understanding maybe, can never look as elegant.
The moon, revelling perhaps, has a heart that's indifferent.
Like an orchid from paradise, having its best qualities inherent,
And, worthier than gold, she impresses me with a flair exuberant.*

By July my waiting was over when I got the transfer approval from the Medical Headquarters. I was scheduled to start as a registrar in the University Department of Medicine at the end of August 1966. So I took the time to have a few things fixed before engaging in what I expected to be a very hectic period of my life. Among these was a free dental check up, one of the few perks of being a government officer. In the visit I was told that my four wisdom teeth were impacted and would not break through normally. Although there might be a chance they would stay put permanently, there was equally a risk that they might not. In the latter scenario they could become infected or force their way out causing a lot of pain. So I decided to have them extracted, which needed to be carried out under general anaesthesia. I was admitted into a private room in the western wing (Hodgkin Ward) of the sixth floor on August 15, 1966 and had the operation the next morning. It went smoothly apart from a bad sore throat and bruised swollen cheeks for a few days. I recovered in time for my new position in the University Medical Unit.

The Hard Beginning to a Chosen Career

When I did, I was back to Mackenzie Ward. The routine remained similar but the stress was much greater. In gaining a little more respect from the staff, I now had to do more, including the supervision of my house officer, the presentation of cases to the Professor in his teaching rounds, the preparation of papers for staff seminars and attending to patients of the Unit, who came to the Emergency Department of the Hospital. It was total chaos when the ward was on emergency call. All new admissions after 5 pm would need my initial assessment and management. Complicated cases were to be discussed with the on-call physician. Invariably the wards would run out of standard beds and rooms had to be made for “camp beds”. At the time suicide patients and sick prisoners were admitted into a custodial ward on the ground floor where facilities were inadequate. I would be lucky to have one or two hours of sleep and that was not all. I had to get up at 7 am the next morning to prepare the new admissions for presentation to the physician in charge in less than an hour’s time.

Like any hospital, joys and sadness, recoveries and deaths were regular events. Fortunately medical mishaps were rare because of the strict disciplines in the Unit but that did not mean they never happened. Shortly after my return to Mackenzie, a girl of about eighteen years of age was admitted for tests to determine the cause of a murmur in her heart. She had no symptoms. Cardiac catheterisation confirmed that she had congenital atrial septal defect (hole in the heart). The consensus was that she might have problems with pregnancy in the future. She was therefore advised to have a surgical correction that at the time could only be carried out under hypothermia. The cardiothoracic surgeon was consulted and he persuaded her and her mother to consent. Subsequently she was readmitted and had the operation. However the surgeon had not done the operation himself before and this was also the first in Hong Kong. No one was experienced in the control of hypothermia and the re-warming process ran into trouble. In a panic hot packs were put over her body. Then the heart went into fibrillation requiring resuscitation and more panics resulted in more hot packs. She survived the ordeal but was left with large areas of burnt scars in her neck and upper chest regions. I caught up with her two years later at the outpatient clinic on follow up; she was well but had no boyfriends, pointing at the same time to the scars. The poor girl also had the tendency to develop keloids; I was speechless. The surgeon who caused this mess was none other than the same one who covered up the death on the operation table in 1964.

As to myself I knew all along I was average and respected my limitations. That was why I chose medicine over surgery. This does not mean I was totally lacking in surgical skills. I remember well a young lady who was admitted into Mackenzie for observation after attempting suicide with an overdose of sleeping pills. She already had stomach washings in the Emergency Department. She was fully conscious on admission but in the morning

when I was doing the ward round with my intern, she suddenly choked and stopped breathing. Nothing could be felt in her mouth and the heart was still beating. I immediately ordered a basic dressing set and performed a tracheotomy within two minutes. Suction was applied to remove the secretions in the windpipe and she was connected to a portable ventilator. She recovered fully and was discharged home after two weeks. The standing order of the Unit was that such a procedure would require a consultation and to be carried out by a surgical registrar. I do not think she would have survived if the rules were followed.

Such dramatic events, however, were uncommon. Most hospital work was tedious and required plenty of patience and dedication, but at the end it could be most rewarding. There was another lady of about thirty years in age, who was transferred from the Tsan Yuk Hospital in an unconscious state. She developed jaundice during pregnancy and rapidly went into acute liver failure and coma. The cause was not clear and the only treatment known at the time was supportive care. This consisted of measures to prevent the development of complications (such as bed sores, pneumonia, dehydration, urinary infection and acid base/electrolyte imbalance) in an unconscious subject, maintaining nutrition, and the monitoring of her progress relating to the liver failure and coma. This took up a substantial part of the ward's human resources that were already stretched to the limit. There was no intensive care unit in those days. After over a month's hard work from the combined efforts of all the staff, she not only regained consciousness but also made a full recovery. Unfortunately we were unable to tell her the cause of her illness.

By then my relationship with Vivian had been progressing steadily. We were keeping regular contacts through letters mainly during the week and going to cinemas over weekends when we were both off duties. As the latter occurred infrequently sometimes we might be watching two movies in one night. Naturally dinner was included. All those who knew us well would say we were lovers but I always doubted this. We have mostly opposite characters, hobbies and reading habits; even our star signs are in diagonal positions. To me at least there were two forces that drove us closer and closer together. The first was the natural physical attraction that had worked similarly between men and women for thousands of years. The second was the increasing unease of my parents over my apparent lack of lady friends, so much so that they were about to introduce some to me. I considered this unacceptable and humiliating. This surely gave our delicate foundation a big push.

Vivian had her final general nursing examination in September and was officially graduated in November 1966. She chose to continue straight away with the midwifery course in the Queen Mary Hospital, which was to begin in the following year and would finish in three months; so our dating stayed uninterrupted. That Christmas she handed me an expensive festive card and a tie, which was more a shock than surprise to me. I was

not ready to commit myself at that stage but I found it very difficult to decline both emotionally and common sense wise. On the other hand I could now consider the matter settled and concentrate all efforts on my career. Finally when Vivian completed the midwifery course and took up a staff nurse position in the operating theatre, the inevitable happened. On April 14th 1967 while watching a late night movie in the Queen's Theatre we kissed for the very first time. The feeling was strange but extremely pleasant.

The 1967 Hong Kong Riot

Since the beginning of 1967 minor unrests were taking place among the pro-communist workers in Hong Kong, closely resembling the chaos in China, which resulted from the Cultural Revolution. This finally led to the great riot that started on May 6th and lasted until October. Homemade bombs, genuine and hoax were found all over the colony. Rioters, looters and anti-riot police battled each other on a daily basis with many casualties. The whole society was in turmoil and ordinary livelihood disrupted. A lot of people sold their business and properties and many emigrated to the United States and Canada. The area between our homes and the Hospital was the least affected; still we stayed most of the time in our quarters and the wards. I was one of the unsettled doctors who applied to work overseas. I was in fact accepted as an endocrinology registrar in the Hamilton Hospital in Canada but, because of the time required for the arrangements, by then the riot was under full control of the British government as the pro-communists lost all support from the people. At the end I changed my mind; the uncertainty and the cold weather over there were too much of a challenge to my timid character.

By December 1967 Hong Kong was almost back to usual although deep inside great changes had already taken root. The riot was a wakeup call to everyone and every organisation in the colony including the government. In the hospital I had reached the status of a senior registrar and been rostered to every ward in the Unit. At about half an hour past noon on one Saturday when I was looking forward to a free and enjoyable afternoon with Vivian, I got a nasty surprise. A patient with a suspected liver abscess was admitted into the ward not under my care for diagnostic aspiration. The registrar, however, had not done the procedure before and I was called to help and to demonstrate. I had of course no choice and reluctantly went to see the patient who was wasted, having a low grade fever, a very high pulse rate and anaemic. When I examined his abdomen, the liver was enlarged, lumpy and tender but the belly was also swollen with the presence of free fluid. Although I could not refute the possibility of a liver abscess my clinical sense told me that I must rule out hepatic cancer with bleeding into the abdominal cavity first before trying to aspirate the liver. So I told the other registrar to do an abdominal tap and if the fluid was not blood or contained a high count of white cells, I would do the aspiration. It turned out that the fluid was all blood and I had an instant acclaim from all who were aware of the events, including the admitting physician.

To me that was actually a stroke of luck. I was reluctant about the assignment because of the long observation period after the aspiration to monitor complications. My free afternoon might as well be gone. That gave me a kind of urge to be especially meticulous in assessing the case and I found my lucky star once again. Such events, nonetheless, were rare; more commonly they were gloomy and depressing. Among the worst were the elderly people from poor families and admitted because of strokes. The lucky ones had a simple blocked blood vessel in the brain; with good nursing care they recovered by themselves and managed to walk out of the hospital with some residual neurological impairment. The unfortunate ones survived the cerebral mishap but were left with hemiplegia. Their recovery depended on long rehabilitative and physiotherapeutic care which the Unit and the poor family members could not provide. After the acute episode was over, they were transferred to a nearby convalescent home in Sandy Bay (大口環療養院) run by the Tung Wah Charity Organisation, which provided minimal and very basic care due to gross deficiency in resources. We did a round there once a month and it was heartbreaking to witness how human beings could be left to die such a degrading and miserable death. Their bodies and limbs were curved up, their faces twisted and their mouths drooling. They were restrained either in bed or in an armchair. Most of them were attached to a feeding tube and/or a bedside urinary bag. Visiting became a hopeless and miserable journey.

In 1968 the Queen Mary Hospital underwent a significant renovation, following which a new system was introduced to name the different sections or wards as part of the riot-induced government changes. The personal English names were replaced by an alphabet and a numeral to represent the section and the level of the floor respectively. From right to left and upper to lower arms of the “H”, they became A, B, E, and F, and the horizontal stroke C and D respectively. So Mackenzie was now called D2 and Abernethy B3, etc.

A Short de facto Spell

Around the middle of the year I bought my first car, a second hand two-door Vauxhall viva, from a retired nursing sister who was returning to England. The car was in tiptop condition and suited us well; Vivian had obtained her driver licence and she was given the spare key. By then our relationship had entered the stage of patting and the car provided the needed convenience. One thing led to another. So one late summer night and at the back of the Vauxhall viva we could not hold back any longer and lost our virginity. If the first kiss was like wine going to my head, the first intimacy was ecstasy and remained forever the most memorable. I was five months short of my thirtieth birthday. After the final barrier was removed we took every available opportunity to explore each other's

body but keeping strictly to the safe days of her menstrual cycles. Looking back and morality aside this transitional stage of pre-marital relationship was the most enjoyable in my life. The only regret I have was that it lasted a mere ten months.

I never considered what we did a sin or shameful but somehow I got a slap on the wrist for the behaviour. On Christmas Eve 1968 I was on call and was nagged by several colleagues into a Mahjong game, of which I was a novice. It lasted through the night and I was totally defeated. I drove home without any sleep and offered to pick up Zhihua from the Grantham Hospital. Zhiyi was visiting us that morning with her daughter, Helen. I took Mum, Zhiling and Helen with me for the ride but half way I had an accident. It was a head on collision with another car driven by a staff of the hospital. We both erred in swerving across the midline while negotiating a bend in a narrow road. This was partly the result of inadequate driving practice when I hurried to obtain my licence over four years ago and got what I deserved. Luckily our speed was low and I was the only one in both cars with an injury. I sustained a small fracture in my left arm just above the wrist and needed a closed reduction a few hours later. A forearm plaster cast was put on to immobilise the wrist for six weeks. I was allowed only two weeks' sick leave and had to work with the plaster on for four weeks. The recovery was not quite complete as my left wrist was permanently weakened.

Ever since I started working, I had little contact with Zhiyi and her family except during Chinese New Year celebrations when the family always got together to enjoy the one and only shark fin soup with crab eggs and meat specially prepared by Dad. We could never find in restaurants a similar dish that came close to Dad's standard, even up to now. Zhiyi was doing well in her business endeavours and had moved out of her small and shared hut in Shek Kip Mei to a proper flat in Nathan Road, Monkok. Six months prior to my car accident and with Dad's help she bought a much bigger apartment in 166 Prince Edward Road. In November the same year she also bought a small Renault sedan and was in discussion with Dad to set up an electronic radio company.

CHAPTER V: FOURTH DECADE 1969-1978

Marriage

I celebrated my thirtieth birthday in a forearm plaster cast and while I was on sick leave. This was a rare luxury to me but not a happy one. I could not dine out and the fracture continued to hurt long after the cast was removed. I did not return to driving for two months after the accident. The car was badly damaged and although the repair was covered by insurance, it took time to get the work done. When I did drive again I was a better driver. Vivian was introduced to my family around this time; I had known her family for over a year. In fact I had met her maternal grandmother momentarily in 1965 when she was admitted into the Unit.

In April I got the good news that I was in line for a government scholarship to undertake a course of study in Britain in the coming financial year. The scholarship was for a maximum of twelve months and not extendable unless under exceptional circumstances. The terms were generous and Hong Kong graduates had an excellent success rate of achieving the goal within the year. Naturally I discussed the implications and options with Vivian. The best outcome was for her to get some sort of a government grant to a similar study course in nursing but she was too junior to qualify. The next choice was to do this on our own but I hardly had enough money to cover for the cost. The effect of the monthly drain from my ill-conceived Fund of Funds investment had bitten me hard. To add salt to the wound the Fund had run into serious problems with the unit prices dropping continuously. So I ceased my contributions but still clinging to a gleam of hope on its eventual recovery.

The only option left therefore was for her to take a year no-pay leave to accompany and support me in my mission. We both knew that we had reached a de facto relationship by the moral standard of the time but marriage so far had not come across our minds. With the new development and the circumstances this became a logical choice. The idea propped up one afternoon in May when we were walking leisurely along Des Voeux Road in the Central District (中環德輔道中) and our fates were sealed. We told our families the decision and went to the Registrar General's Department in the following week and booked July 4th 1969 to be our wedding day.

The six weeks that followed were hectic. At first I wanted to make our marriage a simple two-person affair without involving our relatives and friends. This met with strong disagreement from my parents. Zhiyi was asked to persuade me to change my mind and I had to give in. Then there were hundred and one things to attend to, such as getting our leaves from work, selecting costumes for the ceremony, booking photographic sessions,

searching for our love nest and planning the itinerary of the big day. Then we had to choose where to go for our honeymoon, obtain our passports, get the visa permits and purchase foreign currency or traveller's cheques. We also had to invite our work mates to lunch gatherings as some sort of a semi-formal announcement of our union. Lastly we arranged for our parents to meet to resolve any possible conflicts of ideas and traditions. One good thing that came out from their meeting was the provision of two wedding banquets. The first one would be held on the main day and organised by my parents for guests of my family. Vivian's parents would undertake the second for their guests, scheduled at a time after our return from the honeymoon. This was superior to the common choice of a combined banquet where most guests were strangers to each other.

Time and planning are always insufficient for a once in a lifetime event but the good thing for us was that the time frame had been fixed. Whether or not we were happy or ready, we could not change anything by the third of July. Early the next morning, with Shengduan and Shengkang as my best men, we boarded the chauffeur-driven hired limousine and set off to Vivian's place that was not more than five hundred metres away. When we arrived, by custom her door was closed by her lady friends and we had to "bribe" them with a bargained amount of lucky money to get in. This was just a traditional show with no ill feelings. So we returned with the bride dressed in bright red Chinese costume and accompanied by a guardian (大妗姐). Once we were back inside our house the tea ceremony started with both Vivian and me offering tea humbly to the members of the family who were older than I. This was when the guardian proved her usefulness by prompting Vivian what to do and what to say. The order of the service was determined by the seniority of the member. In return Vivian and the guardian would receive red packets of lucky money from them. Mum had to give in addition some jewellery to her future daughter-in-law.

The same ceremony was repeated when we went back to Vivian's place. Afterwards she put on the western-style wedding gown and we drove off again to the Marriage Registry in the City Hall. We waited for our turn and were then seated in front of a table opposite the Registrar of Marriages with our parents by the side. After the usual brief explanation we stood up and the Registrar began the ceremony that was completed with our vows of devotion and the signing of the certificate. Then we went outside to the terrace and had more pictures taken with our friends and relatives who came to witness the ceremony. By the time we returned home we only had a couple of hours of rest before we headed to the restaurant for our first wedding banquet.

Our rented apartment was in Water Street in the Western District not far from the University of Hong Kong. It was about 15 square metres in area and included a tiny balcony. When we finally got back to our own home it was past 11 o'clock at night and we were flying out next morning to Japan for our honey week. Yet we could not avoid

some drama before retiring. Vivian just started her period and was reading a magazine when it was my turn to have a shower. When I returned she left for the toilet and I went to bed. I was still trying to position myself when she ran into a tantrum and accused me of hiding her magazine. Naturally I strongly refuted that, and unwilling to argue on our first night as husband and wife I looked around and found the magazine under the bed. I felt sad about the little incident as it confirmed the fact that our marriage was founded on fragile grounds.

The tour to Japan was enjoyable as everything was new to us and the places we visited were so different from Hong Kong. We were most impressed by their cleanliness and the large underground shopping centres. When the tour finished in Osaka, however, we were stranded. We did not know that we had to confirm our return flight 24 hours beforehand and so we were forced to stay one more night. Luckily we had sufficient cash to pay the hotel bill. We were taught our first lesson in overseas travel.

After the marriage {Appendix I⁸} I got my alias, Shouqi (壽頌) from Dad, which was written with a brush on a red paper and framed. This would be hung on the wall of my bedroom wherever I may reside.

On my return I got the good news that my scholarship for higher studies in Britain had been approved. I was asked to attend a meeting at the Health Department Headquarter to receive instructions and to finalise the contract. The instructions were mainly money matters relating to airfares, unaccompanied luggage, living allowance in Britain, and reimbursement of course and examination fees. The contract was binding me to stay in government service for at least five years on my return. I already booked my first course on tuberculosis and chest diseases with the Brompton Hospital in London, which was to start from October. This meant we only had two months to prepare ourselves. This was not bad as there were many of us doing the same from different hospitals. Information and advice were never short in supply. In fact we only missed a pre-booked accommodation.

A Year in Britain

We left Hong Kong for London on September 24, 1969 with a stopover in Dubai around midnight and landed at Heathrow Airport early the next morning. We were picked up by one of my university classmates who had been working as a senior house officer there for a year. He had booked us a room in a lodging house for a week, within which period, we must find our place before my course started. This turned out to be not as easy as we thought because accommodation near to the Brompton Hospital was expensive by our budget. Eventually we settled on a bed-sitter in Kensington about three underground train stations away from the hospital.

The course of study at Brompton was both exciting and illuminating to me. The lectures were up-to-date and mostly derived from research results published by staff members connected to the institution. Even basic facts and principles were taught in a different but more effective way. Questions and discussions were encouraged and there were never any sarcastic or humiliating remarks no matter how silly our inputs might seem. There were numerous open lectures, seminars, conferences and presentations in various hospitals and convention halls all over London. The exposures widened my horizon and changed my whole perspective of medicine.

Our luggage by sea arrived at a time when we managed to settle into the new environment and daily routine. The five-day week gave us plenty of opportunities to trace up other students and friends from Hong Kong. Sightseeing was a priority for those who had arrived recently. In the beginning we depended on either public transport or generosity of our friends with cars. I had sold my old car and obtained a government loan to buy a brand new Wolseley sedan in England but it was not yet ready for delivery until November. On the morning after I got the car it was snowing. So I decided to drive instead of taking the train. Strangely it would not start no matter how hard I tried. Yet it was running well the day before when I drove it home from the car yard. I was about to give up when a gentleman came to my help. All he did was to pull the choke right out and the engine burst into life. Of course I knew the choke was to help starting the engine in cold weather but I never knew it could be or needed to be pulled out that far!

I continued to take the train for my course in Brompton, as finding a parking spot in the area was time consuming if not impossible. In the weekends we used the car a lot not only to visit different places but also to get myself familiar with the traffic and the road systems. I had applied for my next study in Edinburgh, which was a six-month course in internal medicine and included different sub-specialty subjects. Our intention was to drive all the way from London and to see as much of the country as time would allow. For that I needed plenty of practice to drive safely in the high-speed motorways. Vivian was pregnant by then and I could not expect her to help much in the long trip north.

The Tuberculosis and Chest Diseases course finished at Christmas Eve and we drove off after Boxing Day. Everything turned out smoothly and we visited the English Lake District and a few other historic places. We arrived at Edinburgh three days later and were met by my Hong Kong friends whom Vivian had not met before. One of them made the booking for our accommodation. That night we had a big gathering for dinner in a Chinese restaurant and found out that there was a large group of Hong Kong graduates there at the time. Three had passed their examination and one, a surgeon, who failed was going to repeat in a few months. Then there were four others including myself, who were yet to start. Two were in general medicine, one in paediatrics and me, in medicine with a

subspecialty in pulmonary diseases. Of these, three would be attending the same course organised by the University of Edinburgh. The big surprise for me was to find Amy with her husband doctor who was also there for the same examination. Shortly after, another couple, both being paediatricians joined in the fun.

Life in Edinburgh

We settled down quickly as the city was small and quiet compared to London. The cost of living was lower and we could get many fresh foods such as chicken feet, chicken liver and gizzards free from the butchers. People were generally much friendlier although the weather was colder. Indeed on the day when I began the course I was welcome by the first snow of 1970 in Edinburgh. Studying was a happy event with so many of us in the class and so many diseases that we had little chance of encountering in Hong Kong. As usual dining out, watching R-rated movies in cinemas and sightseeing were priority activities outside our study. For Vivian there was one more routine, attending the Antenatal Clinic for check-ups.

In February the surgeon passed the second examination for his fellowship and returned home. He and his wife were staying in a rented bed-sitter on the second floor of a three-storey town house at 75 Viewforth while Amy and her husband were in the first floor. The owners were Mr and Mrs Cooper who lived on the ground floor with their only teenage daughter, Lynne. They impressed us as being kind and friendly. So after the second floor became vacant, we moved in and were not disappointed. There was just one inconvenience. The whole house had only one single bath on the ground floor and every night we had to take turns to use it. This was more than compensated for by Mrs Cooper's kind attention to Vivian and she helped us greatly in getting the essentials ready for our first child.

About a month after we moved into the new apartment, George, the young brother of Vivian came to visit us with his girlfriend during the Easter vacation. He was a quantity surveyor and came to London to study for a chartered qualification. Unfortunately he could only stay for a few days and we had little chance of showing him around. Shortly after he left and on April 13 a big event of global significance took place and captured the world's attention for four entire days. I was referring, of course, to the miraculous rescue of Apollo 13 and its crew members following a serious mishap two days after take-off. The continuous live television coverage from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was superb and gripping. I was fixed to the square screen for most of the ninety odd hours and considered the effort and time spent worthwhile as it was a once in a lifetime experience.

The baby arrived two weeks earlier than the expected date and was born on June 1, 1970 at 1445 hours. It was a girl. When I visited them in the evening the baby was in an incubator. Vivian and I were met by the Paediatrician in-charge who told us that the baby had multiple congenital defects from a chromosomal trisomy known as the “cri du chat” syndrome. She was not expected to survive. We were asked to return two weeks later to have a blood test to ascertain whether the condition was hereditary or from spontaneous mutation. That was a shock as well as a great disappointment to us but there was nothing we could do. Subsequently the tests cleared us both of any genetic abnormality and we were safe to have children again. The care of the baby whom we named Valerie Shouxian (守賢) in the Royal Hospital for Sick Children was excellent. We were permitted to see her at any time of the day but she was not making any progress and passed away on August 22, 1970. She was cremated four days later and her ashes brought back to Hong Kong on our return.

During this difficult period my attention was first diverted by the world cup soccer that was taking place in Mexico City from May 31 to June 21, then the Wimbledon Tennis Tournament and later, after Valerie passed away, by the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. The television coverage of both competitions by BBC was impressive and I watched most of the games throughout. The soccer grand final between Brazil and Italy must be a classic, not only because Pelè won the trophy permanently for his country but also this was his last appearance. I could never forget the lob he made from the centre line in the game against Czechoslovakia when he caught the goalkeeper off guard. Although the ball narrowly missed the net, his quick thinking and skill were sensational. In tennis the marathon singles match between Margaret Court and Billie-Jean King was a record. The Military Tattoo was held at the end of the Edinburgh Festival that took place through August. We were reluctant to go in the beginning but Mrs Cooper persuaded us to change our minds and indeed we were glad we did.

After completing the medicine course in June, I together with two others of the Hong Kong group, took up private tuitions from a senior registrar at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary for the next three months. In the session we were assigned one patient each from the wards for fifteen minutes within which we had to complete history taking and physical examinations. Then we presented the case to him and he would ask us questions along similar lines as in an actual practical examination. In addition we could be shown another two or three short cases with good physical signs to test our clinical skills. We each paid him three pounds Sterling per session of tuition. This was the greatest value for money we ever spent in Edinburgh. Although we only had one assigned long case each, in actual fact we all had three in a session since the discussions were open. This short period of private coaching proved very effective and useful to me because I did not have an attachment to a hospital department for the necessary clinical exposure and the tutor was excellent.

The higher qualification examination in medicine, commonly called the MRCP (Membership of the Royal College of Physicians) or membership examination in the United Kingdom consisted of two parts. Part I was on basic sciences and held quarterly. One had three chances in a year to pass it before being allowed to take the Part II. Until July 1970 the Royal Colleges in different capital cities (London, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dublin) held their own examinations at different times. It was then not uncommon for someone to have up to four MRCP degrees with the location indicated in parenthesis. However in October 1970 there was a transitional change of the system to a combined MRCP (UK) degree while the examination styles followed the tradition of the Colleges for the last time. Hence in Edinburgh we had two separate examinations for the Part II, one in general medicine and the other a subspecialty which for me was in pulmonary diseases.

AmY's husband had taken both the Dublin and Edinburgh membership examinations by July 1970 under the existing system and returned to Hong Kong. None of us really knew his results as he seldom mixed with us. We all had passed the Part I in March and were going to have the final in October. Before that we took a break from our studies and drove through the Scottish Lake District including the famous Loch Ness to Glasgow where we met more Hong Kong students. When we returned it was all hard studies and preparations to take on the prestigious examination.

The examination turned out to be pretty straightforward to me. The written ones were in essay form and all came from the lectures or standard textbooks, although I did have a little luck in the practicals. My long case was a lady with rheumatic heart disease, which we had plenty in Hong Kong throughout my training years. So I had no difficulty in picking up all the murmurs and discussing fluently on their significance and management. Then one of the short cases was a gentleman whom I had come across during the private tuitions. However the most important factor was that the examination was honest and fair. It was primarily designed to test whether a candidate's basic knowledge and fundamental clinical acumen had reached a standard set by the College. It was neither meant to restrict the number of passes nor intended to humiliate the candidates as often rumoured. There might be occasional examiners who were less amicable than others but I did not encounter any of them. Indeed when I went for the oral assessment I knew I had passed for sure since it was more like a social conversation than a test of knowledge and competence.

The result was known a week later and as expected we all passed except the husband of the paediatrician couple. He was going to stay behind with the company of his wife and made another attempt later. For the rest we not only celebrated with a big feast and a shopping spree but also planned to take a European tour before returning home. That

gave me a small problem. My government scholarship ceased at the moment when I passed the membership examination. So I had to apply for an extended leave without pay, which was promptly approved. Still I had to find the cash to finance the 14-day tour for two. There was no other choice for me but to redeem the investments in the Fund of Funds at a great loss. I reckoned I got back about half of what I had put in plus hopefully a hard learned lesson.

There were a few loose ends to tidy up before we could begin the tour, which was to take off from London. Vivian was two-month pregnant and it would be imprudent to drive all the way back to London. So we took the car to the agent for direct delivery to Hong Kong by sea and booked the Flying Scotsman down south instead. Most of our possessions acquired in the last twelve months and our original luggage including the books had to be similarly dealt with. Our local bank account had to be closed and change of address notified. Even farewell dinners took up a few days. When we finally left Edinburgh, we could not hide our mixed feelings, sadness in losing Valerie and happy memories of the glorious and joyful moments.

A European Tour for Celebration

The tour started from London. A coach took us to Dover where we crossed the English Channel to Calais by a hovercraft that was new to us. From Calais we were driven to Brussels (Belgium), Amsterdam (the Netherlands) and Bonn (West Germany). After a short cruise of the Rhine River we boarded the coach that took us to Luxembourg. A long bus trip then took us through Autobahn and L'autoroute du Nord to Paris where we stayed for two nights before taking the same Channel ferry back to Dover.

By the time we were back in Hong Kong it was early November 1970 and I learned that Zhihua had left for Sydney to get married on November 14th a year ago. She met her husband, Frank O'Young Zhizhong (歐陽治中), during a study course in Australia. So we could now formally occupy the second bedroom while I awaited my next posting from the government. Zhiling had finished her secondary education and was working as a locum teacher while planning her future career. Incidentally Shengduan was also teaching while waiting to finalise his post-graduate study in Canada. He had graduated from the Chinese University in May 1970.

A Budding Enterprise

While I was doing my best for my future in Britain Dad had formed a business partnership with Zhiyi to set up an electronic company they called Tai Wah (大華電子廠). They each contributed ten thousand Hong Kong dollars. In his usual strange way

Dad had the ownership of the company registered under Zhiyi and Zhihua's names and without any binding contract between them. No one knew the details except Dad, Zhiyi and Xiehe who was the manager. Zhihua left Hong Kong the next day to get married; in any case she was only required to sign her name for the business registration. The company was run by Zhiyi and Xiehe with Dad getting paid as an employee only when it started to become profitable. I believe that it must be doing well as on my return Dad was considering buying an apartment in Caine Road that was then an area for those having above average wealth. He hesitated a few times and did not go ahead with the purchase. I was not aware of the reason or reasons behind this, but he told us in a letter years later that he was preparing for any unexpected events when the business might require the injection of more cash to keep it on course. This proved to be an unwise decision in hindsight. Property was at the time in its very early stage of recovery following the slump from the 1967 riot. No one could expect its supersonic upward trajectory in the subsequent years.

The Beginning of a Medical Career

The first person I went to see was Prof McFadzean with the slim hope that there might be a vacant medical officer position in the Department. I was disappointed as, before I put the question to him, he already sent out the marching order and asked me to "clean up the government tuberculosis service". Other than that he was exceptionally gentle and never lost his temper during the ten minutes of conversations. Next I went up to the Health Department to report my return from overseas and got the confirmation of my posting. The Director of the Government Tuberculosis Services was the last person I needed to see to find out where I would be working. As it was near to the end of the year, I was given a temporary position at the Wanchai Chest Clinic (灣仔胸肺科診所) before returning to the same job in the Grantham Hospital. Only this time I was in full control and had the privilege to occupy an entire apartment in the Doctors' quarter, fully furnished and complete with servant's area for a small rent. With the added qualification my salary was automatically scaled up a level. At the same time Vivian returned to her old job as a theatre nurse in the Queen Mary Hospital. We both had to take the bus to work while waiting for the Wolseley to arrive, which it did shortly before we moved back to the Grantham Hospital.

One week after I restarted in the Hospital, I got the news that Australia would shortly stop recognising the Hong Kong medical qualifications for registration as medical practitioners in the country. So I took an urgent leave for a week and went to Sydney and Melbourne to get myself registered with the Medical Boards of New South Wales and Victoria. I also took the opportunity to look around as leaving Hong Kong for good was always in my mind. Britain did not suit me because of the weather and the poor remunerations for salary doctors. In Sydney I stayed in Zhihua's place in Ashfield, and in

Melbourne, in Angela's apartment in Carlton. Angela is Vivian's first cousin whom I had not met before. She was married and pregnant at the time. I had free guided tours of both cities, but I could hardly say that I learned anything about them.

On my return one of my medical classmates, who worked as the surgical registrar in the Grantham Hospital at the same time as I first joined the Tuberculosis Services in 1965, knew about my registration in Australia. He had made the same move earlier and somehow got acquainted with a land salesman in Sydney. This Australian was in Hong Kong promoting the sale of vacant lots in an estate called Ocean Shores in Brunswick Heads, New South Wales. The property was designed as holiday or retirement homes built around a golf course. He introduced him to me and once again I could not resist the temptation under his persuasion and signed up for a lot at a price of 7,200 Australian dollars that I would pay by monthly instalments of 112 AUD for ten years. The Company promised to fly me there any time when I was in Sydney but I never took up the offer.

The Birth of Ronald

After that rash financial commitment our attention was directed to the busy preparation for the arrival of our second child. Getting the room ready, shopping for the cot, baby clothing, napkins and feeding equipment were easy as we had been through these before in Edinburgh. We decided to choose bottle-feeding and as a medical doctor in those days I got a free supply of milk powder and multi-vitamin syrup from the drug companies for six months. The only remaining issue was whether we should get a nanny to look after the baby. Vivian preferred continuing to work and so we had to search for a reliable in-house servant. This proved much more difficult than we thought. The good ones were always in short supply and retained by their employers. After failing to get one through known sources we were forced to shop in the maids market in Happy Valley. Having no experience whatsoever, we really did not know how to approach them or what questions to ask. At the end we just picked a middle-aged lady who looked honest to us, and negotiated a pay package. The general rule for home servants then included six-day week of work, provision of free lodging and meals, thirteen months' salary and fourteen days' leave in the year. A simple contract would be signed on starting work and the servant surrendered her travel document or identity card as a guaranty. However we never got to that stage. A week before she was due to begin, she came to tell us that she was not taking up the job. Her excuse was the long distance between the hospital and her home. This took us by surprise but we were not too disappointed. We did not have enough time to look for a replacement and our first baby was too dear to us to leave the care to a stranger. So we decided to take the hard choice.

One week later, on the fifth day of May 1971 our first son, Ronald Zizhen (子楨) was born in the Queen Mary Hospital at 7.35 am. He weighed 7 lb. 12 oz. Before she was

discharged Vivian reluctantly handed in her resignation and used her entitled maternity leave in lieu of prior notice. I knew she was not happy about losing her job and missing her workmates but this was soon forgotten and replaced with all the joy of her motherly love interacting with a beautiful baby son. To me the sacrifice was worthwhile although inside I felt indebted to her. I could now concentrate on my career and at the same time, enjoyed a full family life.

Revolutionary Research in Tuberculosis Therapy

The work in the Tuberculosis Services had been gaining momentum and was venturing into a new era in the fight against tuberculosis. At the time in Hong Kong there were four separate establishments involved in the treatment of the disease. They were the Government Tuberculosis Services, the Ruttonjee Sanatorium, the Grantham Hospital and the Haven of Hope Sanatorium (formerly a leprosarium in Junk Bay). They had joined forces with the Tuberculosis arm of the British Medical Research Council to undertake clinical studies in shortening the length of medical treatment for tuberculosis. Until the 1960's there was no clear evidence as to how long the duration of medication should be and the general consensus varied from eighteen months to two years. As a result of this long duration patient compliance became a serious problem, leading to defaults or irregularity in medication and eventual development of drug resistance. There were indications from an early study in Madras, India that (i) the duration of treatment could be shortened with better results, (ii) the most important period laid in the first two months, (iii) ambulatory treatment did not increase the risk of spreading the disease and (iv) taking the medication intermittently (once to thrice weekly) could be as effective as daily if compliance was maintained. With this knowledge the British Medical Research Council had started a clinical trial in co-operation with the health authority in Kenya (the East African study) to test the effectiveness of a six-month course using a low cost combination of Isoniazid and Thiacetazone supplemented with streptomycin in the first two weeks. The same trial was followed in Hong Kong but had to be abandoned midway due to an unacceptably high incidence of adverse reactions to Thiacetazone in the Chinese.

The major problems facing us included the high prevalence of the disease, a restricted budget and human resources as well as an increasing number of drug resistant cases, which gradually took up most hospital beds. Our priorities therefore lied in finding short, cheap but effective treatments for both types of patients, which could be totally manageable in an outpatient setting. In other words we were focussing on ambulatory, fully supervised and intermittent regimens of relatively low cost drugs. Once our goals were set, a plan was drawn up and draft protocols were prepared and discussed by the participating members of the group. The amended protocol was circulated to all clinical staff for comments before it was finalised and the trial began. A study of this nature

might take five or more years to complete in order to make sure that there was an acceptably low rate of late relapses. As a result it was not unusual to have up to three studies going on at one time.

These studies were revolutionary, exciting but demanding. They not only required careful and detailed documentation but also were extra workloads to the already busy clinic duties where one doctor might be required to manage sixty to eighty patients in a four-hour morning session. To me they were educational too as I gradually picked up the knowledge and skills of conducting first class research projects. I began to realise, in spite of my ignorance, I had made an excellent choice of accepting the post in the Tuberculosis Services in 1966.

The Young Consultant Chest Physician

My luck did not stop there. In February 1972 I was promoted to the Consultant level, the youngest to achieve this at the time. Meanwhile the Government Tuberculosis Services were renamed the Government Chest and Tuberculosis Services with the intention of gradually extending into other chronic respiratory diseases. Hence my title became Consultant Chest Physician (Kowloon and New Territories) as I was given charge of the Medical Chest Unit in the Kowloon Hospital and all the chest clinics other than those in the Hong Kong Island. The position carried with it a whole-floor apartment of over 200 square metres in the Senior Medical Officers' Quarter inside the hospital compound. The Quarter had only three levels or units. A Senior Thoracic Surgeon and a Psychiatrist of the Hospital occupied the other two. The change of housing was smooth and effortless since we did not own any furniture in both places and chose to rent them from government supplies for our new home.

I settled down quickly in the new environment and began to draw up plans to overhaul my empire. In the hierarchy I was under the Consultant in-charge of the entire Services but equal to the Consultant (Hong Kong Island), both being long serving members in the Health Department. I had full autonomy over the Hospital Unit but only clinical supervision over the outpatient clinics, the administration of which was under the Consultant in-charge. The treatment policy of tuberculosis in the four joint Services of the colony had been unified but not those under private practitioners. This discrepancy raised conflicts when the two groups met. The private doctors accused the government of restricting their access to the new and expensive drugs and those from the joint group blamed their opposite party of their inability to provide adequate supervision of their patients' compliance with their medication. Fortunately such occurrences were rare since over 90 per cent of patients attended our clinics that were not only totally free of all charges but also provided social assistance for the needy ones.

My efforts were concentrated on the Medical Chest Unit in the Kowloon Hospital. I could not do much about the dominant number of tuberculosis diseases in the wards but I could make them less tedious by including those affecting organs other than the lungs or those with diagnostic and/or management problems. A simple laboratory was set up in one corner of the Doctors' common room so that tests such as sputum and pleural fluid smears and later lymph node imprints could be carried out without waiting days or weeks for results from the Pathology Department. Statistical data on in-patients were started, from which basic clinical studies could be planned in addition to providing accurate data in the annual reports.

Family Happenings and Birth of Donald

As in the past my happy and peaceful life would not last long without a few ripples. Firstly we had a surprise when Vivian found out that she was pregnant again. Since she was supposed to be on the pill, the only explanation was missing a dose or two at the wrong time. This did not bother us much and might be good for the children, being closer to each other in age. However Vivian's morning sickness was pretty bad this time. So we hired a part-time housemaid for two hours a day and five days a week. She came from Mainland China and proved to be very helpful.

Then about a month before the baby was due, we had dinner in my parent's place and were a little late for Ronald's usual bedtime. I was driving and had reached the foot of the slope leading to our quarter when the bottom of my Wolseley suddenly hit some strong object in the road. I braked hard and managed to stop the car without crashing or swerving but the engine went dead. We were shaken but luckily none was injured. We abandoned the car and walked home. I contacted the people in the transport section of the Hospital and one of the drivers volunteered to tow the car to his garage and looked into the damage. It turned out that there was some roadwork going on in the area and I missed the small red warning light. The axle of the car and the gearbox were broken and it might cost more to repair than to replace. At the end he offered to buy the car for five hundred Hong Kong dollars. I cannot recall the state of my mind at the time as I accepted the offer gratefully and had not considered making a claim with the insurance company. Perhaps I did but was persuaded not to because the car was moved before I reported the accident to the police.

Anyway the result was that I quickly bought a brand new Volvo 144 and got myself used to it before the birth of our second son, Donald Ziqi (子琦). He was born at 1.35 am on the 9th of October 1972 with a birth weight of 6 lb. 7 oz. He had problems with feeding and used to throw up quite often. On the other hand he could be weaned off his night feeds completely in the second week! As a result he looked tiny and put on weight very slowly but he was cute and a little darling to the whole family. Not only that, by Chinese

tradition he was considered a lucky charm since I got the big promotion shortly after he was conceived.

However my joy did not stay long. Towards the end of 1972 I got a telegram from Zhihua in Sydney, telling me that she was diagnosed to have cancer of the breast. The doctor advised surgery but she was in the third trimester of her second pregnancy. She needed to talk to me for a second opinion. I sensed her fright and went straight to the telecommunication centre in the Ocean Terminal to make an international telephone call. By then she already had a good briefing from the surgeon and a plan had been decided. Still I admired her courage, as she sounded calm and determined without any indication of a hysterical reaction or self-pity. Since then I received regular progress reports from the surgeon as Zhihua underwent pre-operative local radiation, followed by post-natal right mastectomy and subsequent hysterectomy with removal of the ovaries. As a precaution she had to complete a standard course of radiotherapy. She not only survived all these horrible insults but also looked after a newborn baby boy and his one-year-old sister! What a marvellous lady! She reminded me of our grandmother.

Shengduan, my younger brother, had completed his tertiary education in 1970 at the United College that was one of the foundation colleges of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He graduated from the Science Faculty, majoring in chemistry. He worked as a teacher in a high school for a year and left for Canada in 1971. He entered the University of Windsor in Ontario to study Biochemistry and doing research in Immunochemistry. Two years later he moved to Queen's University in Kingston to take up Immunology. He returned in September 1973 to see Dad and Mum for the first time since leaving Hong Kong. After the re-union dinner in my place, he suddenly developed an acute loin pain. I arranged an X-ray in the hospital and this suggested the presence of a small ureteric stone. So I set up an intravenous line for continuous atropine infusion that gradually worked and was taken off the next day. However we could not recover the small stone that must have been passed out. When he returned to Canada I gave him the X-ray and a note about the incident to show his local doctor. There was no recurrence ever since but after the experience he became conscientious of his fluid intake in hot weathers.

One thing that must be quite unique in Hong Kong is that parents send their children to “schools” at a very early age. By early age I mean as early as two years old or maybe even earlier. The main reason is that they want to give their kids a head start and hence enabling them to get admitted into the prestigious primary schools. Another good reason is to allow the young mothers to return to work. Logically this phenomenon is only seen in families who can afford the high fees of nursery schools and kindergartens. For us the reason to send Ronald to a very expensive Nursery School called Yiu Chung (耀中幼兒院) was that we would like him to be bilingual. We found it impossible to achieve this by

ourselves as we spoke entirely Cantonese at home. So in September 1973, at an age of two and a half years Ronald attended the Nursery School that started at 9 am and finished at 3 pm. It included an hour of lunch break followed by an afternoon nap. This gave Vivian more time attending to little Donald who made up for his slower physical development with the ability to speak clearly at twelve months.

Study Results

My work was busy, given the responsibility to supervise the greater half of the whole Government Tuberculosis Service, but certainly not demanding. There were unavoidable administrative conflicts with my immediate superior, but they were minor and just required a little time to smooth out. On the other hand our clinical trials were progressing well. In fact by early 1974 we were getting the preliminary results on the use of non-Rifampicin containing regimens in short-course treatment of new cases. That was a ground breaking study as it established (a) the vital role of Pyrazinamide in short-course regimens, (b) intermittent medication to be as effective as daily if not better, (c) that Pyrazinamide is better tolerated when taken intermittently and (d) that short courses without Rifampicin (a comparatively very expensive new drug) would require a treatment duration of eight to nine months. With these important findings we started to stage the next important trial on short-course regimens containing both Rifampicin and Pyrazinamide.

The East African study was published in the *Lancet* in 1972. Although the results irrefutably concluded that short-course therapy for tuberculosis was a reality, the efficacy of the trial regimens were not good enough for economically developed countries. The next milestone came from the British Thoracic and Tuberculosis Association, which showed that a combination of Rifampicin and Isoniazid for nine months, supplemented with Streptomycin in the first two months, was highly effective. Their results were not published until 1976. As it subsequently turned out our Rifampicin and Pyrazinamide containing regimens not only further shortened the duration to six months with a near 100% efficacy, but also firmly established the superior place of three times weekly medication in the treatment of tuberculosis.

The time had come for us to show the world our contributions to the final success in beating the once feared “white plague” and for me to enter the international arena. I was chosen to present the preliminary results of our short-course treatment study using non-Rifampicin containing regimens. This occurred in July 1974 and I could not resist the chance of taking Vivian back to England for a sweet memory of those happy days in our first year of marriage. We also decided to take Ronald with us. He was then three years old but we had to leave Donald behind under the care of Vivian’s parents. We were there for four weeks and I spent most of the first two weeks in rehearsing my presentation to a

small group of the British Medical Research Council at the Brompton Hospital. Then we travelled to the University of York and presented our findings at the annual conference of the British Thoracic and Tuberculosis Association. We returned to London and I repeated the same presentation at the Twelfth International Congress on Diseases of the Chest, which was held under the auspices of the American College of Chest Diseases. I had been a member of the College's Hong Kong and Macau Chapter since re-joining the Chest and Tuberculosis Services. Needless to say both presentations were well received. As a result I was voted to be the Vice-president of the Chapter for the year 1975-76 and then the President in the following year.

After completing my official duties we still had over a week left and spent most of the time with George, Vivian's brother who was then working as a chartered surveyor in London.

The Luckless Zhiling

While I was climbing the high society ladder and achieving in the international stage, Zhiling had been struggling all along with her basic education. The education at Chung Sing Primary School, which she completed in 1962, failed to give her a firm foundation for a decent secondary education. She was forced to take whatever she could find and managed to finish her high school in the Academic College (敦文書院) in 1968. As her marks were not high enough, she repeated the examination the following year but sadly it was just as poor as in the previous year.

Nevertheless, she persevered and had Matriculation studies in the Wellington High School (威靈頓中學), which, to her credit, resulted in two tertiary education certificates, one, the General Certificate of Education from the University of London and the other, the Matriculation Examination Certificate from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1970 and 1971 respectively. Unfortunately the subjects were all in the ordinary level and inadequate for university entrance. With all these frustrations, and fighting hard alone, she finally gave up the ambition and started to find a job.

Following the footsteps of Zhihua she applied for a place in the Nursing School of the Queen Mary Hospital (QMH) which took in three training classes each year. It was unbelievable that Zhiling had a total of seven attempts during that period before finally being admitted. Her perseverance was admirable but the pain from the repeated disappointments must be tremendous; yet she accepted it quietly and I, for one, was totally unaware of her frustrations and despair. Throughout the trying period to get into nursing from 1969 to 1972, she worked as a locum teacher in a government school. She

finally entered the QMH Nursing School in May 1972 and graduated a registered nurse in 1975. Her great determination was at last rewarded.

Dad Moved to Kowloon Side

In September 1974 Donald joined his brother in the nursery school almost a month short of two years in age. He was still wearing diapers at the time but he settled in fast and was really enjoying the company. At the end of the year Zhiyi moved to the posh area of Yau Yat Chuen (又一村) in the wealthy suburb of Kowloon Tong (九龍塘). It was then that I first realised the electronic business had prospered. As a result Dad sold his Chinese styled flat in Davies Street and took over Zhiyi's in Prince Edward Road. This meant moving from the Island to the Peninsula across the Victoria Harbour and an upgrade in the suburb of residence. Most importantly we were now living much closer to each other and it would make it easier for my parents to see their grandsons.

With these changes Vivian returned to work in early 1975 as a part time mothercraft nurse with Bristol-Myers. For convenience, we bought a second-hand Toyota Corolla from Vivian's uncle. She would take the kids to school in the morning, went to work and picked them up in the afternoon. Gradually we were also able to recapture our former social life. We could now dine out together leaving our sons to the care of their grannies, or we could have barbecue parties at home with our friends. Later on Vivian took up cooking classes with her friends and the spouses naturally had to be guinea pigs. Over the weekends we took the kids shopping mostly in the new Ocean Terminal Complex next to the Star Ferry Pier in Tsim Sha Tsui (尖沙咀) and had morning tea with Vivian's or my parents on alternate weeks.

We failed miserably in our efforts to introduce bilingual capability in our sons. This was mainly our fault as we ourselves spoke Cantonese at home and we seldom had foreign visitors. As usual we put the blame on Yiu Chung and took the kids to another nursery school called St Nicholas in September 1975 on the recommendation of our friends. We had high hopes in the beginning but at the end there was not the slightest difference because the background situation remained unchanged. Other than that we were the happiest parents and would not ask for anything more. The most important of all was that they were healthy, full of energy, good to each other and easy to look after.

A Visit to Zhihua in Sydney

In July the following year Zhiyi and I took our families and Mum for a three-week visit to Sydney. By then Zhihua had made a remarkable recovery and moved to a bigger unit in Beacon Hill. Zhiyi's two daughters, Helen and Anita were in their early teens and her son,

Benson was about ten years of age, while Zhihua's children, Cynthia and Edwin were in the same age as Ronald and Donald respectively. This was the first time they met each other. We stayed in separate service apartments in Manly and were driven around to the usual scenic spots. In between we had the chance of meeting Frank's parents and his elder sister. I found out through Zhihua that one of my medical classmates was practising there. He was married to a nursing sister who worked in the Grantham Hospital at about the same time as Zhihua.

Ronald's Admission into Manly Hospital

In order not to bother Zhihua too much we booked a short trip to Canberra but three days before the journey Ronald developed an acute asthmatic attack in the middle of the night. We had to take him to the Manly Hospital where he had Ventolin inhalation through a nebuliser without success. He was admitted an hour later, put into an oxygen tent and given additional steroid medication. It took a day for the asthma to be under control and several more days for it to be stabilised. We had to withdraw from the tour to Canberra and unbelievably got a full refund. However we were most impressed by the treatment from the hospital not only of Ronald but also to the family. We actually could visit our son at any time or stay for any duration; if our visiting happened to be around mealtime, they even offered one to Donald! This kind of consideration and hospitality was never heard of in Hong Kong. On discharge we were given a supply of the medication to continue with full explanation and a clinical summary to take home. All these were compliments from the Australian Government! The whole family was overwhelmed.

A Huge Decision

Shortly after our return an event of global importance shocked all Chinese over the world. Chairman Mao died on September 6th 1976. Nobody could predict what effects this would have in China or on Hong Kong. We were worried about a possible repeat of the 1967 riot although the emotion of the whole society was calm and subdued. With the impression of our recent tour still clear in our minds, we decided to take the drastic step of migrating to Australia. We started the process in October, had the full medical examination in February the following year and the interview in April. We were granted the permanent residence visa on June 15, 1977, which would expire after May 20, 1978 if we did not land in Australia by then. In other words we had less than twelve months to make a very important decision.

Meanwhile life went on as usual. Ronald completed his kindergarten in June and we had to find him a primary school. This was much more difficult than applying for the Australian residence visa. All parents would fight fiercely to get their children into the so-

called “prestigious schools” which were simply schools charging exorbitant fees and having good examination results. We enrolled him in two of them, one being the Diocesan, and the other La Salle, both Primary Schools. That was the easy part although I had to pay a non-refundable enrolment fee in each case. After that a date would be announced for the child to be interviewed and tested for his knowledge and potentials to a standard set by the school. In either case we did not really know what exactly happened behind the closed doors. Parents were not allowed to be present in the interview as this was part of the assessment process. Two things we were quite sure though; one happened in the interview during which a lot of attention was directed to the family background of the child. The other was that Ronald failed both entrance examinations while the kids of the few friends that we knew got through easily. All of them, we subsequently learned, had intensive private tuitions for several years just to prepare for this occasion.

The failure of Ronald to get a place in a primary one class was not a disappointment but a shock to me. I began to realise how ridiculous a society we were living in at the time and this more or less spurred me to decide leaving Hong Kong for good. Meanwhile I had to find a place for Ronald. For the first and the only occasion in my life I booked an appointment to see the principal of the La Salle Primary School. In the meeting I essentially used my old boy status to beg for my son a second chance. I succeeded but I could not walk away from the humiliation and disgust. I began to search for a suitable job in Australia.

In 1977 Shengduan had managed to obtain a research job in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. On August 20th in the same year he got married but sadly none of the close family members attended his wedding. I was too pre-occupied with my own business to attend. There was a coming conference organised by the International Union against Tuberculosis to be held in Istanbul, Turkey in October. We had preliminary results from our second short-course treatment study and I was the one chosen to present them at the meeting. This controlled clinical trial showed: (1) both daily and thrice weekly combination of Streptomycin, Isoniazid, Pyrazinamide and Rifampicin are equally effective in the initial intensive phase of treatment for new cases of tuberculosis but (2) if the maintenance treatment does not contain Rifampicin, the total duration of medication has to be eight months. This paved the way for the next study of including Rifampicin throughout the six months and in regimens suitable for ambulatory therapy.

Returning home from the Istanbul conference we got another surprise from Zhiyi. She offered to sell us her pretty new and sleek BMW 2000 for just \$12,000, which I reckoned, would be under half the retail price. I knew then that the electronic business must be doing exceptionally well. I had no reason to refuse, as we wanted to replace the Corolla for some time. It was a beauty compared to the solid and squarely Volvo. We only used it

for special occasions and kept the Corolla for Vivian's work. We became a three-car family!

Leaving Hong Kong for Australia

By the end of the year I finally found the position that suited me perfectly. It appeared in the Medical Journal of Australia and was a Chest Physician post at the Townsville General Hospital in Queensland. The position had been vacant for some time and re-advertised. It required the applicant to have a post-graduate second medical qualification and at least five years of experience in respiratory medicine. Furthermore experience in the treatment of tuberculosis was an advantage. I applied promptly and was duly accepted without a prior interview in January 1978. They wanted me to start as soon as possible but I needed at least three months' notice to resign without incurring any pecuniary penalty. I did and the following months were spent mostly in deciding what possessions we had accumulated to be disposed of and what items we wanted to take with us. Whatever our decisions might be, at the end it proved very costly. We had to sell our good stuffs dirt cheap and bought expensive electronic and hi-fi systems. The worst, however, was the choice of which car to take to Australia. We opted for the Volvo as it had greater space to pack my large collection of books and sold the BMW to Vivian's brother.

When I told my parents our decision Mum did not say much and appeared indifferent. Dad was surely unhappy but did not openly oppose. He simply asked whether this was wise, since to him, I had a great future in Hong Kong. I tried to explain to him my frustration with our sons' education and that I wanted to see the world. They were, of course, unconvincing. Ronald had been accepted into an "elite" school and to see the world did not need to emigrate. His younger son had to leave him six years ago because he could not find an ideal job. Now even the other son with an excellent career would not stay close to him. His heart must be broken but he was not showing any sign of it. To make things worse I did not realise all these at the time! Finally at the farewell dinner in Zhiyi's plush house he expressed his displeasure and regret of my departure. I felt sorry but by then there was no turning back. The next day we left by the midnight flight to Brisbane, Queensland. Dad did not go to the Kai Tak Airport (啟德機場) to say goodbye but the rest of the family and a few of my colleagues came. By the time I boarded the plane a sudden feeling of loneliness overtook me and I could not help a sense of deep regret in my heart. I was giving up a secure and well-rewarded career to chase a dream in foreign soil, putting my whole family at risk. I tried very hard to hold back the tears.

A Year in Townsville

We arrived in Brisbane on the morning of May 17th 1978 and stayed there for two nights. I met Dr Ellis Abrahams, the Director of Tuberculosis, Queensland, the next day. He showed me around his headquarter, the Chest Clinic and the Respiratory Medical Unit at the Chermside Hospital. Then in his office he briefed me about the running of the Queensland Tuberculosis Control and my work as a Staff Chest Physician in the Townsville General Hospital. That evening we were invited to dine in his residence and the next day was spent mainly to see as much of Brisbane as possible. We took the domestic flight the following morning and arrived at Townsville in the early afternoon. We were met by Estelle Tucker, the Head Nurse of the Chest Clinic and taken to a pre-booked motel near to the Hospital. After we checked in, she left, saying that she would take me to the Hospital the next morning.

We unpacked our luggage, freshened up and sat down around a small table by the side of a swimming pool. The motel was built on an elevated area and from there we could see quite a large part of the city. The houses were mainly single levelled and sited widely apart by our standard. A few double-storey ones could be seen up the low hills. The most striking feature, however, was that the whole place appeared to be deserted. Coming from the hustle bustle of Hong Kong the calmness was scary. That was the first time I really questioned the wisdom of my decision and would have cried if I were alone. To put on a brave face as a father and husband, I suggested that we took a walk and got ourselves acquainted with the city of Townsville. We headed towards the shore and found a children's park, which was also without another soul. The kids had a good time there especially with the true size locomotive which must at one stage be functional. That evening we had a terrible dinner in a Chinese restaurant we chanced to find at the end of our loitering.

The next day Estelle came on time and took me first to the Chest Clinic, which was situated in the annex of the Hospital. I was introduced to the other staff members, consisting of Denise, the other nurse, Diane, the secretary-typist and the resident. The resident was actually not under the Chest Clinic but the General Medical system and would only look after the respiratory patients admitted by me into the wards. Then there was the Thoracic Surgeon, my counterpart, who would be responsible for training my bronchoscopy skills. In other words I was working alone and by myself all the time at the Clinic, assisted only by the three female staff directly under me. If I ran into any clinical difficulty or problem I had to make remote consultations by telephone to the senior members at the Brisbane Clinic, or wait for the monthly visits by the senior Chest Physician from Cairns, both being hundreds of kilometres away.

I was then led through to the Hospital where I met the Medical Superintendent. Among the usual welcoming remarks and good wishes he stressed the special attire for the medical staff. Because of the tropical weather, the standard uniform consisted of white shirt, white shorts and long white socks. No jacket or ties were required. Afterwards I was taken to the General Office where the usual documentation of my employment with the Hospital Board was completed. In addition I got a cheque for the reimbursement of my moving expenses, chose a health insurance fund for subscription deductions from my salary payments and agreed to start my duties in two days. When I left I was given the Clinic car for private use until I began to work.

There were three priorities for the next two days. The first was to set up an account with a local bank not only to deposit the cash we brought with us but also for the direct credit of my salary payments. Then we needed to register the boys in the local primary school to get them back on their education as quickly as possible. Both were simple and straightforward as we had little choices. The third could be difficult and tedious but in a small city and with the help of our enthusiastic new friends we actually found a decent unit at 1/22 Carmody Street, Hermit Park within two days. It was tidy and not far from the Hospital.

After I started work on the 22nd of May, our life was back to normal although this time Vivian became a full time house manager. My hospital duties took on a new dimension and were much heavier than when I was in Hong Kong. Besides a full week of outpatient consultations, new and old, that I had to make up (the position had been vacant for many months), there were the monthly visits to country hospitals covering Mount Isa to the west, Mackay to the south and an occasional clinic in the Cape York Peninsula at the extreme north. For most of these visits we travelled by car, driving up to 140 to 150 Km per hour in the country roads. For longer trips we took the small four to six seater light planes. It was certainly fun in the beginning because of the new experience but at the end I started to worry about possible accidents and was not enjoying the trips any more.

Vivian was the first one to adapt well to the new situation. She not only looked after our daily life smoothly but also quickly made many new friends. I had worried about the kids at school in the beginning because of their poor spoken English and the oft-told tales of new pupils being bullied. My worry was unnecessary. They picked up the new language, including the Australian accent, quickly and easily. For some reason or another they never had any unhappy incidents at school. They in fact were enjoying themselves. For one thing there was no homework and a lot of sporting activities, most of which such as cricket and Australian football were new to them. For another there was no school on Saturdays.

I was the last to get around the changes. The daily routine was tedious, the work demanding and peer interaction was wanting. The bronchoscopy sessions with the Surgeon were disappointing because of the small number of cases from the Clinic. I was actually granted a week's special training in Brisbane where I was shown how this could be carried out in the outpatient clinic. This looked promising but I was not able to set it up at my own Clinic in Townsville due to all kinds of limitations in resources.

On June 20, we bought our own house at 56 Lonsdale Street Gulliver on a mortgage. For this I had to use up all my savings and closed my government superannuation account. In doing so, I more or less burned my bridge of ever repatriating back to Hong Kong. Soon afterwards our sea luggage arrived followed by the Volvo. Now we had our home and car again. The house itself had less accommodative space than our quarter in the Kowloon Hospital but the block was large. So we had projects to spend our weekends. The first one was to build a brick fence around the property and this took a few weeks. The job was heavy and dirty but it was fun, as we had never done this before. Then we started to grow tomatoes and Chinese vegetables. Our lack in experience was well compensated by the good soil and the excellent climate. Finally six months after our arrival we installed an in-ground vinyl swimming pool and the boys loved it. To accomplish all these in such a short time we had a lot of advice and help from our friends and neighbours.

Our next-door neighbour was a young couple called Gayle and Sydney. I cannot recall their last names. They were simple, honest and hard working Queenslanders. They knocked at our door to introduce themselves when we first moved in. One of the earliest conversations we had was on the severity of tropical storms that could pass the area and brought down houses and trees. Should that happen, it might become necessary for them to take shelter in our house. This was because their house was built of wooden and plastic boards on top of stilts and ours of solid bricks cemented to the ground and had iron roofs. The weather, however, was kind throughout the year when we lived there. They only came to us once during a bad storm as a precaution. There was no serious damage to both houses.

One weekend in November they took us south to Ayr for a break from work. We camped in a picnic site, laid down some crab pots and took a dingy to fish in the river. We had a good time with enough catching for a decent "river" food dinner by the campfire. Following the trip there was a little uneventful scare though. A few days later the boys came up with a rash and I reckoned they got German measles. Then we learned that Gayle was pregnant. We were concerned and urged them to check with their specialist. It took some time before we were told that she was clear. Gayle later gave birth to a healthy baby boy whom they named Ronald but that was after we had left Townsville. Unfortunately we never had the chance to meet their son.

Chinese Friends in Townsville

Naturally we were more inclined to look for friends of Chinese origin in the new land. Among them two stayed more than transient acquaintances. The first one was introduced to us very early on by Estelle as he worked in the biochemistry laboratory of the Hospital. His name was Way Louie and came from Hong Kong too. His wife, Anne, worked as a kind of secretary-receptionist in a private company. Way taught us how to make the traditional Chinese tofu, soy bean custard and drink at home. He could also make the thousand year eggs with chemicals but we did not like the idea. Anne's company boss was at that time involved in inviting the Chinese world champion team of table tennis players to give a demonstration in Townsville. Through her we got complimentary tickets for the whole family and we had the first entertainment since coming to Australia.

Way introduced us to his good friend Jackson Hooman whose forefathers had come to Queensland a long time ago. Hooman was actually the name of his forefather but became the surname of his family because of the Chinese way of putting the last name in front. Jackson was fully educated under the Australian system but he never took the trouble of amending it. He was married to Roslyn and they had three children, Kenneth, Helen and Selena. Kenneth was the oldest, while Selena was about the same age as Donald. Jackson was an engineer and worked in a cement company. His mother, who lived with them, used to run a Chinese restaurant but now worked part time at home in supplying a daily quota of home made spring rolls to shops. Because of the kids we were closer to the Hooman family than to the Louie's.

After we left, we kept contact with both for a few years and learned that Way moved to Sydney to start a small business. Jackson joined the Commonwealth as a medical engineer. He in fact came to Perth in the early 1980's to do a sort of installation at the Hollywood Repatriation Hospital. We have lost contact with both since then.

Other Chinese acquaintances that we made in Townsville included a young couple and a lady, all from Singapore and a private medical practitioner. The couple were Patrick and Anne Tan, both working in the Hospital. Patrick was a medical registrar and Anne, a resident. June, who married an Australian businessman, showed us how to buy cheap and good seafood direct from the local fishermen. We only met the private doctor once, being introduced to him by Way. We did not know where he came from. He must be doing very well there as he lived in a large beautiful house with a small bridge over a brook in the front yard.

Life was leisurely but dull for the adults, having accustomed most of our lives to the hustle bustle of Hong Kong but proved to be pleasant for the boys. For Vivian and me, television was the major form of relaxation. She did manage to get invited to a few social

gatherings such as the Amway houseware parties. As to me, I was trying hard to adapt to the Australian way of medical practice, at least in the first six months. I was in fact under a lot of pressure. I had no one to turn to or to let out the steam. The television series, “The Love Boat”, silly and superficial as it might be, the always happy endings gave me the much needed relief and might have saved me from going into depression.

Since this was the first-ever hot Christmas we had, we took advantage of the break and had a short holiday, driving up north along the Pacific Highway to Cairns. We took the Volvo and stayed at motels along the way. The experience was new and the scenery totally different from what we had in Hong Kong. The land was open, the landscape wild and most places looked deserted. Swimming pools were present in every motel but we did not make much use of them. We spent most of the time wandering around or looking for Chinese restaurants. For reasons unclear to me, there was no photographic record on this trip. Either I did not bring along the camera or I did not take any pictures.

CHAPTER VI: FIFTH DECADE 1979-1988

Moving to Perth

In 1977 when I was still in Hong Kong and before I got the Townsville position, I was prompted by Dr HS Chen (陳協星), the first physician with a MRCP degree to join the Hong Kong Tuberculosis Service, who had migrated to Perth several years earlier, about an upcoming vacancy at the Perth Chest Clinic. I was asked to get ready but did not receive any further news. On my return from the short Christmas break I got a message from him. He explained that the previous position was taken by a Dr Joseph T. Cassidy with a much better background and qualifications. He did not ask me to apply as he felt that I stood no chance. However another vacancy had come up from the retirement of a senior physician and was being advertised in the Australian Medical Journal. I wasted no time to confirm this and started to act at once. My curriculum vitae were always handy and needed only a little updating, but I had to obtain two referees for my character and professional competency. Before I was assured of the new job it would be imprudent to let the Hospital know of my intention. Finally I decided to ask Dr Chen and my old boss in Hong Kong for the favour. Both accepted willingly and the application was complete.

I received the reply within a month from the Chairman of the Public Service Board in Perth informing me of my selection for the appointment without a prior personal interview. The exact position was: chest physician, level 3 under the Professional Division of the Chest and Tuberculosis Services in the Public Health Department, with a starting salary of \$28,636 per annum. There would be a probationary period of six months and compulsory requirements of passing medical and chest x-ray examinations as well as financial provision for retirement by way of superannuation or life assurance. Other conditions included the reimbursement of the travel cost by rail for the whole family from Townsville to Perth. I would also be granted up to an amount of \$1,300 for transporting essential personal effects to Western Australia if I entered into an agreement to stay on the job continuously for three years. I accepted the conditions most willingly and the matter was settled in late February 1979.

The following three months were packed with planning, decisions and actions, some of which were not straightforward and a few heart breaking. The most pressing action to take was to resign my job, as there was just enough time for serving the notice without incurring any financial penalty. I cannot recall exactly what I said but I got through Dr Abrahams without any difficulty during his usual visit to the Clinic. To inform the Hospital was a matter of courtesy and formality since I was actually employed by the Queensland Tuberculosis Control. My professional duties would officially cease on 1 June 1979. The difficult part was to tell my own staff at the Clinic and I kept postponing

this until the end of March. I must have fumbled and expressed myself badly when I did. Naturally none of them were happy in spite of putting up smiling faces and congratulating me. They must feel being betrayed and failed to understand my personal reasons to make the move. Embarrassing the occasion might be, I was relieved at the removal of the last heavy burden from my shoulders.

Although the job in Townsville had provided me with the necessary requirement to migrate, I was never able to settle down for many reasons. The most important was the feeling of isolation and loneliness. I was brought up in a big city with numerous interactive functions both socially and academically. Regular dine outs and clinical meetings were carried out all the year around in addition to the usual and many seasonal festivals and celebrations. Even at work case discussions and referrals were simple and readily available with little delay. Then I also had a team of supportive junior doctors who were both friends and colleagues. Secondly I realised that my background training was in fact unsuitable for this particular position. There were too many situations in the daily clinics, where general medical practice instead of special knowledge in chest diseases was more appropriate. On a number of occasions I had to call the registrar to help. Thirdly at the time the James Cook University in Townsville was noted only for the study of marine biology, which I considered to be too restrictive for my sons in choosing their careers. Perhaps I was looking too far ahead but I could not take any chances when our sons' education was one of my two prime reasons for leaving Hong Kong.

After the difficult decision was made, we had just two months to prepare for the second big move in fifteen months. We firstly decided to take the chance to see a little more of Australia. So the plan was to drive from Townsville along the eastern and then the southern coast to Port Pirie in South Australia. From there we would board the Indian Pacific train with our car across the Nullarbor to Perth. We would visit as many towns and cities as time allowed. To do that and to save money, we had to bring with us more personal effects. The advice from our good neighbours was to fit a trailer to the car. So we bought a box trailer and fitted a tow bar to the Volvo which also underwent a full service to make sure that it was road worthy for the long journey. Then came the tricky part; driving a car with a trailer is quite different from driving a car alone, particularly in parking and reversing. It took me a few weeks of practice to get used to the basic manoeuvres.

Next on the agenda was to engage interstate removal companies for quotes, arrangements, packing and dates. This wasn't too bad with the previous experience still fresh in our memories and we had kept some of the packing boxes and tools in the garden shed. Most of the heavy furniture, such as refrigerator, television and beds were rented. Other items like chairs, breakfast table and the washing machine had to be given

away. We were still too new to know about garage sales and even if we did, I doubt whether we had the time and the patience to do it.

The house was, of course, a big issue. We could not afford to keep it as a rental property and selling it within a year invariably incurred a big loss. The installation of the swimming pool added another disadvantage for a quick sale. At last we sought advice from the same agent who sold it to us in the first place. Our fears were confirmed. We were unwilling to lose that much money. So at the end, we arrived at a compromise; we kept the price the same as we bought it but without a time limit. This actually made little difference, as we had no way to find another local agent from Perth. It was sold three months later and we lost over three thousand dollars due mainly to the money we had put on the pool and the brick fence. In the mean time we needed to get some one to look after the pool. Once again Sydney and Gayle offered to help voluntarily not only to maintain the pool but also to keep a watch over our house. The sole condition they asked for was to be allowed to use the pool.

While the house was important to our financial state, the boys' education was our greatest concern. The interruption was unavoidable but it was a common occurrence in Australia. All schools were well prepared for them and our worries unnecessary. Within a short time of notice, a summary report of the boys' performance in the school was ready together with instructions after arrival at Perth. They were even given a self-study timetable to complete the year's curriculum. In addition both had a dental check. Donald was fine in the examination but Ronald had a problem. His lower jaw was too small for the teeth. A mould was made and we were asked to take it to an orthodontist for follow up. Subsequently he had a few teeth extracted and a brace fitted for a few years.

With the important matters having been attended to, the rest were trivial. We needed some ready cash but could continue to use our personal cheques and credit cards for the journey. We did not have to transfer the bank account until we settled in Perth. The farewell party at the Chest Clinic was more a courtesy than a good wish from the staff. The awkward part was that everyone had to put on a happy face and could not tell each other what we really felt in our hearts. The final curtain was drawn when my last pay was directly credited into my bank account and I was handed a cheque for the refund of my year's superannuation contributions.

The Long Journey to Perth

We stayed in the empty house for a few nights, taking time to say goodbye to our friends. Then on the morning of June 5 after a long look at our home we set off south bound onto the Pacific Highway. The weather was good; we drove leisurely and had breaks in most towns and cities along the way. Our first night was spent in a motel in Mackay and

the next in Rockhampton where we crossed the Tropic of Capricorn the following morning. There was an Information Centre and a Spire established for this location. We even got a kind of certification with the inscriptions as follows:

KNOW ALL MEN THAT _____ on the _____ day
of _____

Did join that Select Band of Travellers who, having

CROSSED

Into or out of these Tropic Climes, Realm of Waving Palm, Unfailing Sun and Shining Strand, Timeless Land of Grazing Herd and Secret Riches in the Earth, Silent World of Crab and Coral in the Sea, Dominion of the Dancing Brolga and Rainforest Giant and Home of Warmhearted People where the Cane Grows Tall and the Cooling Trade Winds Ever Blow, have thus looked at one and the same time on Territories North and South of

THE TROPIC OF CAPRICORN

In Witness Whereof

(Signed)

H.R. Gardner, Chairman,

Rockhampton & District Regional Research & Promotion Bureau

We arrived at Brisbane on 7 June and stayed there for two nights as tourists. We did not pay a visit to Dr Abrahams, as I did not feel comfortable talking to him again. The next morning we entered New South Wales and drove straight to the Ocean Shores Estate in Brunswick Heads. Since I signed up in 1972 to buy a block of land here, this was the first and the last time we ever had a good look at it. As a matter of fact it was a really nice small piece of land next to the Golf Course and I could see a number of houses scattered in different parts of the Estate. I was sure that its value must have appreciated during these years. For once my blind investment might not end in a loss.

It was stormy and chilly when we reached Coffs Harbour late in the evening. The weather certainly assured us that the Australian winter we missed in Queensland had arrived. Being a popular tourist resort, the town was impressive with beautiful night views. The motel we booked was called Arosa and the best so far through the early part of our long

journey. We had a seafood dinner that was excellent too but as expected, everything was more expensive. The weather did not get better the next morning; so we had a late start. It was still overcast and already dark when we got to Newcastle. We did not think it advisable to carry on and made an unscheduled stop for the night.

The weather was fine when we reached Sydney and stayed good for the six nights of our transit. We spent most of the time with Zhihua and her family, depending mainly on Frank's driving us around for sight seeing. We did not make any attempt to meet my classmate again, as I found out that he was then practising acupuncture and not surgery. I was told also that he was doing well and had moved to a posh suburb unknown to my sister. We took the opportunity and drove on June 16, to Canberra, which we missed three years ago because of Ronald's sudden spell of acute asthma.

We continued the journey after one night's stay in Canberra and arrived in Melbourne on the 17th of June. Here we had a tight schedule besides the usual sight seeing. I caught up with many unexpected medical colleagues from Hong Kong, both junior and senior to me. Two of them were actually working in the University Medical Unit at the Queen Mary Hospital when I joined the Unit in 1967. One was a medical officer and went to UK for his membership examination leaving his post to me. The other was a clinical assistant under the University and got a scholarship to Australia. Unfortunately he failed his examinations and stayed behind to work in Melbourne. When I visited him, he was not home and we were given a rather unfriendly meeting with his wife. We did not try again as we learned later that my friend had retired from medical practice after marrying a wealthy widow. It was then I realised that his house was actually more like a mansion and decorated with expensive Chinese furniture and antiques.

Sight seeing in Melbourne was otherwise exclusively through Vivian's cousin, Angela Zhu, and Edwin Peng. I had met Angela and her husband, Francis in 1972 when I came here to register my medical qualifications and Edwin was the Christian name of Shengqiang whose father provided me with lodging when I first arrived in Hong Kong in 1950. Angela's son, Robert was about the same age as Ronald and Edwin had a son, Vincent and a daughter Winnie, both of an older age. Edwin was interested in drama and had taken part in many stage plays since high school. He had been working in radio stations in Hong Kong, including the Voice of America (Asia) after graduated from the University. He migrated to Australia shortly after his father's death and was then in charge of the Chinese section in an ethnic radio station in Melbourne. He was well known and respected by the local Cantonese community. In 1996 he took part in an Australian production of an acclaimed bilingual movie called "Floating Life (浮生)".

We left Melbourne for Adelaide on June 22 and stayed there for two nights. We then drove to Port Pirie, delivered the car with the trailer to the Indian Pacific Rail and

boarded the train. The trip took two full days and nights, stopping sparingly in a few stations. We had a cabin with four single bunk beds in two tiers and a wash area. It was rather cramped up but comfortable. Although the greater part of the journey was through the Nullarbor Plain, we did not feel bored, as this was the first time we ever travelled for such a long distance in a sleeper train. Then there was always the convenience of the dining car when we needed a drink or a snack or the reading room when we wanted to catch up with the news.

Arrival at Perth

We arrived at the Perth terminal in the morning of June 26 1979. It was drizzling and cold. Dr Chen was waiting on the platform and told us that he had booked a room for us in the King's Hotel just a short walk from the back of the Perth Chest Clinic. He waited until we got our car and went back to work after briefly telling me how to get to the hotel. We got there easily but there was no parking for the trailer and I had to move it later to a locked up space in the back yard of the Clinic. After freshening up and a short rest Dr Chen took us to a nearby Chinese restaurant for lunch. We spent the afternoon walking around the city to familiarise ourselves with the new environment. That evening we were invited by Dr Chen to have dinner at his house in South Perth and introduced us to his family. Frances, his wife, was also a nurse from Queen Mary Hospital; Simon, the son and Katherine, the daughter were high school students. The whole family were devoted Christians; so logically, one of the discussion topics was to invite us to attend their regular bible reading. Although we fully supported their religious faith, my previous experience with the Christian bible sessions in the university scared me because of the long duration and their persistence in attempting to convert the non-believers. Something good, however, did come out from our conversations.

A couple from Hong Kong had come to Perth recently to take up a course of postgraduate study. The husband was a young doctor aiming to obtain a diploma with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the wife was studying for chartered accountant in the University of Western Australia. They knew that we were coming to reside and would like to meet us. They were busy during the weekdays and so the time was fixed for the coming Friday evening. We were given their address with simple instructions on how to get there.

The next morning I went to the Clinic for the usual briefing and paper work mainly with the Chief Clerk. I was given the job description, signed various documents, completed the personal information sheet and decided on pay instructions. One new arrangement was that it was compulsory to join the Civil Services Association with a certain percentage of my pay deducted as subscription fees. The date to start my duties was set for Monday July 2, 1979. After the formality was done, I returned to the Hotel and we

went to a local bank office to have our Queensland account transferred over. The next major matter for attention was getting the boys back to school. Since private schools were not in our minds, the choice of good public primary schools was a simple matter by general consensus from people with whom we had discussions on the subject. Essentially it depended on which suburb we would like to take up residence. Since we were new to Perth, we had no way of knowing where to choose at that stage. However one thing I was sure and that was my work duties would be divided in two places, the Chest Clinic in the city and the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in Nedlands. Based on this we enrolled our boys in the Hollywood Primary School in Monash Avenue, Nedlands, telling the school that we intended to live in the area. The school was not only near to the Hospital but also had a good High School of the same name just north of it.

We met Philip and Teresa Tang (湯), the young couple from Hong Kong on the evening of June 29 in their apartment in Wembley and were surprised by the presence of three more young men also from Hong Kong. They were students in the University of Western Australia; Andrew Kuang (廣) was studying medicine, and Joseph Pan (潘) and Michael Lu (呂) accounting. We got acquainted very quickly and were talking like old friends in no time, naturally in Cantonese. Soon they learned that we were looking for transient accommodation before searching for a permanent residence. It so happened that there was a vacant unit for rent just next door to that of the Tangs. It was a townhouse of two storeys with a sitting-dining area and a kitchen on the ground floor and two bedrooms and a toilet/bathroom upstairs. It was partly furnished; we needed only a refrigerator and a table for meals and the boys' studies. Each unit had a carport and there were plenty of visitors' parking spaces. It suited us well. We actually needed to buy a simple foldable table and four chairs as the young men who rented a house in Dalkeith, had a functioning fridge to spare. With my trailer and the help of the three willing youngsters, moving it to Wembley was really effortless to us. We went back the next morning to meet the agent, inspected the unit and signed the rental contract.

We moved into Unit 35/71 Herdsman Parade Wembley at the weekend.

The Perth Chest Clinic

“It was a rainy mid-winter morning in 1979. I can never forget the moment when I first set foot inside the Perth Chest Clinic. Outside, the building was unremarkable apart from the huge Moreton Bay fig tree across the road, but once in the entry hall the very high ceiling with its exposed jarrah roof was majestically imposing. The gas heaters hanging aloft were burning and their flames shimmering with warmth, affection and tranquillity that one only expects from an open fire at home. I was mesmerised and the nostalgia has since kept my passion for the place.” That was the opening paragraph of what I wrote in

May 1998 about my first encounter with the Clinic when we celebrated its Golden Jubilee. The description referred to my first impression on the morning of June 27, 1979 when I reported my arrival to the Clinic.

The Perth Chest Clinic was opened on May 7, 1948 to centralise the control of tuberculosis for the State of Western Australia. By the time I took up employment, the battle against the disease had been won. The service was renamed the Chest and Tuberculosis Services by the gradual inclusion of other chest diseases, concentrating mainly on their social, health and preventive aspects. At that moment there were (i) the mines section, consisting of the radiographic screening of mine and asbestos workers and the Pneumoconiosis Board, (ii) the asthma supervisory service, involving spirometry testing, assistance in the correct technique and use of medications and skin allergy tests and (iii) stop smoking sessions. Besides, each chest physician had a weekly outpatient session at the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital under the Respiratory Medical Department in addition to the direct care of tuberculosis patients admitted by him or her.

Family Life in Peaceful Perth

We all settled smoothly and quickly into the new city. As usual the boys had no trouble whatsoever in blending into their school. Life was getting more close to our old Hong Kong style for Vivian as we now had the Tangs and friends as our “neighbours”. For me the work at the Clinic and the Hospital was not much different from what I did in the Hong Kong Tuberculosis and Chest Services. Most importantly there were many senior physicians around the place who could help and for difficult cases referrals were just a letter or a telephone call away. The only item left in our agenda was to search for a suitable place we could call home.

In the beginning we joined the crowd to visit the new suburbs with their much cheaper and very attractive new houses with their modern designs and accessories; they formed most of our weekend activities in the first few months. Later we added gardening and house plant centres as well as shopping for sea foods particularly abalone, the price of which was ridiculously cheap in the beginning but unfortunately increased rapidly since we arrived. Exploring the city and its surroundings was natural and the first one to impress us was the King’s Park and later Lake Monger.

More and more Hong Kong Chinese were introduced into our living circle through a sort of chain reaction. Through Dr Chen again we were invited to dinner by a couple in Dalkeith. The husband, Felix Lu (陸孟為), was a well-known and established general practitioner in Hong Kong. His wife, May, was a devoted catholic, kind and gentle; several of the young undergraduate and postgraduate students that we had met, or were about to meet, were her Godchildren. They had brought with them their youngest son and

daughter, Michael and Jane. Both were studying in private high schools in Perth. Then through this family we gradually came to know Carol, a lawyer and her husband, George Huang (黃), a neurosurgeon, Stephen He (何), a geriatrician and his family, and a little later, KK He (何), a cardiovascular surgeon and Winnie, his wife. Two more university students were added to this Hong Kong group list within a pretty short period of time. They were Simon Cheng (程) and Alfreda.

The most influential and lasting friend introduced to us was Bernard Deng Yaoqi (鄧耀其) who had graduated from the University of Western Australia with a PhD in Biochemistry but worked mainly in property investment and share trading. May made the arrangement for us to meet him after learning that we were looking for a house. It was Bernard who enlightened us about the property market. The most important point he made was that the new suburbs looked attractive and cheap but their appreciation in value over time was generally much less satisfactory. He advised us to search in the established areas.

Buying our First House in Perth

On September 7, we got the news that our Townsville house was finally sold for the same price we bought it. Hence we lost all the money we put in to build the fence and the swimming pool. With the money we quickly made an offer for a house in 73 Oceanic Drive, City Beach. We thought at the time this was some sort of a compromise between a new and an established suburb where even run down houses were more expensive. When Teresa learned that we had made an offer for an old house without any structural check, she asked her building engineer friend to help. However, when we brought him to the house, the owner refused our inspection, saying that the contract had been signed. Bernard was consulted and he also agreed that there was no legal right in our demand. It appeared that the purchase was set unless we forfeited the 10% deposit.

A few days later we unexpectedly got the reply from our bank, refusing the mortgage at the previously agreed interest rate because of our financial situation. Was my lucky star looking after me again? I notified in writing the real estate agent of the development, adding that we were unable to proceed with the purchase, as we could not financially afford a higher interest rate for the loan. The owner rejected this out right; so we had to face it in the hard way. Through our only lawyer friend, Carol, we employed her firm Stone James Stephen Jaques to act for us. It only took a letter from the lawyers and the matter was settled. We got all the deposit back, had the contract nullified and I learned the first lesson in real estates. Later Bernard advised us to look for houses in the Western suburbs, his reason being that, in his experience, the houses in these areas had been

appreciating in value by about twofold every five years! However, we never achieved anything near enough in our subsequent dealings. Time must have changed.

This last event dampened our enthusiasm in house hunting for a while but it gave us more time to get used to the new environment and friends. Social activities were never lacking at the weekends and we celebrated Donald's seventh birthday in the Wembley apartment with our young Chinese friends and students. Some time later our household effects from Townsville arrived, which we had to keep on hold in the transport company's storehouse on a short-term basis. This renewed and hastened our search for our home. There was little success as the acceptable ones were invariably outside our budget and those we could afford, either too small (usually apartments, duplex and town houses), run down or both. Finally one morning in November, Vivian called me at the Clinic. This was unusual and she was excited. She just found a newly advertised house for sale in Nedlands, the asking price of which could be within our reach. In our short experience houses like that were sold very quickly in the area. So I requested a long lunch break from work and Vivian picked me up on the way to inspect the house.

The house of 12 Martin Avenue in Nedlands was situated about midway between the Stirling Highway on the south and the Karrakatta Cemetery on the north. The block of land was a quarter of an acre in size and the house itself occupied less than a fifth of the land. It was an old style solid brick building with a good-sized enclosure ("sleep-out") added at the back. It had high ceilings and two lead light glass panelled doors to the formal lounge. To complete the residence there were a kitchen that could fit in a small meal table for four, a separate formal dining room and three more rooms on the southern side, but one had doors opening into the second bedroom and the "sleep-out. None had built-in wardrobes. The carport was next to the northern wall. The front yard had small patches of roses and the large back yard two huge evergreen subtropical trees that bore small olive-like fruits in summer and a few tall gum trees. A small shed built of asbestos cement sheets in wooden frames and a corrugated metal roof was sited at the south-eastern back corner of the block. The large block was ideal for the growing boys and there were enough rooms for a comfortable living, one master bed-room of generous size for Vivian and me, the "sleep-out" for the boys and the third room in between as a study. Best of all it was within walking distance to the Hollywood Primary School. The whole setting suited us perfectly apart from the somewhat higher price than we had prepared to pay.

The sales representative, Greg Rosen, was a very nice gentleman. After learning our situation and interest to buy the house, he helped us to make a realistic offer subject to obtaining a loan from the bank. In this way, if the vendor accepted the offer, we would have enough time to arrange the finance with a deposit. That was what we did. Back to the Clinic naturally the matter would be part of the afternoon teatime conversation. It so

happened that Charlie Lim, another chest physician from Malaysia, was a good friend of the manager in the Nedlands branch of the National Australia Bank. He willingly arranged an appointment for me in the next day and the matter was settled. A month later we had our first home in Perth in time for our second hot Christmas. There was of course the usual hard labour of moving in, including getting the old stuff from the storage and purchasing some new furniture and white goods. The Christmas celebration was a quiet one and so was my forty-first birthday, as most of our Chinese friends returned to Hong Kong for the occasion.

After settling down in our new home, we took the first available chance to slip out and watch a late night movie in the Innaloo Drive-in venue, perhaps trying to recapture the sweet old times of our dating days. It did not turn out too well as the movie was lousy and later we learned that leaving young kids home alone is an offence in Australia although we knew that they were good sleepers at night. Nevertheless we did have a narrow escape.

Things returned to the usual after the long summer holidays for the boys. At first Vivian drove me to the Clinic that started at 8.15 am in the morning and then took the boys to their school on the way back. Soon the boys preferred walking with their schoolmates, many of whom lived around the area and several even in the same street. A few months later we had to buy them each a bicycle, not only for attending school but also for some after school activities with their friends. For the various and many school activities, however, we still used the car as they took place mostly outside my working hours.

Ronald had been seen by a local orthodontist and waiting for the right time to fit the brace, following which he had regular check ups for adjustments. He then gave us another surprise on his eyesight. This was noticed first by his teacher and the ophthalmologist confirmed that he had short-sightedness. We could hardly believe this; he was only eight years old and never an enthusiastic reader of books but the eye specialist said it could be congenital. So he started wearing glasses for his lessons.

In my high school days I used to admire friends who could play the piano or violin. By the time I could afford to have such expensive instruments I had long passed the learning period. So I was eager to avail my kids the opportunity irrespective whether they had the talent in or a desire to learn music. With Vivian's agreement we sent them to a qualified teacher nearby for private piano lessons, followed by the purchase of a three-crown Ronish upright piano in July 1980.

I took my first annual leave of two weeks in August and drove down south to Esperance. On the way we visited as many country towns as we planned. We had heard a lot of horrible stories on how easy traffic accidents occurred in country roads. It is difficult to

judge the speed when driving in a long straight stretch; concentration could be impaired after several hours of continuous driving or when one is tired or simply bored. So we took frequent stops to relax and refresh. The trip was pleasant and the experience new to all of us. It is hard to believe that we did not repeat the journey ever again together.

“Two Is Enough”

Happy and content with our two sons, we felt that further children were not desirable especially because of the severe morning sickness that Vivian had when carrying Donald. Wasn't the motto of the Hong Kong Family Planning “Two is enough”? It was an easy and logical decision at the time and the process just as straightforward. A consultation with Mr S.O. Lim, a gynaecologist, a few simple explanations and a short waiting period were all it took. Three weeks later Vivian had the bilateral endoscopic tubal “block”, using gold clips. She was discharged the same day. The idea of using metal clips instead of ligation was that, in case we changed our mind there might be a chance the process could be reverted. We never did until twenty-one years later when we deeply regretted the decision.

Life was quiet and peaceful as we watched the boys enjoyed their youth and their schoolwork. Both did well academically; Ronald was at the top of his class and given special mathematics assignments. Most important of all they were active and healthy apart from an isolated episode of acute leg pain from Donald in the middle of the night, necessitating admission into the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. No cause was found and the pain did not recur. It was taken to be “growing pain” which, we were told, was not uncommon.

During this time we recaptured our previous interests in growing edible plants. There was plenty of land but it required hard labour to turn it into cultivatable soil. We managed to clear a small patch in the back garden and succeeded in growing snow peas and corn in the first crop. We later built a small pond next to it and a brick barbecue behind the carport. Vivian made tofu a few times from what we learned in Townsville and they were good. Such genuine and original Chinese tofu was at the time not available in Chinese grocery shops in Perth. Then through correspondence with my father we also succeeded in making cured pork strips. At the time butchers discarded animal and fowl offal from sale; so we collected some of them such as chicken legs for food and duck gizzards to be salted and sun dried. The latter is an essential component of watercress soup.

On the 4th of August 1981 we became Australian citizens and declared our allegiance at the Nedlands City Council house.

Visits from the In-laws and Zhiling

For whatever reasons Dad did not go to Shengduan's wedding in 1977, he might have regretted the decision. So in the spring of 1981, about 6 months after the birth of his first granddaughter, he finally yielded to Zhiyi's persuasion, who wanted her son, Benson, to study overseas. The party consisted of my parents, Zhiling, Zhiyi and Benson. Dad brought with him Shengduan's alias, Shouyi (壽頤) from marriage, in a frame and belatedly. I felt that the short stay had lessened his dislike of foreign places.

Therefore in September the same year, with short notice, my parents, accompanied by Zhiling, visited us in Perth. I was surprised to say the least but welcomed them heartily. We took them around the city and the nearby Bamboo Chinese Restaurant. In order to attract Dad's interests we also drove them to industrial areas and enquired about construction materials and seafood supplies especially shark's fins, unfortunately with no results. In another day we visited the Mundaring Weir and had a pleasant walk around the dam. For the rest of the time when I was working, I left him with the video of "World at War" from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) to watch. Despite all our efforts, Dad was unmoved in his determination to stay put in Hong Kong. In retrospect I have to totally agree with his decision, even just for his age. Hong Kong had been his home and livelihood for most of the time since he was 15 years of age. After a week they left for Sydney to visit Zhihua.

A few months later and in the summer of the same year, Vivian's parents followed suit from Canada. They had migrated to join their son, George in Vancouver. As usual we drove them around to as many different places as possible within a day's time and for the short period of their stay. That included a boat ride in the Yanchep National Park, which was also our first.

Zhiling Had Her Own Plan

Keeping very much to herself, Zhiling had started arrangements to emigrate. After completing the nursing course in QMH, she was transferred to the newly opened Princess Margaret Hospital in Kowloon in 1975, and she had her Midwifery training at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in 1976/77. In the same year she applied for Australian residentship with me as her guarantor, which was considered insufficient by the Embassy. Her application was suspended until she could find work in Australia. So she accompanied Dad and Mum for their visits. Somehow her luck changed as she found an advertised nursing position in the Swan District Hospital. She hastily applied and got an interview during her stay. To her surprise she was later notified that she had been accepted and thus fulfilled all the requirements. By then she had left Perth for Sydney. On

her return home she completed yet another nursing course at the Intensive Care Unit in QMH from December 1981 to September 1982 before emigrating to Sydney soon after.

A New Financial Commitment

Settling contently in a place was one thing but looking after the financial future of the family was another. My character and indeed Vivian's were unsuitable for private practices, without which my income would always be limited and certainly unable to face emergency situations. I had tried many times to explore other avenues but all had failed probably from ignorance more than a lack of luck. Still this could not be used as an excuse or to give up. Our new friend, Bernard Deng was a firm believer in properties and in fact had been in the process of developing an estate of housing complexes in Kardinya. By November 1981, the draft was ready and prospective buyers were sought for the 25 units. May had bought one and persuaded us to join the party. Knowing that we could not afford that amount of spare cash, she even offered me an interest-free loan when the payment was due. At the moment I only needed to put in a deposit plus legal fees for drawing up the contract, totalling around \$4,600. I signed up for a two bedroom two-storey unit and waited for the building to complete. The first instalment was on April 21st, 1982 and as promised, May helped with \$11,000 of the total of \$14,000 required.

In May the following year, Zhiyi, Xiehe and Anita visited us and stayed in a holiday apartment in Cottesloe near to the ocean. Helen, their elder daughter, was studying in Sydney and their son, Benson, had just been accepted by a high school in Kingston, Canada as a paid student. Since it had passed the high season, the holiday unit was good value for money. I took it as some sort of a follow up event from Dad's visit. So we were greatly surprised when she bought a house in the first and only open inspection at 25 Bedford Street very near to ours. It was a cash offer with settlement at one month, which would give her enough time to set up a bank account in Perth for fund transfer through telex on their return to Hong Kong. The house would be rented out under the same real estate agent. I was required only to check her bank statements. I realised then that Tai Wah was prospering and she was loaded.

The Kardinya estate was completed in November and the final payment for the purchase of my Unit 7 was due. I took out a mortgage of \$25,000 with a finance broker at a hefty interest rate of 18.5% for two years. My monthly interest only repayment was \$364.58. I was assured that all the interests were tax deductible. The events subsequent to Zhiyi's visit included not only the unexpected purchase of a house with regular rental income but also an additional bank account with much more money than mine, which, I learned, had to pay a withholding tax of 15% on earnings (i.e. accrued bank interests). That gave me an idea of borrowing \$11,000 from her to repay May in total; I would then paid into my sister's account the equivalent amount in twelve instalments plus a small interest. The tax

ruling was such that the interests earned by a non-resident from an Australian resident for a qualified purpose such as investments, were exempt from withholding tax. The move was a saving to Zhiyi and made me feel better since May insistently refused to accept any interests from me on the loan.

The Revival of Vivian's Nursing Career

Vivian could not work as a nurse in Western Australia as the local Nursing Board did not accept the Hong Kong diploma. Until then she was busy looking after two young kids. With them growing fast and getting more and more independent she was craving to work again and the opportunity finally arrived.

It was just a few weeks after Zhiyi and her family returned home, when the Health Department of Western Australia allowed nurses with certain up to then unrecognised qualifications to become registrable with the Nursing Board, provided that they underwent a three-month refresher course. The catch though was that the course took place in the Swan District Hospital in Middle Swan and it would take at least 30 minutes' drive one way from Nedlands. However considering all aspects we had no reason to ignore this good fortune. So Vivian revived her career and started on the course on June 18th 1982. She was essentially paid the starting salary of a registered nurse to refresh her skills and knowledge. Travel to work was easily solved. The boys went to school early on their bicycles and stayed on for another hour or so after school finished when one of us would be home. Their lunch was packed the night before. For afternoon shifts, Vivian drove me to the Clinic at 8.00 am and took the car to work. I got a lift home from the Clinic staff. For morning shifts, Vivian took the car and I the bus to work; when she finished in the afternoon she picked me up on the way home. This lasted until September 9th, 1982. She got the registration but there was no available position to follow on.

To pass time she took up a part time waitress job in the Bamboo Chinese Restaurant, which was situated in Stirling Highway about 15 minutes' walk from the house. The good thing about this job was that she could choose working around the busy lunch hours when the boys were at school. In time she managed to take up longer hours and helped with putting orders to various supply stores and companies. The pay was meagre, only eight dollars an hour, but nevertheless a continuing income to her. This lasted for no more than six months when a better opportunity arose.

Dad's Eightieth Birthday

On the 9th of January 1983 it would be Dad's eightieth birthday by the Chinese lunar calendar and a huge occasion to the whole family. We must all return to join in the celebration irrespective of the high cost. I had maintained my medical registration with

the Hong Kong Medical Board since moving to Australia and therefore had no trouble to practise if I could find a job. A little enquiry and a letter of application were all it needed to book me a locum for two weeks in Anderson and Partners, a group practice servicing employees of big private companies and medical screening of prospective emigrants. That was a big relief as the pay covered a large portion of our airfares.

In preparation I took four weeks of my accumulated annual leaves, arranged my locum duties for the first two weeks and left the rest for the reunion including the main event. As to our birthday present other than the card, we ordered a box of frozen lobster tails from the West Perth Fish Market to be collected in time for our departure flight. That proved to be a clever choice, as Australian lobster was a rare commodity and everyone loved them.

The celebration was standard Chinese style stressing mainly on attendance and food. One great thing to us was the chance to taste one more time Dad's unique shark fin soup with crab roe, unaware that this turned out to be the last. This was served a few days before the main event that was held in the Xintongle Restaurant (新同樂魚翅酒家) {Appendix I⁹} in the Harbour City in Tsimshatsui. All guests attending were presented with a pair of ivory chopsticks carved with my father's name in red paint. The next day we gathered in Zhiyi's relatively new and posh semi-detached town house in Flamingo Gardens, Fei Ngor Shan (飛鵝山花園). Naturally Xiehe also showed us their Tai Wah Electronic Trading Company located in Kwai Chung (葵涌) in the New Territories. They had succeeded above all expectations and that was Hong Kong in those days. With that we headed home on January 12, 1983 to our quiet and peaceful Perth life.

To me the best result of the return was I sensed a sort of understanding from Dad on my leaving Hong Kong. Of course this could simply be the effect of time, but at least he was not showing any bitterness when the matter was brought up. Or could my locum job mislead him to think that I was considering coming back to work? After all the pay was definitely superior to that of my permanent position in Perth. I could not come to a conclusion with my mind tossing back and forth throughout the return flight. At the end I did not think it really mattered as long as my action had been forgiven. However, I reckoned the major reason was likely to be the preliminary dialogue between Britain and Mainland China in September 1982, relating to the shameful Convention of Nanking (1896) and the terms on the repatriation of Hong Kong on July 1, 1997.

Our Professional Careers in Perth

About four months after we returned home, we were persuaded by our Chinese friends to purchase a quarter share of a rental unit in 48 Austin Street, Shenton Park under Vivian's

name. The idea was again for reducing her income tax. The price of the whole property was \$32000, which was mortgaged with a monthly interest only repayment of \$426.67 for 18 months, beginning on March 15, 1983. The rent collected to the end of the financial year would be \$1050. After adding all the expenses associated with the purchase and ownership there was a net loss of \$400 when the tax return was filed. In the following year the loss increased to \$814 but when the unit was sold in August 1985 the price had gone up to \$58000! A small tax-free profit of about \$5000 was made in 18 months with little effort. That was the first impressive investment return we had. Wasn't here another good lesson on investment to learn?

In May Vivian got a nursing job in the Mount Henry Geriatric Hospital through advertisement in the paper. It was a daytime position but with morning and evening shifts. It turned out that there were other nurses from Hong Kong working there as well. After a while we realised that a single car was not adequate and had caused some inconvenience for the family due to the increasing weekend sport activities from the boys. So we sold our block of land in Brunswick Heads, New South Wales for \$28000 and bought a second-hand Ford Telstar TX5 under Vivian's name. The job lasted over a year before a midwife position in the Swan District Hospital became available and she was asked whether she would take it. There was some hesitation in the beginning because of the long distance to travel but at the end her love for midwifery proved too big an attraction to ignore. After a brief special course at the King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women, she started her full-time duties on August 2, 1984 at the Maternity Unit in the Swan District Hospital, Midlands. This was the result of great efforts after such a long break and, in spite of an hour of driving for a return journey, she loved it and indeed stayed in the same job and the same hospital until she retired in June 2008.

In the Chest Clinic I was doing well too due to my superior skills in reading chest x-rays. So when Dr Chen injured his elbows twice in quick succession, I was handed the duties of the Mines Medical Officer with three additional responsibilities. The first was the reporting of chest films taken throughout the year of workers occupationally exposed to various inorganic dusts especially silica and asbestos. I once had to do an on-site survey of mineworkers in Newman in the northern part of Western Australia. The second was to hold follow up clinics and Pneumoconiosis Medical Boards on those with abnormal chest x-rays. The third was to keep and produce annual statistics from the results.

I was always interested in research, influenced undoubtedly by my previous association with the British Medical Research Council and its famous members such as Wallace Fox, D.A. Mitchison and David Girling. Now I had found my utopia at last and started to focus on what I would like best to be or to do. I began searching for materials and was attracted by the prevalence of a special group of Mycobacteria, then commonly called "atypical mycobacteria" in Australia. By the time the State Tuberculosis Conference was

held in Perth in August 1983, I was able to present a paper on the subject in the meeting. Although it was a poorly constructed preliminary attempt, I gained enough respect from my interstate colleagues to be noted. That encouraged me to carry on and I was surprised by the large amount of valuable data hidden and lying to rot in this small clinic. I should never be short of materials for projects or scientific papers.

From Nedlands to Dalkeith

At the end of 1983 Ronald graduated from the Hollywood Primary School and was the dux of the school. He received a prize from Richard Court, the Member of Parliament for Nedlands. He also had the choice of going to Swanbourne Senior High School in a special class for “intellectually talented” students. These were no indication of later success but made me feel good, since seven years ago Ronald was rejected twice from getting a place in a primary one class in Hong Kong. It certainly justified our anger and decision to leave. So he moved to Swanbourne Senior High when school restarted in February 1984 after the summer holiday. At first we had to drive Ronald to school because of the long distance from home but he soon found the confidence to ride there on his bicycle. Donald would finish his primary school at the end of the year and we had already booked him a place in the Christ Church Grammar School in Claremont.

With both of us working the time was right to upgrade our home. The first consideration was naturally the cheaper choice of renovation. We chose Jennings because of its better reputation but it turned out to be not cheap. We hesitated and then in July Vivian came across a preliminary notice of a house for sale in 83 Minora Road, Dalkeith by Greg Rosen, our favourite real estate agent who assisted us to buy our first house. We had the inspection right away and liked the house, but we needed to sell ours first. It so happened that the vendor was downsizing to a retirement unit in Claremont, which she had not purchased. We had no trouble submitting an offer subject to the sale of our house and a delayed settlement in three months. The latter was similarly applied when we later accepted an offer for our house. The financial arrangement was, on the other hand, a little complicated.

I took the opportunity to tidy up my borrowings in an attempt to reduce interest payments. The exchange incurred an additional debt of about \$90000. The intended bank loan was \$55000. Excluding the 10% deposit I paid, the balance of \$18500 was covered by a fund of \$20000 from my Dad that I requested. As a result the monthly repayment for the reduced loan was an acceptable \$633 for 10 years. So when the renewal of the mortgage for the rental unit came up in late August, I reduced it to \$15000 (from the original of \$25000) and borrowed another \$10000 from the bank on similar terms as the house. I moved the financial broker's loan to the bank in 12 months and paid off

Zhiyi's a year later when she sold her house and closed the bank account in Perth. The bank was left as the sole mortgagee of my two properties from 1986 until 1990.

Both Nedlands and Dalkeith are established and sought after suburbs. Within them different sections are graded further by their distance from the Swan River; so we talk about houses on the south/north of Stirling Highway, south/north of Waratah Avenue and riverfront. Minora Road is on the south of Waratah Avenue and so the block value is significantly higher than that in Martin Avenue. Added to this is the fact that the house is north/south orientated instead of east/west. The potential for appreciation in value was therefore worth the extra capital. Settlement was on October 31, 1984 and the move hurt more this time than the last one from Townsville to Perth. I had to discard a lot of things we brought from Hong Kong and having great sentimental attachments.

The house in 83 Minora Road, Dalkeith was basically similar in style to the one in Martin Avenue except some years younger. The living area was larger due to the addition of a spacious room fitted with an air conditioner and another side door to the back garden. This could be used as a games/entertainment area or another bedroom. The original house had a lounge, a formal diner, a kitchen, a small shower/toilet and three bedrooms from a side corridor. All the bedrooms were of good sizes and two had built in wardrobes. Between the games room and the kitchen was a rectangular space that could be used as a meals area. It had doors on three of its sides, one to the garden, one to the second toilet of the house and a sliding door to the games room. A long drive way on the left side of the house led to a carport and then a garage/store. Behind the garage was a rundown wood shed with an iron roof. On the right side of the house was an open narrow laneway ending in a pergola outside the games room. The back garden was dominated by two huge plane trees near to the house, a large pepper tree on the right and a tall palm tree near the back fence. In between there were a lemon tree, a rose bed and a patch of everlasting coverings.

The move was good for the boys going to school; it was very near to Christ Church and at a much shorter distance to Swanbourne than from Martin Avenue.

Shortly after we settled in our new home, we learned that the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed and finalised the terms for the return of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997. I received a letter from Dad, telling me about the panic of the residents on the news and openly agreeing with our decision to leave the colony. I felt no sense of vindication but sadness; the waiting had been long and there was no way that he would come to join us in Australia.

A Period of Turmoils

After five years of peaceful and productive years, something unpleasant was waiting to happen. It began in late summer 1985 when Vivian suddenly felt dizzy at work. A blood test was done and showed a low haemoglobin level. After she was seen by the medical staff in the hospital she was referred to a gynaecologist who diagnosed it as intra-uterine bleeding from fibroids. The follow on actions were quick and in a week she was admitted into the Cambridge Private Hospital and a hysterectomy carried out the next day. The recovery was equally swift and Vivian returned to work in six weeks.

I had no idea when the next tremor in the family began. It came imperceptibly some time after Vivian's recovery. There were two telephone stations for one number in the house. The main one was in the formal diner and the second in Donald's bedroom at the end of the side corridor. Ronald seemed to be gradually hooked to the telephone in the bedroom. Naturally we thought that he was talking to his schoolmates although the conversations took a long time. We were in the dark for weeks until one day Vivian received a call from the school. Apparently a female voice, posing as his mother, telephoned the school, asking Ronald to come home because she was sick. The teacher suspected a fake from the young voice and alerted us. As a result we found out that he had got himself involved in the latest teenagers' fad called "Party Line". We managed to stop it at home but he continued through public telephones for a while before finally ceasing completely. We did not know why and pretended not to know; most likely he just lost interest when the matter became open. A little later he dyed his hair in technic colours and varied them at frequent intervals. We were awed but did not interfere or make any comments. We took it as part of the transitional rebellion in the development of an adolescent. Then it all went away as suddenly as it appeared.

Things did not quiet down for long when a more serious event occurred. One day the school sent Ronald home because he had engaged in a fight with Michael Renton, one of his classmates; he drew and pointed a small pocketknife at Michael. It was alarming and could easily become a police matter. The school probably left the decision to Michael's parents and sure enough, I shortly got a call from his mother asking me how I would deal with the incident. There was no defence or excuse for Ronald's rash action despite deep inside I believed that he must be provoked. Still I had to act decisively. I apologised and told Mrs Renton that Ronald would be grounded for a month with no pocket money. This turned out to be the right move as it not only defused the tense situation but also led to Michael and Ronald becoming close friends in the later years.

In spite of all these Ronald was academically performing well. Throughout his high school period he had won the Certificate of Distinction in the Australian Mathematics Competition every year and participated in one of the Australian Mathematical

Olympiad Interstate Finals. In partnership with Michael Renton they came first in the 1987 state-wide Share market Game and got an interview by Geraldine Mellet in the 7:30 Report in ABC Television. Ronald finished his secondary education in four years after choosing to skip year 10 completely (an option available then only to the "intellectually talented" classes).

On comparison Donald was plain sailing throughout his high school years and never caused any trouble. Indeed he was well liked and made a lot of friends. He might have an occasional tantrum of temper at home or when he was not in the mood for piano lessons. Naturally as both grew up, they went out more often and returned home later and later, but then the stress, if any, went exclusively to their mother.

The greatest turmoil, however, was yet to come.

A Tragic Death

One morning in October 1985 I got a long-distance call from Zhiyi. Dad had been struck unconscious by a bicycle in Sheung Wan (上環) Hong Kong the day before and was taken by ambulance to the Queen Mary Hospital. When she arrived in the ward in the evening, he momentarily woke up and quickly lapsed into a coma. She had to pay a private fee to get a CAT (computerised axial tomographic) scan done in a private radiology department, which revealed bleeding into the brain. No doctor in the hospital would operate to remove the blood. I had no choice but to take an emergency leave and fly out as soon as I could book a seat.

As I stepped into the arrival hall in the Kai Tak International Airport (啟德國際機場) on October 11th, Zhiyi was already waiting there. Her chauffeur then drove us straight to the hospital. My Dad was comatose and lying in a camp bed with an intravenous drip, a urinary catheter, a stomach tube and an oxygen mask. The first thing I had to do was to ask the medical superintendent for a private room. Luckily she was free and I knew her husband, a paediatrician, quite well. Unfortunately only a first class room was available and this was very expensive, not only for the room but also for all services and items dispensed. Zhiyi had no hesitation in taking it. Afterwards we went back to Zhiyi's place, which had changed again to another larger semi-detached townhouse in Flamingo Gardens not far away from the previous one. The old one became the family home of Helen, the elder daughter, and her husband, Michael Wu (吳).

Zhijia and Zhiling from Sydney, and Shengduan from Canada, arrived later. For convenience we all, including Mum, stayed in Zhiyi's place. We visited Dad every day mostly in Zhiyi's chauffeur driven and air-conditioned Mercedes Benz. The return

journey was usually by bus, underground train or taxi. We met the surgeon in charge only once and he made it clear that he did not recommend surgery; so all we could do was sitting around Dad, chatted and hoped for a miracle. The miracle did not come and at 6.25 am on the 23rd of October 1985 Dad passed away without ever regaining consciousness. He was two months and two days short of his 82nd birthday. All his sons and daughters and Xiehe were present. The hospital bill must be large, paid by Xiehe and the amount was never revealed to us.

The funeral arrangements were again made by our sister and brother-in-law with The World Funeral Home (世界殯儀館) in Hung Hom (紅磡) Kowloon. To us this was another luxury option that we could hardly afford and most likely would not have chosen. The ceremonial services took three days before Dad's body was cremated and the ash given to me for subsequent burial in Perth. Zhiyi again covered all the expenses. I reckon she must have spent a few hundreds of thousands Hong Kong dollars in total. What we did not know was whether this came from their private account or that of the Tai Wah Company.

When we later returned to Mum's apartment without Zhiyi and Xiehe, we searched all over the flat and could not find a will or note from Dad. No record was found about any money loaned privately either. We knew that Dad had a habit of putting some of his savings into other firms, in tranches and renewable every twelve months but without receipts or formal documents. No one ever came forward admitting they had money owed to Dad in spite of his obituary being posted prominently in the major newspapers. The amounts shown in his bank statements were too surprisingly small to believe, but there was really nothing we could do. Mum did not have a clue and so did Zhiling who was the next closest person to Dad. Then in the wake dinner at a Tsimshatsui Chinese restaurant (小楠公), Xiehe announced that, for Dad's share in Tai Wah, he offered HK\$ 1M each to his sons and HK\$ ½M each to the daughters other than Zhiyi. We were overwhelmed including Mum after learning what sum of money Dad had properly left in his bank. Talking about money, the government sent Mum a cheque of a few thousand Hong Kong dollars as a token compensation to the family of fatal victims in traffic accidents. I left with the urn of Dad's ashes on November 1 with a heavy heart but no tears. The past three weeks had been a bad dream.

After I returned to Perth we went to the Karrakatta Cemetery and bought a vacant graveyard number 18 in the Chinese Section for \$375. It was not only cheap but also allowed to accommodate up to four persons. The interment of the ash was carried out on the 19th of November 1985 but the Avon granite top and headstone with Chinese inscriptions were not ready until the end of January 1986. The grant of the land was for an initial period of 25 years, but when we inquired in 2000, we were told that this

limitation would be waived if there is a responsible owner to take care of the grave. This is a very gracious act of the cemetery management.

Business Migration

The meeting of Mrs. Margaret Thatcher and Deng Xiaoping in Beijing in 1982 disturbed the politically carefree attitude of the Hong Kong people and led to Dad's re-think on my decision to leave the colony. At the same time it brought back the bitter experience of Zhiyi's three-year ordeal under the Communist Chinese government over thirty years ago. So she and Xiehe too began to consider seriously about emigration. The fact that their children had chosen to study in Australia and Canada for their tertiary education was not only a matter of convenience but also an indication of their preparation to move. The parents had difficulty in mastering the English language. To get an idea of how life would be in a foreign land they had been travelling around frequently, including the trip to and the purchase of, a house in Perth in 1982, as well as a business migration tour to New South Wales and Queensland in 1983. Strangely enough the decision received Dad's approval although he himself was adamant that he would not follow. Mum was indifferent as usual. Zhiyi was in a dilemma, as she would not leave Dad alone.

After Dad passed away Zhiyi felt the time was right. They chose the only avenue best suited to them, the business migration category. They needed a minimum of AU\$250,000 in cash and a business plan of providing employment in Australia. Both were handled smoothly through a lawyer, Mr. Michael Chen (陳維新), in a Migration Agency. The money would be used to set up a branch office/warehouse to distribute Tai Wah products in Australia. As their main business and principal residence remained in Hong Kong, the move was easily managed. Both daughters had their tertiary education in Sydney and Benson had left Canada to join them in 1983 before completing his university course.

The day to land was delayed by a couple of months due to an unfortunate accident. Mum sustained a fractured neck of the femur from a fall on the street and had an emergency pin and plate operation. The surgeon, Mr. YF Lee, was someone I knew well in the Queen Mary Hospital days. He did an excellent job for free and the recovery was speedy. They arrived in Sydney in March 1986 and stayed in the house that Zhiyi had bought in 1983 for their children in Killarney Heights, Warringah. It was a two-storey house and had a large games room in the ground floor, which they used to store their electronic products and spare parts. Mr. Jiang (姜樹榮), the chief technician of Tai Wah, at one time used it to repair defective models returned from the retailers. Just a few months after they settled down, Mum broke her other leg in a similar fashion as the first from a fall while walking on the street. She was admitted into the Lidcomb Hospital where Zhiling

was working at the time. The same operation was needed but this time it took much longer for her to walk again without assistance.

The “Great Leap” Years

The one million Hong Kong dollars I was supposed to get from Zhiyi was worth around two hundred thousand Australian dollars at the time. I received the first half in early 1986; this led us to consider upgrading our present house which was in a much better location than the previous one in Nedlands. This time we were persuaded to employ a private architect through a friend from Hong Kong, who just had a granny unit built to his Dalkeith house. This looked good and the price was reasonable. At first we intended to set a budget of around \$50,000 for the renovation, but when the contract was signed on April 11, 1986 with the chosen builder, we did not have the experience to limit our total expenditure. As a result, every time we made any change in the building process or parts used, there would be double inflation of the cost imposed both by the builder and the architect. At the end when it was finally completed in September, the total cost amounted to an unbelievable \$120,000! Fortunately by then Zhiyi had sent me the second portion of \$40,000 and she also indicated that she might not be able to let me have the remaining sum until a year later.

The renovation was essentially a new two-story section, replacing the original sleep-out area outside the games room, the second toilet and extending into the back garden. In doing so, we thought the work would give us the least disruption to our daily life within the front section, but the two huge plane trees had to be sacrificed. This was unfortunate but necessary because they were getting too close to endanger the house. The ground floor of the addition contained the meals area, a large family/entertaining hall, a laundry and a third toilet. The hall was separated from the garden by glass planes and two sliding glass doors to let in as much light as possible in winter. The kitchen was extensively upgraded. The upper level had the master bedroom with *en suite* bath and a spa, which also opened into a second bedroom. The latter was reserved for Mum if she decided to stay with us. A walk-in wardrobe and a study completed the whole setting. The original part of the house now belonged entirely to the boys and opened into the kitchen by a side door.

During that summer my newly renovated house got a warming party from Shengduan and his family who came to Australia with the intention of a second migration. Zhiyi, Xiehe and Mum met them in Sydney and they came to Perth together. My brother was impressed with the city especially the warm weather and tried very hard to come but eventually had to give up. He had difficulty in getting a desirable job here. Mum did not stay behind either as we realised that with both of us working full time it was imprudent to leave a seventy-six-year-old lady, unable to speak English, home alone.

Zhiling's Marriage

Zhiling arrived in Sydney in a hurry towards the end of 1982 due to a tight landing date required by the Australian authority. With the help of Zhihua, accommodation posted no delay in her settling down and so was in finding a suitable job with her qualifications. She started work in February 1983 as a General Registered Nurse in the Lidcombe Hospital, Bankstown. Three years later she was promoted to Acting Nursing Manager.

With her job secured and the eventual arrival of Zhiyi's family in 1986, Zhiling could relax and attend to her personal life. There were no details nor rumours all along and suddenly I was told that she was getting married in October 1987. I was asked to give the bride away and be one of the two witnesses on the marriage certificate. We took the opportunity travelling there to meet the other family members since their immigration. We took Donald with us and stayed with Zhiyi in Killarney Heights, inspected the workshop in the ground level and toured their branch office in Lane Cove West.

The bridegroom was a gentleman from Singapore called William Yeo. The wedding ceremony was simple and we spent most of the time at the celebration dinner, trying every trick to find out more about Mr Yeo without success. I blundered in toasting to the newly wed, requiring prompting from Zhihua. That was the first time I noticed that Zhihua was becoming a polished society lady far ahead of me.

When my duty was done our stay was short, as we left Ronald behind. He had an important examination when we left. Still we managed to inspect the huge block of riverfront property in Longueville, which Xiehe had bought. In the centre was an old historic building that was rumoured to be considered for heritage listing. On the advice of people in the know, he took the killing decision of pulling it down before the motion was put forward. With that he was free to plan his luxury mansion in Sydney.

A month later I finally got the last portion of my inheritance in the form of a 1979 Mercedes Benz 280 SLC in lieu of cash. This was mutually agreed upon when I learned that Zhiyi was selling the car to pay me the balance. It was good for my ego but a poor investment decision as the car had a few hidden problems from under use and lack of proper maintenance. There was even no logbook. For sentimental reasons and as an icon of Dad and Zhiyi's success in business partnership (first ever in the family), I tried to look after it with my best effort despite the expensive repair and service bills.

Ronald Entered the University of Western Australia

Ronald sat his Tertiary Entrance Examination in early December and while waiting for the results we took him and Donald to Hong Kong for a holiday on the 27th of

December 1987. We stayed in the Park Lane Hotel in Causeway Bay. On the expected day we telephoned our friend in Perth and got the good news of Ronald obtaining a score of 454.4 marks out of a possible maximum of 520, which we knew, should be sufficient for him to fulfil his first choice to study medicine. We already had a one-day coach tour of the Hong Kong Island on arrival, which included a sampan ride in the Aberdeen Harbour. We celebrated his success with visits to the Ocean Park, the Peak, the Song City, the Sea Palace Floating Restaurant and the prestigious Hong Kong Country Club. The last was at the invitation from May and Felix Lu. It was a very happy and satisfying holiday for all in the family. We returned home on January 18, 1988.

Ronald started his medical studies in the next month when tertiary education in Australia was still free for residents. However in the following year, this was replaced with a Higher Education Contributions Scheme, otherwise better known as HECS, by which a student could apply for a government loan to pay his tuition fees and repay the debt later by instalments when his/her income exceeded a certain predetermined level. They might, on the other hand, opt to stay debt free and pay the charges in full. That was a great help to our financial situation as the private school fees and accessory expenses for Donald kept increasing every year. Naturally we embraced the HECS with both arms.

At the end of his first medical year Ronald went to the United Kingdom with one of his classmates and brought back a girl friend from Wales. Her name was Josephine. She tried to settle down and worked as a sort of attendant in the service industry in Cottesloe. It did not work out and the relationship broke down after a year. We never made any attempt to find out, as the matter did not seem to affect his mood or studies. While this unhappy event was taking place, he got a surprise from Zhiyi who, after obtaining our consent, sent him a second hand Toyota Celica from Sydney as a present. The car was originally bought for her son Benson on his return from Canada to join the family in Sydney.

CHAPTER VII: SIXTH DECADE 1989-1999

Donald's Turn

By March 1989 we had saved enough money to discharge our mortgages, both on our principle residence in Dalkeith and the rental property in Kardinya. Donald completed his secondary education in the Christ Church Grammar School at the end of the year with a TEE score of 430.4 from a possible maximum of 520. Although it turned out that he had enough marks to be admitted into Medicine, he opted for the combined course of Science and Engineering, which required five years of full time studies. He also applied for the HECS to pay for the tuition fees. We did exactly the same celebration for him in Hong Kong as we did for Ronald. We had, however, to start earlier on December 16 and returned on January 5, because we needed to prepare another trip to Sydney for Anita's wedding on February 2, 1990.

The Longueville Mansion

The wedding banquet was held in a Chinese restaurant called Chopsticks, which was furnished with a stage and a western music band. The architect who designed and supervised Xiehe and Zhiyi's new house at 1 Stuart Street, Longueville was among the honour guests. He was with his wife and his beautiful daughter who instantly became the centre of attraction to the boys when the dance began. The master of the ceremony was none other than the migration agent-lawyer-adviser, Mr Chen. He did a very good job and brought a lot of laughter throughout the evening.

By that time Xiehe and Zhiyi's mansion had essentially been completed. The land area was four or five times the standard block size of the suburb and the greater part of it were covered in native trees. The small original old house had been knocked down; only the rundown boat shed on the edge of the Lane Cove River remained. The house was built in the same spot as the previous one only much more enormous. It had three levels. The lowest had the slope of the land as its back wall and housed a sauna, a wine cellar, a gymnasium and a billiard room that opened onto a terrace and the concrete swimming pool. The second level was the entertainment area. The kitchens were at the back, consisting of the Chinese section in an enclosure and a door that led to the Western section. Between the latter and the family meals area was an indoor barbecue "island". Storerooms and cupboards were built around the section. The middle part housed the entrance hall in an atrium, a formal dining area, two huge lounge and family rooms, a display room, a study and a guest suite.

A wide spiral staircase from the entrance hall went up the atrium to the upper level of 5 bedrooms, all with en-suites. On the left side and facing the river was another spacious lounge area that opened onto a large terrace-balcony overlooking the 20-metre swimming pool below. Beyond the pool was a gentle slope turned into a mixed garden and native forest. A walk way to the left led to the boat shed and the river. To the right was an elevated area of lawn with only a few ornamental trees. This lawn hung over a cliff to the riverside and provided a good view of the distant city skyline including the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge.

To enter the mansion one had to drive or walk through a right of way in the adjacent Longueville Park. After passing a heavy and remote-controlled iron gate, one could see the covered driveway between the brass front doors and a fountain of koi fish. Beyond this was a large courtyard with a five-car garage in front and the side door of the house to the right. Between the garage and the Park was a steep stairway leading up to a standard sized clay tennis court, which formed the back boundary of the property.

Mum had the luxury of celebrating her 80th birthday in the mansion on September 19, 1990. We went there to share the joy, as this is a huge milestone in the life of a Chinese.

Zhiling's Turning Point in Life

Zhiling's marriage with William Yeo was a total mismatch, founded on a pretence from him and naivety of her. For William, he had a hidden agenda of using Zhiling's Australian citizenship for his immigration to Australia; for the latter, being essentially fresh out of school, had no experience to anticipate that people could behave so dishonestly without shame. We visited them only once shortly after the marriage in their house in Belrose for a barbecue lunch. The relationship inevitably broke down after he got what he wanted. That occurred some time before Mum's 80th birthday and the divorce was finalised in November 1990. At least William did not demand half of her assets.

It was impossible to understand how Zhiling got over the heart-broken pains but one thing I am sure is, she did and in a relatively short time. She turned her frustration into hard work on her career and started taking more courses of higher education in health services. Before the marriage, she had obtained the Associated Diploma in Clinical Nursing in Gerontology from Sydney University in 1986. She continued to attain the Bachelor of Health Administration in 1993 from the University of New South Wales and the Graduated Diploma in Applied Science (Health Information Management) in 1995 again from Sydney University. Thereafter she became a Specialist Clinical Coder and Health Information Manager in a number of health institutions, including Westmead Children's Hospital, Mona Vale Hospital, Manly Hospital and the Hills Private Hospital

from 1995 to her retirement in 2006. Afterwards she continued part-time work in the Westmead and Hills Hospitals for three more years.

Financially she was managing well too. Zhiyi bought her house with William in Belrose and gave her back the full amount. With this, she was able to purchase on mortgage a nice townhouse with three levels at 8/65-67 Finlayson Street Lane Cove, NSW 2066 in August 1991. With a steady career and regular promotions she revitalised her life and started to travel, entertain and, a little later, invest in a small portfolio of blue-chip stocks. This is quite an achievement for a once badly hurt single lady in ten years' time.

The Frequent Flyers

Later that year we traded in Vivian's Ford TX5 for a brand-new Honda Accord as the former was starting to cause many troubles and the maintenance services from the dealer were unsatisfactory.

In April the following year (1991), Zhiyi and Xiehe visited us with Helen, her two children, Vincent and Stephanie, as well as Anita and her husband, Barry Ye (葉). They had been planning about a mini-world tour for the Peng and Wang families for some time. Obviously we could not practically do it all together; so two trips at different times were planned. The one including Vivian and me was a group of seven members from three families of Zhiyi, Helen and us. Michael, Helen's husband, Ronald and Donald were absent due to work and study commitments. It was scheduled for the coming July and August. Zhiyi and Xiehe would arrange and pay for booking the tour, airfares and hotel costs from Hong Kong. We only had to provide for our return airfares from Perth and expenses for local sightseeing excursions.

A month later and before starting the tour, I was again persuaded by Bernard to mortgage my house and borrow an investment loan of \$200,000 from the Perpetual Trustees WA Ltd. The money was used to purchase a half share in building four green title units in 24 Litchfield Street, Victoria Park. The repayments were once more for interest only. Another month later Vivian used her own money to buy a second hand Toyota MR2 Coupe for Donald who was then in his second year of University. We felt that he deserved better but this was what we could afford. He loved the car though, and spent a lot of money on it in later years including a powerful hi-fi system. When we heard any loud music from the street, we knew that he was coming home.

I had booked my leave for six weeks and flew to Hong Kong on July 20, 1991. We stayed in Zhiyi's place and, surprise, surprise, they had moved once again to the top of Fei Ngor Shan, only this time it was surely grandiose. It was a stand-alone house with split-levels and a spacious garden with a fishpond, many ceramic pots of large bonsai and tall green

trees to provide summer shades and overlooking a steep cliff on one side of the property. The house even had a name, the Windsor Lodge. I began to understand why Zhiyi had been showering her siblings and their close family members with expensive gifts such as cars, Rolex watches, fashion clothes, ornamentals and now extended overseas tours. There was something uncomfortable at the back of my mind. Too extravagant? Perhaps, but I could not tell exactly what it was at the time. To prepare for this special trip, my old Nikon camera would seem obsolete. So I spent HK\$7,000 odd on a new Sony digital video-cam using small cassette tapes.

A Mini-World-Tour

The tour started on the 25th of July 1991 from Hong Kong. The first stop was Los Angeles, California where we spent most of the time in Disneyland, Universal City, Hollywood and dining with Zhiyi and Xiehe's friends living there. Then we flew to Vancouver, took the Sky-ride cable car to the Grouse Mountain Park, visited the Capilano Reserve and had dinner with Helen's friends in the Canada Place. The next day we had a harbour cruise in SS Constitution to browse the city and the seals. Then we met up with Shengduan and his family in Toronto, and drove to the Niagara Falls together in my brother's cars. This was the first time we met my sister-in-law, Laurene Tang Zhenbao (唐振寶) and their two lovely children, Ian and Sarah.

Afterwards we went to Montreal, loitered in the Parliament House and the Natural Museum, and stayed there over night before returning to Toronto. We spent the rest of the day around the Canadian National (CN) Tower area. The last event in Toronto was a cruise of the Thousand Islands in the St Lawrence River. The next morning we left the hotel for the airport to join my brother in Sault Ste Marie. The family had left the day before, taking their cars home. On the way I suddenly realised that I had left my brief case at the hotel. We could not turn back; otherwise we would miss the plane. I could not afford to lose the case as it had my car and house keys. That was the first time I ever made such a careless mistake and I began to realise age had caught up with me. Luckily one of Xiehe's friends with whom we dined on the first night in Toronto was returning to Hong Kong in a few days. So in the airport Xiehe telephoned him and asked him to check with the hotel. When he got there, he had no trouble retrieving my brief case, which was found by the room maid on top of the bed sheets. I got everything back when we returned to Hong Kong.

Shengduan had a house in 47 River Road, which was situated in a very large block of land bordering Lake Superior in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario. He was extending the house on the lakeside when we visited him. He took us across the border into the American side of the

town in the State of Michigan and watch the Soo Locks in the St Marys River. We stayed in his place for the night and left for New York City the next morning.

We started with a full day cruise in the Hudson River, leisurely glancing the skyscrapers along the coastline of Manhattan, the famous bridges and notable features such as the Statue of Liberty from the distance. We did not for some unknown reasons, go to the Time Square but we did go up the Empire Building and had a glimpse of one of their old underground train stations.

We then flew across the Atlantic Ocean on the 10th of August to London where we started off with a city sightseeing ride in a topless double-decker bus. We went to Windsor Castle and the Hampden Court Garden and travelled up north to Edinburgh. We visited the Princess Street Garden with its majestic Ross Fountain, the Scottish Monument, Castle Hill and the Edinburgh Castle. Xiehe was planning to set up a branch business here similar to the one in Sydney, which they named Beon. It was in the preliminary stage of development. A local gentleman was put in charge and was assisted by a young Chinese from Hong Kong. I forgot their names. They acted as our make shift tour guides. We learned subsequently that the Scottish business was actually a means for Xiehe and Zhiyi to obtain British passports.

The next destination was Paris where I had to stay in bed for the whole afternoon in the hotel. I caught the flu from Vivian who was sick in Edinburgh requiring a course of antibiotic from a local practitioner. Fortunately we both recovered quickly and did not disrupt our schedule. We started with a city tour that included breaks in the Palace of Versailles with its magnificent chateau art gallery and gardens, the Louvre, La Defence (the new business district with skyscrapers), Eiffel Tower and a walk in Champs Élysées and the district clustered with famous designer products. A short cruise in the River Seine gave us another fleeting views of this romantic city. We could not, of course, leave without a taste of the famous French crabs and escargots in a roadside restaurant.

Our final stop was Rome. As English was not common here, communication became problematical. The only choice for us was to join the city tours. We started with the famous Trevi Fountain and Square, then the previous site of the Mamertine Prison and the ruins of Forum Magnum, and of course the remains of the Colosseum. The next day we visited the St Peter's Basilica and walked leisurely around the area before being led to a souvenir shop where we were tempted to buy mosaic pictures of polished stone pieced together by an artist labelled as Prof. Valenty. We flew back to Hong Kong on the 22nd of August 1991.

A Quick Visit to Shigen Village

After a short break Zhiyi persuaded me to take Vivian to visit our native village, which I left 42 years ago. The temptation was too great to resist. So we applied for an urgent visa with our Australian passports and travelled by land through Guangzhou and Foshan to Shigen. We first went to see Quan Hu whose son was the tenant of our house in the Big Lane. He accompanied us to the house. It was kept in surprisingly good conditions with most of the setting and furniture essentially the same as what I could remember. Even the Big Lane and the granite bench in front of the house were unchanged, though many new houses, some double-storey, had been built during this period. We walked through the whole Lane and could not find a single familiar face. The primary school where I studied was totally different. Zhiyi brought me to the market to look for one of the two daughters of Shansong and Mum's eighth sister. Luckily she was there exactly as Zhiyi had found her before, but unfortunately she was mentally handicapped due to the sufferings during the politically turbulent years. When Zhiyi handed her some money, she could only manage a few giggles. Her name was Yinping (銀萍). That was the last and only time I met her, one of my many lost cousins on Mum's side. We returned to Guangzhou and stayed the night in the elegant Oriental Guest House (東方賓館). We left the next day back to Hong Kong before heading back to Perth on the last day of August.

The Return of the Family Curse

Early 1992 we were informed of the shocked news that Zhiyi had been diagnosed with cancer in the right breast. She had been promptly referred to the surgeon who treated Zhihua sixteen years ago and apparently cured her of the disease. A similar protocol was applied, namely a total mastectomy followed by local radiotherapy. The ovaries were not removed because she had long passed menopause. We visited her towards the end of the year when she had recovered from the surgery and was having external irradiation as an outpatient. I drove her to the treatment sessions while I was there and left before the course was completed. She attended the followed up appointments diligently and was doing well. Although in retrospect, I could not definitely conclude that my grandmother also had breast cancer in her twenties, Dad was quite sure it was from what he gathered. If that were so, there would be three blood-related women in the family over three generations and skipping the second.

The treatment appeared to work well as the disease was considered in clinical remission with the completion of the X-ray therapy. Zhiyi was improving so well that she no more adhered strictly to her follow up appointments and spent longer and longer periods in Hong Kong absorbing all sorts of traditional Chinese remedies from the advice of her

close friends. Indeed another tour to Eastern China was planned for March the following year. This time the group consisted of Zhiyi and Xiehe, Zhihua and Zhiling, Vivian and me, a total of six for three hotel rooms. Apart from our own return airfares, Xiehe again generously paid for all the tour arrangements and hotel expenses.

We left Perth on March 13, 1993 and once again revisited our native village, this time with Jianliao and Shengkang on the 17th. We continued on to Foshan where we did some sightseeing and stayed overnight before returning to Hong Kong on the 19th. We were disappointed on this occasion that there was no trace of Yinping.

The Eastern China tour lasted eight days from March 22nd to 29th, covering most tourist attractions in six cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Suzhou, Hangzhou and Ningbo. This was an entirely guided journey through a travel agency and so we had all the time to enjoy ourselves with the spectacular views, shopping and sumptuous meals. I could even afford the time to scabble a few Chinese poems to commemorate the special return visit to China (Appendix II: 華東遊).

The Cruise and Tour of the Three Gorges

We returned home on April 3rd and soon got the news that, after years of speculation, the Chinese government had confirmed building a large hydroelectric plant in the Changjiang River. The legendary Three Gorges would be flooded together with many scenic and cultural sites as well as some residential houses. As Zhiyi seemed to be doing well, we decided to take the Changjiang cruise and arrangements were made for October but this time without Zhihua and Zhiling. Instead we were joined by a couple in Hong Kong; the husband was a surgeon and a good friend of Xiehe.

We left Perth on October 23rd and started the cruise on the 27th, flying first to Changsha (長沙) in the Hunan (湖南) Province. The plane was delayed; we arrived late at night and could only manage a hastily prepared supper. The next morning we travelled by coach to visit Wuhan (武漢) and Jinzhou (荊州) before boarding the river boat in the evening at Jiangling (江陵). The boat was reasonably clean and the size of the cabin, though small, was acceptable, but the smell from the bathroom was unbearable. The meals were good with buffet breakfast and there was consistently a dish of steamed fish in the main meals. The views of the Three Gorges were spectacular especially to the first comers like us. The boat berthed at a number of places for short land excursions and ended in Chongqing (重慶) where we took the coach to Chengdu (成都) on the 2nd of November and flew back to Hong Kong the following day. We returned to Perth on the 5th.

A Second Medical Doctor in the Family

In January 1993, as a requirement of his medical curriculum, Ronald went to London, Ontario in Canada for a six-week resident training in a hospital under the supervision of the University of Western Ontario. He had a lovely time there, enjoying himself with skiing and being entertained by Vivian's brother as well as my brother in Toronto. On his way back to London, he missed the plane for the first time; although it did not cause any hassle, he had since become a laughing stock in the family. At the end of the year he graduated from the Medical Faculty in the University of Western Australia and started his internship at the Fremantle General Hospital in 1994. He moved out from home and shared a rental unit with his friend in the area. He came to visit us infrequently mainly for birthday celebrations and special Chinese festivals. We had practically no knowledge about his work or social activities apart from the fact that he looked happy and healthy and that he changed his Toyota Celica to a Mazda MX5 in October the same year. He was enjoying life and we were informed that he was having a de facto relationship with a nurse who came from England. Less than two years later while we were visiting Zhiyi in Sydney he telephoned and told us that he intended to buy a house in Mount Hawthorn at 15 Bondi Street. I was delighted as, in my opinion, this was a wise and responsible move; I offered him \$30,000 to lighten a little his burden from the mortgage. Although he did not need it but eventually agreed to accept. The bank rate for housing loan then was around 7 to 8% per annum.

In 1994 the Hong Kong medical class of 1964 had graduated for 30 years. A Pearl reunion dinner was arranged on the evening of October 16th at the Hong Kong Grand Hyatt Hotel. I decided to attend and would take the occasion to have a short break in Singapore where we had not been before. So we left on the 12th and stayed there for three nights, during which we took a city tour, a trip to Sentosa Island, returning by cable car, as well as a new and exciting experience in the night safari. We arrived at Hong Kong on the 15th in time for the reunion. It was an overwhelming feeling to see most of the old faces again after a separation of 30 years! I learned that, by then we had already lost three of our classmates. Four days later we had a one day trip to Dongguan (東莞) with Zhiyi and Xiche to inspect a developing site of their electronic company. This would be entirely for assembling the component parts delivered from Hong Kong to take advantage of the cheap local labour. We also had a short visit to the rapidly rising city of Shenzhen and its several tourist attractions, including the Splendid China Miniature Park (錦繡中華小人國). We returned home on the 24th preparing for another much longer trip.

Celebrating the First Engineer in the Family

Donald graduated at the end of 1994 with the degree of B. Eng. and a first-class honour in Environmental Engineering. To celebrate we took him to a tour of U.S.A. and Canada. We started at the end of November and arrived at Los Angeles on the 1st of December. We stayed in the Howard Johnson Hotel and spent the first two days in Disneyland, Universal Studio and Beverley Hills, including a night tour in Rodeo Drive and a supper in the Hard Rock Café. Donald also had a caricature drawn by a roadside artist within a few minutes and it was a really good one. On the third day we took a coach tour to Tijuana, Mexico across the border. We had lunch there, walked along the main street lined with souvenir shops. On our return we had a stop at Seaport Village in San Diego.

The next morning we flew to Las Vegas and had our first and only experience in the most famous gambling city of the world. We actually did not spend much time in the casino or with the poker machines that were everywhere even in the Hilton Hotel where we stayed. In fact we chose to watch the show “Starlight Express”. We took a flight from the Scenic Airline to view the Grand Canyon from the air. We arrived at the terminal station and watched an iMax documentary of the natural wonder. Unfortunately the weather was not on our side. The clouds spoiled my video filming from the plane and the sudden snowstorm in the terminal station, our sightseeing. We returned to Las Vegas late that evening.

The next morning we had to wait a long time for the hotel coach to take us to the airport for the flight to San Francisco and missed our breakfast. In the airport poker machines were again everywhere but we were not interested. Instead we had our first taste of taco wraps while waiting to board. By the time we checked into the Handlery Union Square Hotel it was already dark and we just loitered in the street until we found a Chinese restaurant. After dinner we made a short shopping round at the nearby Macy’s Department store before retiring for the night.

For the following day we took a coach tour to most of the city attractions. We started with the Golden Gate Bridge, then the streets of San Francisco and a short ride in the cable car to the end of the Powell-Hyde Line, just to watch how the tram reversed in a turntable on the road. Following that we headed to the water front area where we visited Pier 39, Fisherman’s Wharf, had a feast on the famous huge crabs and took the bay ferry ride in the Bay. We had a close view of the sea lions sunbathing in their haven near the shore and glimpses of the Alcatraz Island, and the Golden Gate and Bay Bridges. The coach continued and took us to a scenic spot with a beautiful lake surrounded by some ancient looking structures, one of which was the impressive Palace of Fine Arts Theatre. Finally as usual one could not come to San Francisco without visiting the Alamo Square and Park with the row of iconic Victorian houses across the Steiner Street.

The next city of call was Orlando. We took a taxi from the airport to the Ramada Hotel Downtown that we had booked. It was a long trip and the driver was a handsome young man who happened to be a basketball fan of the local Orlando Magic Club with the then famous Shaquille O'Neil in the team. There was a home game that evening and he would try to get us two tickets at about US\$120 each. Donald was a NBA (National Basketball Association) fanatic and we were delighted but not for long. The game was a sold out and in spite of his connections the cab driver was unable to get what we wanted. Instead, for not knowing what better to do, Donald flipped over the telephone directory in the hotel room and found a 25% discount offer for lobster teppanyaki in a nearby Japanese Restaurant. This was an excellent compensation for the early disappointment as it was not only good value for money but also enjoyed by all three of us instead of two. To this day I still cannot believe our luck. Moreover on the same night we could watch free another full NBA replay game in the television.

On the following morning we were about to find a tour for the day and were approached by a salesman from a real estate development company, offering us free tickets to the Orlando Universal Studio, provided we agreed to attend a sales promotion in the evening, with no obligation to buy. That looked to be a good bargain and we accepted the compliment willingly. The tour followed a similar pattern as the one in Los Angeles but with settings based on different well known TV series and motion pictures. They were however always entertaining as they were spectacular and totally new experiences to us. Around 5 pm we were conducted to the estate with demonstration units and then interviewed by their staff. After a lengthy explanation of the special promotion terms, they engaged in aggressive and pushy sale tactics. Honestly the price was high for the quality and size of the units but we were completely ignorant about the location and had no experience with properties in the States. We stood firm and from then on we got an ugly face from the salesman although finally he had no choice but to take us back to the hotel. Another lesson learned here, "there is no such thing as a free lunch in this world!"

The whole of the next day was spent in the John F. Kennedy Space Visitors' Centre. That was exciting, eye catching as well as educational. I spent a lot of time video taping the place, both inside and out of the exhibition halls. Donald was more interested in the rockets, satellites, lunar modules, space suites, shuttles and even the astronaut actors.

The last stop in the USA was Washington DC and I have no recollection or photographic records of which hotel we stayed, but we booked all our tours from a counter in the lobby. The places we visited were standard for new comers, such as the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, DC War and Thomas Jefferson Memorials. We took the elevator up the needle-like Monument to have a bird's eye view of the famous city, which was immense and beautiful. The next day was rainy but no snow yet. We queued

up for a long time to have a guided tour of the White House. In the afternoon we visited the Washington Chinatown.

We finally did some window-shopping the next day. It was getting near to Christmas; the decorations in the shops alone were much more extravagant than those we had back in Perth. We also visited the Union Station; the great hall in the centre was impressive. In addition there were many shops, cafes and restaurants, all catering for the festive season. There was also in display at the time a large model train running on tracks that went through tunnels, plains and over bridges. The following morning we flew to Toronto, Canada and were met by my brother and his family, who had driven from Sault Ste Marie the day before with his new seven-seater Toyota. We drove first to see the CN Tower and then to the majestic castle of Casa Loma when it started to snow. Once inside it was warm and heart-felt with all the atmosphere of what Christmas should be. There were plenty to appreciate, as it was in fact a museum; there was even a live performance at the time.

The next morning we started on the long drive to the Niagara Falls where we spent the whole day witnessing the magnificent wonder of how the water from the quiet tributaries turned into torrential downpours, so spectacular and yet so alarming. The accompanying non-stop thundering noise must be the best ever production of surround sound effects. By the time we left it was already dark but all the way we could see neon light decorations of Christmas-related figures and familiar Disney cartoon characters. It was just six days before the greatest holiday season of the year. We left the following day for Vancouver.

The last part of our tour was spent with George and his family in Vancouver. George, Vivian's younger brother had moved from Toronto to the plush western suburb of the city for a few years. His wife, Eileen, is a chartered accountant and they had two children, Aaron and Erica. He naturally was our guide and driver throughout the visit. Apart from the usual attractions such as the Canada Place, Stanley Park, city centre and the Lions Gate Bridge, we also had a ferry ride in the Vancouver Harbour and many Chinese dining. To Donald the best, however, was his first skiing experience in the resort town of Whistler to the north of Vancouver. Christmas that year was spent there but unluckily it was not a white one as I had hoped. We returned home via Sydney on the 28th of December after completing a joyous holiday of just over four weeks.

Who would then expect such a common journey could dominate my memory for ten years in the final phase of my life?

An Exorcising Marriage in Sydney

Early 1995 we received the bad news that, in her latest follow up examination, Zhiyi's CAT scan revealed evidence of multiple lumps in the liver and the abdominal cavity. Chemotherapy was commenced and the side effects caused wasting and lethargy. The prognosis was poor and the family started to embark on traditional Chinese herbal medication. There were plenty of suggestions by friends and relatives mainly from hearsay or folklores. They did not make any difference to her condition and poor Zhiyi had no choice but to consume them just to keep up her hopes and with their wishes. At the end they sought the mystic powers and brought forward their son Benson's marriage. Folklores had it that the double happiness of a marriage can cast away the bad spirit that causes sickness or bad luck in the family.

The marriage took place on March 28th in the large open terrace at the first level of the Longueville mansion with the Master of Ceremony in attendance. We all went there. The boys were the groomsmen; Vivian and I took part in the important tea service, whereby the senior members received the homage from the new couple, and in return gave them their blessings and packets of lucky money. The whole drama ended with the wedding banquet in a Chinese restaurant for another three hours. By the time the marriage was completed, Zhiyi was well and truly exhausted and looked terrible. We left with a heavy heart and a brave face the next morning.

The Death of Zhiyi

After the marriage of her son, Zhiyi persisted with the dual treatment of western chemotherapy and traditional Chinese herbal medicine with increasing emphasis towards the latter. At one stage Xiehe even sent his chief technician to obtain some expensive herbs from remote areas in China. As a last resort she was referred to a visiting professor from China and treated as a private patient. In our few visits during this period we could see parcels and parcels of different herbs either in store or being brewed in special clay pots. Mum was more or less in charge of this important task as the timing and final concentration must be precise. Zhiyi's general condition appeared steady although repeat CAT scans continued to indicate progressive spread of the disease. She was undoubtedly going downhill. Then around the middle of 1996 her condition had a sudden turn with difficulty in breathing and chest pain. This was subsequently confirmed to be a pleural effusion on the right side. The prognosis would be about six months and only palliative measures were warranted.

Zhiyi was always kept in the dark about the seriousness of her condition, and with the persistent herbal medication she clung courageously to the glimmer of hope until a few months later when she developed bleeding in her stomach. The whole family was in a

panic; Vivian and I hurried over there as quickly as we could get a flight. We arrived in the late afternoon and Zhiyi had been moved to the guest room on the ground floor. She was continuously throwing out small amounts of coffee ground fluid from the month, confirming the extension of the disease to the upper digestive system. I sat at her bedside for the night to nurse the bleeding and ease her fear with talking and assurance. Although this relieved somewhat the burden of those who had attended to her on the previous nights, it had no help whatsoever to her situation. At the end we had to call an ambulance to take her to the Emergency Department of the North Shore Hospital. Unfortunately she had to wait there overnight before a bed was available for admission.

Once admitted, symptomatic relief was gradually put in place. An intravenous infusion line was set up to maintain nutrition and to provide an easy and fast route for medication; a gastric tube was introduced to clear the blood and relieve the retching; a urinary catheter was inserted to avoid the inconvenience of using a bed pan; and on the next day a chest tube was put in and connected to a drainage bottle to improve breathing. Eventually she settled down and the bleeding from the stomach decreased. However as expected, the drainage from the chest remained unchanged. We returned home soon afterwards and she passed away in the hospital on the 7th of December 1996.

The funeral was booked for December 11th and the whole family needed to attend. It was high season to travel and I expected to pay dearly for the airfares. Nevertheless when we telephoned and explained the situation to Qantas, we not only had no trouble in getting the four seats but were also given a small discount. How touching this was at a stressful time like this!

The ceremony was held in the Gregory and Carr Funerals' parlour where the proceedings were mixed. There were nuns reciting Buddhist psalms on one side and relatives and friends paying their last respects on the other. I presented my eulogy in classical Chinese at the end to complete the ceremony (Appendix II: 祭秩儀家姊文).

Afterwards we were transported by car to the Macquarie Park Cemetery. There we learned that the grave was a five-block site in the Chinese section, which was intended for the burial of both Zhiyi and subsequently Xiehe. At the time of interment the area was quite barren with only a handful of established graves. When we returned in subsequent years, the place had become popular and were rapidly filling up with extravagant graveyards, some of which looked more like open mausoleums, including that of Zhiyi. The couplet on the headstone was my composition but written by a calligrapher in Hong Kong.

A Long Period of Disarray and Disappointment

Soon after I joined the Perth Chest Clinic I realised that changes were being considered for its future. Tuberculosis was rapidly becoming a curable disease in as short a time as 6 months; yet on the other hand with the rising influx of migrants from countries having a high incidence of the disease, the standard of the controlling institution must be maintained. The first plan in the early 1980s was to incorporate the Chest Clinic into the Department of Respiratory Medicine at the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. This was agreed by the heads on both sides but was annihilated by the radiologists of the Hospital. They refused to accept the traditional practice of Chest Physicians reading the chest x-rays and demanded to charge the Health Department the standard fees on the films being taken there. The cost was too high for the small budget of the Clinic.

The failure of the initiative led to the first reorganisation of the branch in 1984 with the demotion of the Chest Clinic to a lower tier in the hierarchy and the creation of the Community Health Branch with its director (Joseph Cassidy) and directorship taken from the Tuberculosis and Chest Services. When Dr. Cassidy retired in 1987, his role was taken over by Dr. Charles Watson and the Clinic put under Dr. Jag Gill, who, having no qualification in chest diseases, became the Physician-in-charge. Several more external reviews and reports followed, all coming to nothing, and ending in 1988 with the second realignment scheme. Community Health became Disease Control and more sub-units were included. The result was similar; more bureaucracy was created by increasing the number of administrative positions at the expense of real service workers at the lower end and, as a token, the two surviving chest physicians were renamed senior medical officers. In the mean time the continual retirement of the last generation of “tuberculosis physicians” left no force to defend the Clinic, which was subsequently reduced to a “Tuberculosis Control Program” under Dr. Charles Lim in 1991 as the Physician in-charge. In the same year Charles Watson left for another position in Sydney and the directorship of Disease Control went to Jag Gill. I inherited the Chest Clinic in 1995 when Charles Lim relinquished it and retired less than a year later. In July 1996 as a preparation of incorporating the Clinic into the Respiratory Medical Department of the Royal Perth Hospital, I was given an accorded status as a consultant physician in the Hospital. The incorporation became necessary with Dr. Lim’s retirement, as I needed another chest doctor to share part of the Clinic duties.

Research and Publications

Witnessing all along the turmoil and the uncertainty of the Perth Chest Clinic, I could not help wondering that, with regard to my career, I might have made a wrong decision in leaving the Townsville General Hospital. There was, on the other hand, enough compensation from the happiness of the whole family. The early success in my

presentation at the Thirteenth Australian Tuberculosis Clinical Conference of 1983 was encouraging, and I had turned my attention to the ambition of writing the very first scientific paper all by myself. I restarted the search in 1989 from our medical records and was then surprised to find that there had only been one paper published on *Mycobacteria kansasii* in Australia and even that was 12 years ago. So I jumped on it and completed the paper the following year. I submitted it to the specialty journal, *Respiratory Medicine*, in the middle of 1990, revised it in December, and finally had it published in 1991.

After achieving this long-awaited personal goal and hard-earned experience in research, further productions were much easier as long as I could find the time and the right materials. In the ten years to 2000, I had written 13 papers in my spare time, most of them published in reputable medical journals. They also included three presentations in the Australian Tuberculosis Conferences in 1994, 1997 and 2000 respectively and one monograph entitled “Tuberculosis Control in Western Australia” published by Westcare Incorporated in 1996. They covered all aspects of tuberculosis control and a little on to the atypical mycobacterial diseases. On top of these there were at least an equal number of asbestos-related papers where I was a co-author in view of my role as one of the chest x-ray readers {Appendix I¹⁰}.

My success in academic work was contrasted by the persistent decline of the Clinic in its significance within the Health Department. Since the mid-1980s the place had accommodated three more programs, namely the Asbestos-related Vitamin A Program, the Migrant Health and the HIV/AIDS supportive service. The last was a mere physical presence at the rear of the building but the Migrant Health screening required the assistance of the Chest Physicians on busy days. The work was light and involved the general medical check-up of newly admitted migrants to Australia. At times it could be demanding as there were always some coming in odd hours irrespective of efforts to group them in appointed sessions. When Charlie Lim retired in 1996, I had to work alone for some time before we could manage to get a young Australian graduate to help with sessions. He was from interstate and studying for a postgraduate diploma in the University of Western Australia. He was very promising in every aspect and looked set to be able to take charge when I retired. However, suddenly and unexpectedly he had a burst of temper while in consultation to a patient, the reason behind which was never known to the staff. He left abruptly within a year and not seen or heard again.

With the disappearance of the ray of hope we advertised the position in the Australian Medical Journal twice but both failed to attract applicants with the required qualifications. Finally we had to accept a doctor from within the Health Department, who was similar to my age, had no experience in tuberculosis or chest diseases and noted for her difficulty to work harmoniously with colleagues. These proved to be spot on, as within a few months she had upset all the nursing staff, offended several patients by her

determined patronising attitude and scared the interpreters for the migrants. A lot of time was spent repeatedly to resolve the conflicts firstly within the Clinic and later at gradually higher levels without avail. To her credit she did make an effort to improve her knowledge in tuberculosis by taking up a course of study in Nairobi, Kenya at her own expenses. Unfortunately most of the practices there could hardly be applicable to Australia. When the dispute with the nurses reached an untenable crisis, her duties were suspended pending the final decision from the authority. That was towards the end of 1999. A roster from the Chest Physicians in the Department of Respiratory Medicine at the Royal Perth Hospital (just across the road from the Clinic) was temporarily set up to help. The occurrence of the series of events led me to reevaluate my work at the Perth Chest Clinic and reassess my future.

CHAPTER VIII: SEVENTH DECADE 1999-2008

A Miserable Death

After the burial of Zhiyi in the Macquarie Park Cemetery at the end of 1996 Xiehe indicated that my Mum could stay in the Longueville mansion with the convenience and assistance of his servants. Mum was eager to come to stay with me in Perth but the fear of her being home alone for most of the day continued to haunt me. So she was forced to stay put and life carried on as usual. We flew over again six months later to watch the live TV coverage of the ceremony on the return of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China until the early hours of July 1, 1997.

Then in the later part of the year Xiehe informed us that he was to marry again and he had found a lady by the name of Peiwen (培文) in Shanghai who was a retired school teacher and had a government pension. Xiehe had bought her mother an apartment and she was unlikely to stay permanently in Australia. Eventually she visited Sydney a few times and was presented to us when we had a barbecue lunch together in a park. She got bad travel sickness when riding in a car for long period of time. This posed no problem to Mum's situation, but a year later Tai Wah ran into financial difficulty and Xiehe announced that he had to sell the mansion to repay the bank mortgage. Although the matter was not considered urgent at the time, we had to plan for Mum's alternative accommodation. Canada was out of the question. All her children in Australia were on full time work and none had domestic servants. She would be home alone for up to 10 hours during weekdays. Her fragile condition was unsuitable to climb the narrow and relatively steep stairs present in all our existing homes. Lastly her local doctor for over ten years would better look after her medical conditions.

The logical conclusion we arrived at was an aged care hostel with nursing facilities when required. She had in fact been to one of these institutions before for respite care through her doctor. So around July she was again accepted into the Uniting Kamilaroi Lane Cove as a respite client for an initial period of two weeks pending subsequent assessments whether she would be suitable for hostel or nursing home resident status on a long-term basis. Vivian and I went to see her in August. The place was very nice and clean, and she had a single room with en suite. There was even a small balcony overlooking a courtyard. The major difficulty for her was walking to the dining area and lack of human interaction. Mum was never happy but kept the feeling to herself and I presumed that in time she might settle down. We returned home satisfied with the arrangement.

The period of respite care must have been extended or her status was changed to aged care on recommendations from her doctor until mid-September when she had a fall and

was taken to the nearby Longueville Private Hospital. X-ray examination revealed cracks in three spinal bodies in the thoracic and lumbar areas. By the time we went to visit her (this time with Donald) she had settled down somewhat but was definitely distressed. She even asked me to let her die! I was devastated by a deep sense of guilt and helplessness; by then any chance of recovery to a decent living had gone. To make things worse, she was hiding an enlarging and infected pressure sore at her low back due to traditional modesty of a Chinese lady.

I came back to Perth heart-broken and lost track of Mum's movements for a while because of my deteriorating work situation. The next piece of news I picked up was that she developed kidney failure in October. It was likely that some time later she was moved to Ann Maria Nursing Home in West Ryde, as she required full time care. In early December her doctor found that she had anaemia, over-active parathyroid, renal failure and pressure abscess; he referred her to the Emergency Department of the Royal North Shore Hospital. Since none of these were acute conditions she was kept waiting for many hours before a bed could be made available. She was nursed there for two weeks and taken back to Ann Maria when a vacancy in Abrina Nursing Home in Ashfield was available. We had been searching a long time for a home where there were Chinese speaking staff and clients and Abrina was one of them. Although too late in occurrence, she was transferred again on the 29th of December. She never had the time to settle and was taken unconscious to the Ryde Hospital on the 6th of January 2000, where she finally was released from all her sufferings. The diagnosis on her death certificate was pneumonia, the old people's friend. She was eight months and 11 days short of her 90th birthday.

The funeral service was held in the Northern Suburbs Memorial Gardens and Crematorium in North Ryde NSW on the 12th of January 2000 in the presence of her living two sons and two daughters with their spouses. Most of her acquaintances and friends in Sydney attended. It was uncharacteristically drizzling in mid-summer Sydney that morning. The ceremony was a quiet one with all four children presenting eulogies. Zhihua's and mine were in Chinese. My presentation, in particular, was poor; my guilty conscience of indirectly leading to Mum's misery in the last six months had overtaken me. Out of desperation I invented a lame but factual excuse of attributing this to a favour from the providence, which made it possible for four generations in the family to witness together the transition of the millennia.

The eulogy from my brother, Shengduan, was a good one and worthy to reproduce here as our tribute to a great loving mother:

“Our eldest sister, Zhiyi, used to say: the funeral service for anyone over the age of eighty years is not a sad but happy occasion to celebrate and glorify life.

“Our Mum was an old fashioned traditional Chinese lady. She was uneducated and could not read nor write. Yet she brought up five decent children almost single-handedly, one business entrepreneur, a medical doctor, a doctor of philosophy in health science and two nurse. How she did it, I do not know, but what I do know, Mum, you raised us with the only instinct you had, love and devotion!

“Back in the 1950’s, Mum, you lived in China under the communist rule with the three youngest of your children. You had walked through the valley of death several times but you survived for our sake and brought us to Hong Kong.

“After moving to Hong Kong, life was hard. You had to work at home to earn some money and quite often you used it to buy flowers to make the house more like a home. After I graduated from the university, I worked a year as a high school teacher. When I gave my first pay cheque to you, you said: My son, if you have a girl friend, don’t be shy and bring her home to meet us. Sorry Mum, you had to wait another seven years before you got the chance to meet your second daughter-in-law. When you two finally met, your first question to her was why she would marry such an ugly and sloppy man! That was an excellent icebreaker and the wall between the in-laws melted right away. Your daughter-in-law always remembers you as a cute, kind-hearted, easy to get along, loving and caring mother.

“Fourteen years ago you settled down in Australia and we came to visit you from Canada as often as we could. The whole family came about four years ago. Two cars were needed to take us from the airport to your place. My children, Sarah and Ian, took the first one and reached the house first. You were waiting all the time for us at the front gate. When you saw the second car in the driveway, you said loudly: the bald-headed man has arrived! Sarah thought that it was hilarious for a mother to call her son a bald-headed man and Ian reckoned this was cool. Mum, they both remember you as a humorous and loving granny.

“Just a few months ago I called you in the phone. After a few minutes of talking, you said you were very tired and wanted to rest. Mum, you may now rest in peace. We all love you and you shall live in our hearts forever and ever.”

Her body was cremated and the ashes taken back with me to Perth. The ash was interred in the same grave as Dad’s at the Karrakatta Cemetery in Nedlands on the 31st of January. They were at last united again after being separated for 14 years 2 months and 14 days.

Amid these unpleasant events, Donald who had taken up the M. Eng. Sc. course since graduation had eventually found an engineering job at M P Rogers & Associates. A year

later in 1998 he purchased his house at 5 Whitfeld Street Floreat and moved in with his girl friend, Sandy Mercer. As with Ronald I chipped in \$30,000 as an encouragement. Early the following year, Ronald moved from Mount Hawthorn to 116 Sydenham Street Doubleview, which was a three-level big house. He shared it with his fellow classmate who was a trainee surgeon and Ronald an anaesthesiologist. It was at this time that our first grandson, Isaac Yixian (亦賢), was born (on July 9th 1999 in the King Edward Memorial Hospital). They moved back to the Mount Hawthorn house in the following year due to incompatible life styles between the families. This was soon followed by the birth of our first granddaughter Yasmin Yijia (亦嘉) on the 20th of October 2000 (in the St John of God Private Hospital).

Resignation or Retirement

On my return from Sydney after the loss of my beloved mother I realised that there was no future for me in the Chest Clinic. Those taking charge of its fate had neither any idea about this great heritage nor care about its future. So a few months later I decided to leave; the question was to retire or to resign? The system in public service at the time dictated that resignation might need to go through a set of procedures, including explanations, answering questionnaires and/or interviews. Furthermore I could not take up a similar job anywhere in the vicinity. However a retirement was clear-cut and left no questions asked; I could even continue to work there as a temporary staff. The final decision was: I turned my resignation due to frustration into a retirement! As such I did not discuss the matter with Vivian beforehand; after all it was all about years of disappointment and frustrations that I alone had gone through. Although both Ronald and Donald had been independent, I still did not feel financially secure enough to stop work. The first step I took was therefore to sell one of the rental units in Victoria Park for \$141,327 in August 2000 as a safety net of ready cash. With this I handed in my application and retired officially on December 4th; I converted my entitled leaves of four and a half months into a lump sum payment.

My Departing Speech

The farewell party was a low-key one and organised by the staff of the Chest Clinic. The notable presence was Dr. Kenneth Carruthers who recruited me from Townsville and had retired for many years. Strangely enough those that missed me the most came from the team of research workers on asbestos related diseases, including its head, Dr. AW Musk of the Respiratory Medical Department at the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

When my turn came to address the party, I said:

“... My gratitude must go to each and every one of the loving staff of this Clinic for their unrelenting support and understanding during the last three difficult months. To them I owe an apology for not disclosing earlier my departure which was actually decided quite suddenly. The fact is: I am not leaving because I want to retire; I am leaving because I am unable to contribute further to the Perth Chest Clinic in a way I would like it to be in the new millennium. It is therefore fair to let someone younger, more dynamic and more capable to have a chance. ...

When I was given the job of physician in charge in May 1995, I set myself four humble goals:

1. To establish and document policy guidelines for the functions of the State Tuberculosis Control Service,
2. To produce a practical manual of the control program in Western Australia,
3. To restore the national respectability and prestige of this Clinic to the level of the Australian Tuberculosis Campaign era, and
4. To develop the Perth Chest Clinic into a force in the Asia Pacific region to combat the global problem.”

“... We were able to complete the first goal within twelve months and went on to research and publish. The latter are necessary to update our policies and in so doing we gradually earned the respect from the colleagues in the other States and Territories. The manual has always been a bigger project and I found it difficult to take on the task without the assistance of another physician to relieve my clinical burden. The project was therefore never started.

To achieve the last goal I need to overcome two hurdles, namely the revitalisation of the Tuberculosis Service to prevent it dying from natural attrition, and the search for somebody with the interest and potential to take over by the time I retire. ...”

“Occupying the position for half a decade, achieving only 50% of the goals and seeing no prospect of success on the rest with my lone hand, I am sure you will agree that I should leave and let someone to have a fair go. Don't get me wrong; I never admit that the failure is my fault. A wise person once said that management without power is ineffective and power without judgment is dangerous, and I have never been given any power beyond caring for the clients in the Clinic. ...”

After my departure the Chest Clinic went under the Royal Perth Hospital and one young Consultant Chest Physician successfully bargained with the Health Department to recapture the directorship of tuberculosis. I always thought that I had done enough for the State body to be rewarded the title but I was totally mistaken. No bureaucrats

nowadays would or could voluntarily reward outstanding and loyal services any more except of course for themselves or political reasons.

A Hectic Period after Retirement

After getting rid of the burden, I first took a holiday to visit my in-laws in Vancouver, Canada from 18th to the 25th of December hoping to enjoy a white Christmas. On the fourth day we were window-shopping in the Pacific Centre after lunch. An unbelievable event happened, which effectively spoiled our vacation. Vivian went to the washroom and hanged her handbag as usual at the back of the door. When she finished, the bag had disappeared and there was no one to be seen in the room. Obviously the bag had been stolen. We reported to the management and went through the tedious procedures of interviews before we were allowed to use their telephone to cancel the various credit cards. It was plain that we were getting nowhere from them, we went to report the theft of our belongings to the police, the loss of our return air tickets to the airline, and the incident to the Australian High Commission in an attempt to obtain our replacement passports. The pressure was immense as it occurred on a Friday afternoon but at least we did all we could under the circumstances.

Naturally we had a sleepless night but imagine how delighted we were when at 4.00 a.m. we received a call from two police officers, followed by their appearance in the hotel lobby (the Pacific Palisades Hotel in Robson Street) 10 minutes later with Vivian's handbag! Furthermore they politely refused any token gesture of our gratitude apart from "Thank you very much" and "Merry Christmas". Apparently whoever stole the bag had the decency of taking only the cash and the digital camera; our passports, air tickets, medication and photographs in undeveloped films were left in the bag, which was dumped into a mailbox. This piece of good lucky came at a cost of over \$1000.

Soon after we returned home Donald and Sandy took a long backpack travel in Europe. We had little idea about the places they covered. We actually received only one postcard from them when they were leaving Italy for Switzerland. One thing clear as crystal was that they were enjoying a tour of their lifetime in every sense!

After my disappointed holiday in Vancouver I found work with the Health Services Australia on February 2nd 2001, which was a Commonwealth medical assessment agency on prospective applicants for residence in Australia. The work was light, consisting essentially of a full clinical history and examinations with emphasis on infectious diseases, working capacity and future demands on the healthcare system. The pay was lean, at a rate of \$15.00 per client, the contract was sessional and the time at my own choice. A month later Vivian changed her red Honda Accord sedan to a black Subaru Forrester, a five-door four-wheel drive, to help her shopping loads.

A few months after I started work at the Health Services Australia, I was offered a part-time Chest Physician position from the Royal Perth Hospital to work again at the Chest Clinic. The pay was at the starting scale of a staff physician with the addition of the standard allowances and superannuation. This was too good to refuse and I started with three mornings a week on July 1st 2001 and the remaining days at the other place. This full week schedule of work stabilised my mind in terms of financial security and even the vivid horrors of the 9/11 events in television did not disturb me much. My dual work continued until the end of June 2003 when I gave up the one with the lower pay. Within six months of my return to the Chest Clinic I completed the unfinished manual for tuberculosis control and called it “A Concise Guide to Tuberculosis Control in Australia”. I left it to the nurses when I finally left the Chest Clinic on November 6th 2005. By then and in a way I had fulfilled my professional working life to the age of sixty-five years.

A Total Devastation

Just under eleven months after I returned to the Chest Clinic as a part-time chest physician of the Royal Perth Hospital, Donald who had been feeling unwell for a while had a blood test around the middle of May 2002. Ronald who had gone to the Royal Melbourne Children Hospital for a second degree in paediatric anaesthesiology had returned at the time to do a locum work in a country hospital. We were shown the blood test result and it was like a bombshell out of nowhere! We were totally devastated. It indicated that Donald had acute leukaemia and his doctor had arranged for a marrow biopsy the following week.

After the initial shock and heartache we still had to go through a period of anguish waiting to learn of the verdict and the reality that might follow. Ronald’s reflex reaction was to terminate his course in Melbourne to support his brother who was the only non-medical member in the family. Vivian and I saw it differently; whatever the implications might be, it would take time to evolve and we both remained closely associated with the healthcare services in Perth. Even in the unlikely event that Ronald may be needed in person Melbourne was just a few hours away by air. For the rest telephone calls would do the job adequately.

The biopsy was done confirming the diagnosis and Donald was referred to Dr. Paul Cannel at the Haematology Department, Royal Perth Hospital. While waiting for admission more tests were done and the full diagnosis became “acute myelomonocytic Leukaemia, subtype *translocation* (8;21)” We were then interviewed by Dr. Cannel and he told us that this form of leukaemia had a 70-80% chance of cure rate with chemotherapy alone but still we had to prepare for a possible bone marrow transplant in case it might be required. Of the close family members, Vivian and I were ruled out due to old age; only

Ronald needed to be tested. He was subsequently excluded also as a non-match. Our second-degree blood relatives were then contacted for consent to be similarly tested as potential donors. Unfortunately none was found to be suitable.

On May 31st 2002 Donald was admitted into the Royal Perth Hospital in a general ward and chemotherapy was started the next morning. A pretreatment electrocardiogram unexpectedly showed some weakness in his heart muscle, which could affect the exact choice of the drugs used. The plan was to give a total of four courses of combination therapy, each lasting for seven days. A central venous line was inserted for their administration and another peripheral line for giving him supportive medication (in case of unpleasant side effects) and ensuring nutrition and acid base balance. He could maintain ambulence by moving the drips around with him if necessary.

The first (induction) course consisted of:

Cytarabine, daily for 7 days,
Etoposide, daily for 7 days and
Daunorubicin, daily for 3 days.

A pump controlled the rates of their administration automatically over a fixed time schedule according to the protocol.

Donald had minimal side effects throughout the treatment. His appetite was upset but there was no vomiting that probably was controlled by the use of an anti-emetic concomitantly. The effect however became obvious when tests showed the dramatic and continual fall in all blood elements. He would require periodic transfusions of packed red cells and platelets. By the second day of treatment he was moved to a single room in the special BMT (Bone Marrow Transplant) Unit with strict infection control precautions and ventilation system. This was because white blood cells, being highly antigenic could not be transfused. Instead G-CSF (white cell stimulating factor) injections were started to assist the recovery. However two weeks later a marrow biopsy showed no cells and would need to be repeated in order to confirm whether remission had been induced. While waiting for the next biopsy he was allowed to go home for the weekend.

When the repeat biopsy still did not show any cells, remission was assumed and the second (consolidation) course of chemotherapy was delayed until the 27th of June. It consisted of Cytarabine, Etoposide and Amsacrine, all being given in the same manner daily for seven days. The Amsacrine replaced the Daunorubicin as the latter was considered more toxic to the heart. This time the adverse effects were much more severe and lasted longer. Other than the low haemoglobin and platelet levels requiring transfusions he developed a few episodes of scaring rigour requiring either intravenous

antibiotic or fluid replacement. There were no sign of recovery even seven weeks after its completion. Generally Donald was allowed home waiting for the recovery after the blood counts were rendered satisfactory with transfusions. The third course of chemotherapy was postponed to early October and finished on the 18th. The same severe complications followed as with the second course; it was then decided that he would not be given the fourth course.

It took more than two months after the completion of chemotherapy for Donald to recover to a shade of his former vibrant image though his sense of humour was in fact heightened after the ordeal. He was doing so well that he and Sandy joined us for a visit to Sydney where we had a harbour dinner cruise and attended the wedding banquet of Cynthia (Zhihua's daughter) in Gosford to the north of Sydney. Unfortunately his good luck ran out three months later. At a routine follow up on the 6th of May 2003 we were told that the disease relapsed and attempts were made to collect Donald's own stem cells for autograft but failed because of the small numbers obtained. Efforts were intensified through international online search for a matched donor. Meanwhile three more courses of chemotherapy were administered to induce another remission. These took place from May to July with the last one completed at home through an ambulatory pump hung to a shoulder bag. The news of finding an acceptable donor finally came in early August. The person was a Chinese lady in Hong Kong; the match was not complete but considered good enough under the circumstances. The scheduled time for the transplant was October. When Donald recovered sufficiently well from the treatment he and Sandy went to Darius' wedding in Hong Kong; Darius, Bernard Deng's second son, was in the same class as Donald at the Christ Church Grammar School. Donald was invited as a guest speaker in the ceremony.

Donald's Illness on the Rest of the Family

Ronald rented out his house in Mount Hawthorn when he moved to and shared the house with his surgeon friend in Doubleview in 1998. Less than two years later the family moved back and Ronald obtained his specialty qualification in anaesthesiology. In the following year they made the third move to Swanborne at 13 Bellevue Terrace and were getting close to our place. When Ronald went to Melbourne with his family in January 2002 to do his paediatric anaesthesiology degree, the house was under the care of Johanne's brother for the twelve months. To alleviate the heavy cost of taking the family to Melbourne with him, Ronald returned to do a two-week locum job in a country hospital in Western Australia. They stayed in our place for the period and that gave us a really family gathering. There was however a scare when Isaac caught a cold and was noticed to daze off with a transient febrile convulsion. We took him to the Princess Margaret Hospital as a precaution; he was discharged after a short period of observation.

Ronald had just finished his locum work and about to leave for Melbourne again when Donald's blood results indicated he had acute leukaemia. We had to persuade hard to convince him not to give up his goal as there was really nothing much he could do apart from showing care and support. I understood that they kept frequent telephone contacts all the time after Ronald returned to Melbourne. When his disease remitted after chemotherapy, the first thing Donald did was to visit his brother and family in Melbourne. When he completed the requirements for his second qualification, Ronald went into private practice back in Perth; hence he could visit Donald any time when he was free, in hospital, at home or in our place. The visiting hours in the BMT Unit of the hospital was long and with minimal restrictions as long as one observed the strict infection control precautions. Our third grandchild, Owen was born on July 23, 2003 when Donald had just finished his course of pre-transplant chemotherapy at home.

As to us, after the initial shock and pain Vivian immediately took seven weeks of compassionate leave, which was later extended with her long service leave. I took four weeks off work initially as my job was part-time and confined mainly to the mornings. Even so after a year I gave up the lesser one in Health Services Australia. Our mood naturally fluctuated with the numerous ups and downs in the course of Donald's fight for his life. There were moments of worry and concern when he had the spells of rigour and shivering; there were periods of anguish when waiting for tests to improve; there were rays of faith and hope when the disease was in remission; then there was the constant sadness and heartache watching the gradual deterioration in his physical form and health. Our routine and almost daily duty was to prepare his favourite meals and soups in strict accordance to the rules of infection control. Vivian was always social and never seemed to run out of talking subjects either with Donald, Sandy or their friends. I was the quiet one but felt emotionally much closer to him than ever before. Was this because we were linked in blood and flesh? Or was this a presentiment that time was running out for me to hold onto him?

In between Donald's numerous hospital admissions and whenever his physical condition and blood counts permitted we would take him to various quiet diners for lunch or supper. On occasions we might be joined by Ronald with or without his family, and by Sandy with or without her parents. The places visited varied from food halls in shopping centres to high class European restaurants. Vivian had her saddest birthday celebration on July 2nd 2002 when Donald was having his consolidation phase of chemotherapy in hospital and Ronald with his family in Melbourne. The two old folks sat at the corner table by the side of Hay Street in Subiaco. The meal was good and the weather fine but our hearts were shattered. We conversed sparsely not even trying to comfort each other; for we knew so well the prognosis was bleak. The food was swallowed with our hidden tears.

The Bone Marrow Transplant

After the pre-transplant chemotherapy Donald was in a relatively good shape. Other than going to Hong Kong for his close friend's wedding he also started a website on himself, telling his story about the disease and the horrific treatments in a light-hearted and humorous manner. The address of the site is:

<http://users.tpg.com.au/pangster/>

The marrow transplant took place in a special room at the BMT unit, Royal Perth Hospital on October 1st 2003. Earlier a senior registrar had flown to Hong Kong with specific equipment and instructions to store and transport the bag of collected bone marrow from the lady donor. At the scheduled time the marrow was connected to the central venous line and the desired running rate set. All resuscitation measures and personnel were standing by and watched the whole procedure. We were among the observers. Fortunately nothing serious occurred during and after the transfusion. The late effects however appeared gradually over the coming months and years. The worst were the immune related damage to the skin and the lungs and before these there was the immediate depression of Donald's bone marrow, which was actually a two edged sword. The effect was good to kill off the hidden traces of leukaemic cells but at the same time leaving the body almost defenceless. With good supportive care he got over this in two months and started to recover slowly. Nothing much could be done on the skin changes; the lung complication came later.

Fifteen Months of High Hopes

In the early months of 2004 Donald was progressing well and he started a kind of online employment service with a friend. The concept was essentially providing a platform for both employers and work seekers to use the site for a small commission. Such an enterprise was relatively new at the time and needless to say it was a waiting game. Meanwhile they were learning to run a business, promoting and improving it continuously. For the remaining of his time, he traded shares with little success.

In March after witnessing Donald's gradual improvement we took a break and a short tour to the Hunter Valley in NSW. That was a refreshing change from the daily catering services in the past eighteen months. In July Donald was invited to speak at the "Longest Table Lunch" for the Leukaemia Foundation in the Sandalford Winery and Restaurant in West Swan followed by a visit to Hong Kong to celebrate the Christmas festival. It was also heartening to see Donald finding work as a coastal engineer with the Worley Parsons Group in the following year. He even went as far as renovating the bathroom of his house, which he completed pretty professionally though very slowly. These promising

signs raised our hopes of a successful outcome in spite of the fact that the cytogenetic tests were never totally clear. So in August 2005 we joined the Hong Kong Nursing group (in Western Australia) to take a China tour to Yunnan (雲南) and Lijiang (麗江).

Life was back to the previous usual. Vivian had returned to her full time hospital duties since 2003 while I finally ceased the Chest Clinic work on November 2005. Seven months later I was lured by the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection to read their accumulated load of screening chest x-rays on asbestos exposed workers. The work was familiar and the price tempting at \$15 per film. The catch was I had to access them in their location at a far away suburb (Cannington). On balance it was not bad; so I had a sessional job again and I stayed there for a full three years. We continued to see Donald in his home regularly and dined out with him and Sandy as before but seldom present at his outpatient appointments, which generally took place in Dr Cannel's private surgery in West Perth.

A Rapid Downhill Course

The follow up appointment two years post-transplant was at Christmas time in Dr. Cannel's Haematology Office at the Royal Perth Hospital. Ronald and we were there with Donald and Sandy. The tests were performed but the result would not be known for some time, as it was a long festive break. At this meeting we were given a picture of the lady donor with her partner but her name was withheld.

Although Donald's condition appeared stable, no further improvement was noted in the tests and in particular the cytogenetic marker was creeping up slowly. The bad news came in May 2006 when CAT scan revealed the presence of focal masses in his liver and a biopsy confirmed them to be leukaemic. So the bone marrow transplant was unsuccessful in eradicating the disease although there was yet no evidence of relapse in the blood and the marrow. Local radiation to the masses was applied but the effects were as bad as the chemotherapy. Further scans showed the appearance of new masses in the abdominal cavity as the old ones were ablated. The end result was more treatment, more suffering and more damage to his body and mind. At one time he fainted on standing up at home; we happened to be there and took him to the hospital. We never knew how worry or distressed Donald was when he was alone; he always wore a smile in front of people irrespective of what state of mind he was in.

In August Vivian decided that Donald got sick after she bought the black Subaru Forrester and that the car looked very much like a hearse. So we changed it to a metallic silver Volkswagen Jetta. On the 30th of the same month, we went to watch the Cinque du Soleil show in Langley Park Perth with Donald and Sandy, who had bought the tickets months beforehand as a Christmas present to us. Exactly thirty days later, on September

30th they, being both fans of the West Coast Eagles Football Club, were in the Melbourne Cricket Ground watching their team defeat the Sydney Swans to win the 2006 championship in the Australian Football League grand final.

All the happy occasions could not halt or alter the course of Donald's illness. The lung complication that was next to follow was an immune-related development to the marrow transplant resulting in a kind of interstitial inflammation and fibrosis. All lung volumes were reduced; oxygen absorption from the air sacs was reduced; and there was difficulty in the lungs to cope with exertion. The only care they could provide was steroid medication and periodic monitoring of his lung functions. At this time Sandy gave up her own engineer work and was fully in charge of his medical care. We had no idea what the view of Dr. Paul Cannel was at this stage and were scared to face the reality. Indeed we took another tour to Jiuzhaigou (九寨沟), China in October that year.

Life dragged on painfully and sorrowfully as we watched helplessly Donald being eroded away in front of us, only to be masked by the plump features (undesirable side effects) from the steroid therapy. Our feelings must be numbed by then if we had not given up hopes already. Ronald moved his house yet again to Claremont in 2006 and we booked another tour to the Rocky Mountains on rail and Alaska by cruise for May 2007. But never Donald, as we learned later that he had kept his faith in beating the disease all the way to his last breath!

Helen, Zhiyi's eldest daughter flew over from Sydney to see Donald in early April. We had a buffet dinner in the Burswood Atrium followed by a breakfast in the Old Swan Brewery Restaurant three days later. He did not look well but tried his best to enjoy the gatherings. Then on the 28th of April, a week before our tour we had a family dinner at the Emma Seafood Chinese Restaurant in Victoria Park with the attendance of Sandy's parents and Ronald's family, which turned out to be our last family supper.

We completed our tours on May 21st and were just outside the Vancouver International Airport when we received the call from Ronald telling us that Donald's leukaemia relapsed. Our decision was not required, as Donald had determined to have another course of chemotherapy that was due to start the following week. We immediately cancelled our three-day stay in Vancouver and booked the next available flight back to Perth. We arrived home on the 23rd and when we visited him, he was in a shared room, sitting up and working on his computer. He looked comfortably his usual self as we last saw him but we knew pretty well that we were going to lose him soon.

The chemotherapy was able to clear the circulation of cancer blood cells but the marrow had lost most of its regenerative powers. Donald depended on the transfusion of

platelets and red cells to keep him going but the G-CSF had little effect in bringing up the white cells. After a month of hard struggling the inevitable finally happened. Donald developed a serious Gram-negative bacterial infection that quickly turned into a multi-drug resistant septicaemia. To make it worse the bug cultured was pseudomonas, one of the worst a person could get in an institution. Within a week and with no effective antibacterial agents to use he developed multiple organ failure and was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit. He was there conscious all the time and kept on asking about his neutrophil (white blood cell) counts. We admired his fighting spirit but felt very sorry for him. At last we agreed to the Intensivist's suggestion of an induced coma and two hours later his heart stopped and he passed away. The time was 0645 hours on the 12th of July 2007. Donald was three months short of his 35th birthday.

Funeral and the Rest

This moment had been haunting me for over five years and was all but expected since the failure of the bone marrow transplant was evident fourteen months ago. When it finally did come, the pain was still too great to bear and the shock too stunned for tears. We prayed silently beside Donald's body for five minutes and left him alone with Sandy for another fifteen minutes. Holding to one another and heart broken, we left the place that was supposedly able to resurrect a human being with modern skills and technology except Donald.

We went home to freshen up and have a good rest before making the announcement in the paper and to our relatives and close friends with the request to donate to the Leukaemia Foundation or the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit of the Royal Perth Hospital *in lieu* of flowers and cards. Funeral matters were discussed at a meeting between the Mercer and Peng families two days later. It took place in Churchland in the house of the Mercer seniors. The final decision was to engage the Bowra and O'Dea for the funeral arrangements. The ceremony would be held and the casket cremated at the Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park Crematorium in Padbury. Rob and Diane, Sandy's parents offered to share half the expenses, and Sandy would like to have Donald's ashes spread around a blackbutt tree in their family farm in Margaret River where Donald had spent many happy weekends with Sandy. The procedures were left to the next meeting with the Funeral Director. The main ceremony was set for July 21st at 1030 hours in the Crematorium and there was a small viewing service the day before in the chapel of the Cottesloe Office of Bowra and O'Dea.

The weather had a dramatic change on the morning of the funeral; when we began the ride to the Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, the sky was overcast and the wind chilly. It started to rain on the way and kept on raining throughout the whole ceremony. Donald's favourite music and songs were playing for most of the time until the celebrant, Mr. Peter

Ferguson addressed the gathering at 10.30 a.m. This was followed by eulogies from Sandy, Ronald, friends and relatives. A DVD on Donald's short adult life was then presented. The ceremony ended with every one standing to bid the final farewell as the casket was slowly moved from the stage to the crematorium. The guests were invited to attend a wake in Ronald's house for the remaining of the day.

The traditional formalities were completed in the following ten days. Firstly the ashes in a plastic bag, was packed inside a special cardboard box from Bowra and O'Dea, which was then placed inside a miniature wooden casket with a gold-coloured plastic plate on top and labeled with Donald's full name and the dates of birth and death. Secondly the official death certificate was ready after a week and sent to us through Bowra and O'Dea together with the invoice for the expenses, which totalled a little over \$8000. Two weeks later and at the invitation of Diane and Rob we drove down to spend a night with them in their cattle farm in Margaret River. We were shown the gravesite reserved for Donald's ashes on one side of the farm, which was a plot of land measuring 3x3 meters in area and being enclosed by poles of 2.2 meters high. It was clearly visible from the all timber house that was built on an elevated area of the block.

Finally came the long and tedious regulatory management of Donald's estate since he did not have a will and was not legally a married person. This involved a detailed inventory as well as an understanding between Sandy (de facto partner) and us (parents). Although we had agreed to let Sandy have all his assets, by law 10% of everything should be awarded to the parents. These were carried out periodically over two years. Every time we received our share of the payment we electronically transferred it back to Sandy's bank account. We had no idea where they came from and did not keep a record of the amounts. We truly felt that Sandy deserved them for her unreserved care and support through the five years. The only item we might not have done right would be the three crown Ronisch piano since this belonged to the brothers. Ronald was too easy going to care and so we too let it go.

We had visited the Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park a few times to look for a good burial plot but the area we liked never seemed to be ready. The wall memorials were too small for the casket. As a result a proper burial was delayed further and further. In the mean time I had been busy with two projects of mine, which I considered more meaningful. I had started a verse to farewell Donald (Appendix II: A Final Farewell to Donald) in the wake and must therefore complete it as quickly as possible. The second was to produce a PowerPoint memoir from the collection of family photographs.

The first project was finished in a month and the other, called "Photo-memoir of Donald" {Appendix I¹¹}, took two months as I was attempting to do a PowerPoint slideshow with music for the first time. The file is large at almost 200 megabytes in size

and I subsequently uploaded it to my Google Drive to share it with my relatives. During this time Vivian went into the Bethesda Hospital to have surgery for her right “frozen shoulder”. Three months later we restarted our “seeing the world” ambition and took a coach tour of Shandong (Appendix II: 齊魯行) followed by a cruise in the flooded Three Gorges of Changjiang (Appendix II: 三峽遊).

All the time I maintained my chest x-ray reading for the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection at irregular days that I was able to spare. This helped to take the mind off my sorrows. In March the following year I resumed another sessional work as a research assistant with the Asbestos Diseases Prevention Program, but this time the viewing of the x-rays was done at the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. My pay came from a limited research budget and was therefore at a lowly \$15 an hour. It did not bother me, as I liked the work although parking there was not cheap and troublesome.

Zhiling’s New Relationship

I had no idea how the serial tragic events in the family following Zhiling’s failed marriage affected her social recovery. They included Zhiyi’s diagnosis of, and death from breast cancer (1992-96), Mum’s admission to, and subsequent death in a nursing home (1998-2000) and the very short life of Donal (1972-2007). Undoubtedly her greatest help and consolation came mostly from Zhihua. In one fine day in 2005, after their shopping spree they were searching for a place to have a nibble in Chatswood Westfield Centre. The food hall was full and the only vacant seats available were in a table occupied by a gentleman who did not hesitate to allow them to join him. His name was Tony Lucic from Croatia. They started a conversation and ended in Zhiling’s mobile number added to Tony’s.

This chance meeting was followed by many regular ones between Zhiling and Tony with or without the presence of Zhihua. It was, to begin with, a companionship more than physical attraction between the two lonely souls with similar past events of failed marriages and political oppressions. Tony was born in Dubrovnik when it was under Yugoslavia and migrated to Australia in the early 1970’s. He was a qualified electrician and had four children, one of whom died from an acute asthmatic attack. His main hobbies are soccer, fishing and driving. Indeed during one of our many visits to Sydney, he gifted us two huge squids which were the best I ever tasted in my life, and he drove us to the airport in his vintage car! They all knew about our travels with the Hong Kong Nursing Association of WA. So in 2008 Zhiling and Zhihua joined us in touring Jiuzhaigou, followed by Zhiling and Tony in the South Korea/Japan trip.

Zhiling sold her townhouse at the end of 2008 with a handsome capital gain. Two months later, in February 2009, they formalised their de facto status and bought a house

in Kinsella Court, Kellyville, NSW 2155 in equal shares. The house was then a relatively new two-storey rural residence but five years later, the North West Rail Link Corridor Strategy was announced by the State Government, preparing to guide the development of land around eight new stations. One of them was the Kellyville Station Precinct. The suburb's average block value suddenly jumped to the million-dollar mark. However they had kept their assets and finance independently and drew up separate wills for their relationship. Zhiling, perhaps following the example of Zhiyi, started to gift luxury birthday presents, such as the Chinese Zodiac 1 oz gold coins to her grand nephews and nieces.

Time to Downsize

Our house in Minora Road and the block of land proved to be too large for the two elderly parents. Ronald had already moved to a block even bigger than ours. Every thing inside and out reminded us of the happy days when the vibrant Donald was around. The loud music from his car as he drove onto the driveway and the high-spirited greeting “Hi Mum! Hi Dad! Your favourite son is here!” as he entered the house, were still reverberating from the walls of the family room. It took me more than six months before I had the will power to tidy up the stuffs in his old bedroom. The small basketball courtyard set up by him in the back garden had shown signs of neglect. His Honda motorcycle was lying idle in the garage for a long time. The obvious decision would be to downsize and move to another area. So we put the house on the market on the 31st of March with Abel McGrath and sold it within a month for \$2,950,000. We requested a late settlement of 120 days, as we needed more time to get rid of the huge amount of stuffs accumulated over twenty-four years. That took more than three months even with the help of many friends and relatives. It was sad that we had to throw or give away so much stuff, many of which were of sentimental value. It took three large disposal bins to reduce the house contents to a reasonable volume for removal. We then began to hunt for our next home.

At the same time Vivian made up her mind to retire as well, which she did in June 2008 after working in the Maternity Unit of the Swan District Hospital two months short of twenty-four years. With that house hunting accelerated and we found it a month later. It was a two-level brick and tile house situated in a 480 square meter block with a front garden of reasonable size and a small concrete swimming pool adjacent to an alfresco area and a tiny lawn at the back. The lower level contained the family and dining rooms, the kitchen, formal lounge, a study and an en-suite bedroom. A short driveway next to the front garden led to a two-car garage behind a remote controlled roll-a-door. A side gate on the inner fence opened into the porch and the front door. There were four side doors, two from the garage and one each from the laundry behind the kitchen and from the family room to the alfresco. The upper level contained three bedrooms, two of which

had walk-in wardrobes and en-suites. The largest one became our master bedroom and the smallest for Donald's books, albums, sporting trophies and his childhood toys. The third one I used as my study whereas the study downstairs became a library. An air-condition unit, which provided ventilation and temperature control to the whole house, was attached to the left side of the house. In addition there were two ceiling fans in the family area, which could blow air upwards or downwards. However it was not cheap at \$2,390,000 for under half the size of our previous block. So at the end we only had about \$500,000 free cash.

While waiting for the house swapping to settle we visited Sydney with Ronald and his family in July. We had our first experience in a luxury service apartment at Quay West, which overlooked the beautiful Sydney Harbour.

We moved to the new home on the 19th of August 2008. Amid the chaos of moving houses and visiting Sydney we missed an invitation to attend the retirement of Patricia Hall, a Chest Clinic nurse. So I wrote a note to explain and invited her to come to our new place for a cup of coffee. She did and brought with her another colleague, Christine whom I knew just as well as Pat. They presented us a rose in a pot, which was named "Motherly Love" and very appropriate to Vivian. Morning tea was extended to lunch in the Claremont Quarters. Through them I learned that the Clinic and Migrant Health were about to move to a new premise at a nearby building in the Wellington Street and that the place would be named the Anita Clayton Centre. Although when the Clinic staff was asked to suggest a name, the majority proposed mine. It was denied by the Health Department on the ground that they preferred a lady in this occasion. Anita, who joined the service at about the same time as I, was the head nurse of the Clinic when I retired. I did not give any thought on the matter then, as I did not expect this. Some time later I felt being badly snubbed and could not accept a decision on political correctness over the traditional standard by merits. So I ignored the invitation to attend the opening ceremony of the new Centre.

A month later and before we had finished unpacking from the recent move, we went on a tour to South Korea and Japan (Appendix II: 韓日遊記) in October 2008. Zhiling and Tony joined us this time.

CHAPTER IX: EIGHTH DECADE 2009-2018

Seventieth Birthday

The loss of Donald must be the greatest calamity in my life. Although I was brought up in a poor village family in China, my childhood was a very happy one. Being isolated from the prospering cities I never felt wanting any luxuries nor indeed knew how the rich people lived. The Sino-Japanese and the civil wars did not affect me at all, thanks to my Dad's wisdom as a farmer and being the eldest son in a Chinese family. Once I had the right education in Hong Kong my destiny was entirely in my own hands.

I was reaching the height of my career when I chose to migrate to Australia, very much against tradition and the wishes of my parents. Nonetheless to this day I have no regrets on the decision in spite of the disappointment in my achievements. Whatever I lost in wealth and social status by leaving Hong Kong I was more than compensated by the happiness and the health of the whole family until the curse struck Donald. The perfect family was cracked.

After I finally settled down quietly in the new house in Mosman Park, I asked myself what the meaning of my life would be from then on. It did not make any sense that I was celebrating my seventieth birthday while Donald was taken away from us at less than half of my age. My motto of life has always been, "Life is how I make it!" "But how am I going to make it now?" I had no answer and still cannot find one. Instead I wrote a Chinese poem (Appendix II: 七十誕辰) to describe the state of my mind on the 2nd of January 2009.

Tours and Cruises

I persisted with my two sessional jobs of reading chest x-rays in Cannington and at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital because they helped momentarily taking the memory of Donald away from my mind. For the rest of the time, I remained a walking skeleton desperately searching for a new meaning of my life. I did not need more money than I had saved; Ronald probably had as much if not more, in his assets though with a bigger and younger family. So "why don't we just spend them?"

In March 2009 we went to visit George who was working in Beijing (北京), had a local tour there and took the high-speed rail for the first time to Tianjin (天津). Then we flew to Xian (西安) to see firsthand the necropolis of the First Qin Emperor (秦始皇) and his terracotta army in Lishan (驪山), Shansi (陝西). In May we went to Toronto, Canada for my niece, Sarah's wedding. There we also took a tour to East Canada, including

Montreal, Quebec and the Thousand Islands in the St Lawrence River. To complete the busy year we had the coach, rail and cruise tour of both the North and South Islands of New Zealand in November. In the middle of the year, I finished off my sessions with the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection after clearing up all their x-rays.

Donald's Memorials

That I used a bedroom to store Donald's personal belongings and his old furniture was a necessity in the beginning. They had accompanied him for most of his high school and university days. I could not shut my eyes and threw them away; so I rearranged them with the addition of a few of his photographs, particularly the one when he attended the annual long table lunch sponsored by the Leukaemia Foundation as a guest speaker in 2004. His single bed from Ikea, which we bought for him at the time we moved to Minora Road, was in my study due to insufficient space. With the wooden casket containing his ashes in display for almost a year, the room, as Vivian once observed, looked like Donald's mausoleum. Every year on the anniversary of his passing I would watch "Photo-memoir of Donald" once in this room with my eyes filled with tears until 2017 when strangely they dried up although the heartache was still there unfazed.

On the first anniversary the blackbutt tree in Diane and Rob's farm had grown to nearly two meters tall. The site was ready to take in Donald's ashes. So we drove down south to Margaret River again. This time Ronald, Johanne and their kids all came with us but they stayed in a nearby motel. We had brought the complete casket, which was unscrewed and opened. The plastic bag of ashes was taken out of the cardboard box. Sandy and then the kids poured them out slowly around the tree while the rest stood outside the enclosure in silence. It was a simple non-religious but solemn rite among the families.

On our side we had decided that Padbury would be too far away. So we toured around the Karrakatta Cemetery, as my parents were buried there. Again we could not find something we agreed to be appropriate. We had booked a tour to hike the famous Huangshan (黄山) in Anhui (安徽), China for October 2010. To keep us fit for the challenge we started a regular morning walk around Mosman Park. We chose the roads or paths that were going up and down for the training. It was during these exercises that we came across the highest section of the Bayview Terrace where there was a kind of memorial wall with plaques erected by local residents. It overlooked the Swan River and the Perth city central. An enquiry with the City Council confirmed our eligibility and available spaces but we needed to hand in an application with what would be engraved on the plaque for approval. The site was free for residents and the cost for the engraved plaque was \$160 including installation. It was completed in time for the third anniversary. On the plaque were written the following:

DONALD TK PANG
09.10.1972 12.07.2007

The water you researched
The river you embraced
The city you perched
The best spot we've traced
Love forever
Mum Dad Ron Jo

On the early hours of July 12th 2010, a severe cyclone passed over the southwestern corner of Western Australia causing havoc to countless trees and a number of houses. When I got up in the morning the sky was gloomy, the wind was howling and the showers were still at the mercy of the dying cyclone. The gardens were covered with fallen leaves and boughs. The depressing scene reflected exactly my mood. I recorded the moment in a Chinese poem (Appendix II: 三年) before I viewed my PowerPoint Memoir that morning.

The last piece of memorial actually started a year earlier when I learned about the news that the University of Hong Kong was preparing for its centenary celebration in 2012. One of their main projects had been the development of a Centennial Campus to replace the very old buildings. Within this there would be a Centennial Garden bounded by a brick wall. Alumni were approached for donating to the project by sponsoring the bricks, on which one was allowed a certain number of inscriptions. A skilled workman would subsequently engrave the writings on the brick and a replica {Appendix I¹²} sent to the sponsor. The idea fitted us well; the application and donation were made in 2009 followed by the submission of inscriptions and their approval shortly after. The Centennial Garden and Brick Wall however were not ready until the 24th of November 2013 when the Vice-Chancellor officially opened them. Even then we did not attend until a year later when we returned to Hong Kong to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of my graduation from the medical school.

The End Is Nigh

After the final piece of important duty was accomplished, I struggled to find something meaningful to do. I continued to travel and wrote my occasional poems when I had the inspiration. I maintained my lap pool swimming in the summer and morning walks on Sundays with friends if weather permitted. Later we added our own local walks on a daily basis. I called these activities my evening rainbows.

In October 2010 we started a long tour of Anhui, Hangzhou, Huangshan and Shanghai (Appendix II: 黃山杭州上海旅遊記趣), followed by Taiwan after a short rest. Shanghai was holding the year's World Expo and the city was really spectacular and breath-taking when viewed from the observation deck of the 492-meter Shanghai Financial Centre. Huangshan was its usual with its excellent landscapes but we were unlucky to have chosen a really fine day for the trip, as we sorely missed the famous "sea of clouds". Still watching the sunrise at the peak was unforgettable. Our first tour to Taiwan was enjoyable especially the night visits to food stalls. We had a lucky escape too; an untimely typhoon caused heavy damage and derailed coaches on the eastern routes of the island. Our tour took the highways on the west side.

In December 2011 we accompanied Ronald and his family to Hong Kong for the first time. We stayed at the East Hotel in Taikoo Shing (太古城). We took them to the usual tourist attractions, such as the peak, Star Ferry, Repulse Bay, Walt Disney and Ocean Parks, Factory Outlet in Tung Chung (東涌) and the Ngong Ping (昂平) 360 cable car. They enjoyed every minute of the visit including shopping in the adjacent Taikoo Shing Complex. We were there during the Christmas and New Year holidays and I had my seventy-third birthday celebration back on Hong Kong soil.

My health had been good with some minor ailments propping up at long intervals after my fiftieth birthday. There were the shingles, the skin cancer, glucose intolerance and the high blood lipids. They were followed by the persistent low white blood counts, benign prostate enlargement, macular degeneration, non-genetic haemochromatosis, osteoarthritis of the knees, and finally coronary heart problem. The last one was found out by chance as I never had cardiac pain. I was getting more often missed heartbeats that I had since my internship days. A resting electrocardiogram did not reveal anything but an exercise one was abnormal. A cardiac angiogram demonstrated 50% blockage in three coronary arteries including the anterior descending branch. I had no choice but to submit myself to an open-heart graft surgery, which was performed on the 18th of February 2014 by Mr. Robert Larbalestier. He was so skilful that he could do four-vessel grafts without using the heart-lung bypass. This helped a lot in my rapid convalescence and I was discharged home in a week. With this I sensed that my *physical* life is coming near to its end.

My sessional work with the Asbestos Prevention Program at the Hospital was carried on until six months after the cardiac surgery when I finished reading their entire library of old chest x-rays. With this I concluded my *productive* life as a chest physician.

The European River Cruise Lovers

My first cruise experience was from Seattle to Alaska in 2007. This gave me an unpleasant beginning, as I got seasick on the first night when the ship sailed outside the inlet. After I recovered the second part of the trip was enjoyable in every way. I did not take this up again until 2011. I was told that river cruise was very different from an ocean cruise. So in May that year we took our first European river cruise with Scenic from Amsterdam to Budapest, which was extended by two coach tours from Paris to Amsterdam and again from Budapest to Prague. It turned out to be a magnificent experience to both Vivian and me. Paris was as attractive as ever and Prague was unexpectedly nice, perhaps due to my preconceived idea or bias towards a former communist nation. The cruise ship however was the gem. From outside it had only three levels and a flat bottom. Compared to the ocean liners it was very small in all respects, accommodating around one hundred and twenty guests but this was exactly what made it so pleasant. In the course of the journey we could make a lot of friends from different countries and continents. We were fully served three meals a day and if one had the time and energy, two further coffee, tea or drink breaks plus a late nibble with entertainments or live music. At the end of the trip we became more or less a big family. This social side of the cruise suited Vivian well but I was more enchanted by the numerous ancient structures, many of them either ruined or just remnants, on both banks of the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers and the histories behind them. Onshore visits invariably included countless majestic palaces, vast cathedrals and elegant chapels as well as some modern architectural wonders. It was all enjoyment, relaxation and education combined!

The next April we continued our exploration of the European waterways and attended the Floriade (Netherlands) 2012 by joining another Scenic European River cruise. It started from Amsterdam through a side trip to the beautiful Bruges and then to Venlo for the World Horticultural Exposition. This particular show was held in the Netherlands once every ten years. We were there a bit early and the ground was not yet completely ready. Afterwards the tour continued in the Rhine to Basel in Switzerland and then by coach through Berne, Interlaken to Zurich.

In May the following year we took the Moscow River-Canal Cruise starting from Moscow to St Petersburg. The theme was quite similar although the ship was not as luxurious as the other Scenic fleet in Western Europe. The views and sceneries were of a different kind particularly the façade of the underground railway stations and the mysterious Kremlin. I picked up here and there something about the Russian history and culture.

In August 2014 just six months after my open-heart surgery, we took a coach tour with Tauck, which was strongly recommended by our travel agent. It was a land journey around the coast of Ireland and was equal in all respects to the standard we enjoyed with

Scenic. Weather wise it was similar to New Zealand but the people were even friendlier. The choices of accommodation and meals were impeccable and the tour director and guides were highly knowledgeable professionals. Sadly we were not likely to change our affiliation because our loyalty with Scenic over the years had elevated us four levels to the diamond status; only emerald remained above us.

In July 2015 we became more adventurous and took the North European Cruise from Copenhagen to Iceland. It was still managed by Scenic but the cruise was in an ocean liner “Le Soleal” operated by a French company, Compagnie du Ponant. After three nights in Copenhagen we sailed along the Norwegian coast to one of the fjords and watch the spectacular Kjosfossen Waterfall in a special Flam Railway trip. Then we turned southwestwards to visit several northern Scottish Islands before crossing the North Sea to Iceland. There we visited the three great attractions of Pingvellir National Park, the Gullfoss (Golden Falls) and the Geysir Hot Springs Field as well as a bath in the huge Blue Lagoon geothermal spa.

On leaving Iceland in the Reykjavik International Airport our flight was delayed a few hours due to a mechanical problem in the plane. As a result we missed the connecting flight in Zurich and were forced to stay the night in an airport hotel. When we boarded the renewed flight the next day we got the greatest surprise of our lives, we were upgraded from the business to the first class seats. That was the first and most likely the only time we ever travel in such luxury. Moreover it was not just any first class but first class in an Air Bus A380! If this was not my lucky star at work again, then what else?

In April 2017 we had the Danube River Cruise from Vienna, Austria to Sfantu Gheorghe (St George), Romania with a coach extension to Bucharest. So we completed the European waterways from North Sea to the Black Sea in three cruises with Scenic, covering the rivers Rhine, Moselle, Danube and the Moselle-Danube Canal over a period of six years. This was extended eastward from the Baltic Sea to the Moscow River-Canal system and westward through the North Sea to Iceland.

The Final Trivial Pursuits

It is inevitable that in a life covering over eighty years that one would like to recapture the past one way or another. I first attended the pearl reunion celebration of the Hong Kong University Medical Class of 1964 and then every ten years at the ruby anniversary and the golden jubilee in November 2014. As this would be deemed to be my last attendance I wrote a long poem, *Ode to the HKU Medic Class of Sixty-four* (refer Appendix II), to commemorate those glorious undergraduate years, which were undoubtedly the most precious five years of my life.

Tracing the ancestry and having family reunions with different generations of related people are another common undertakings to relive the past. In December 2014 we held our first reunion at the Magenta Resort in New South Wales from the 27th to the 29th. Strictly speaking this involved only the three closely knit families of Peng (彭) Wang (王) and O'Young (歐陽). Presentations were given on family affairs during the three days. I presented the Peng genealogy (the beginning) with the title "The bloodline behind the reunion". The function was so generally liked and well supported that a second gathering has been planned for November 18th, 2017 to take place in Hong Kong. This time the families from Jinlan and Jianliao would be included.

In October 2015 we attended the wedding of Ian, Shengduan's son, in Toronto. On the way we broke the journey and revisited New York City for five days. Other than the usual attractions that had not changed much, we spent a whole afternoon at Ground Zero where the construction of the One World Trade Centre was still going on. We loitered around the National September 11 Memorial Pool and Museum, which brought back our vivid and overwhelming feelings of the event as we watched it unfold in the television screen over fourteen years ago. As a result the security rules for cross-country border travels had been severely tightened and unduly delayed. We actually had our face identity and fingerprints taken on entry into the country, a practice that not long ago was applied only to prisoners.

On our return I put my last rental unit in Kardinya on the market after spending more than fifty thousand dollars to renovate it from a shameful condition after the last tenant's vacation almost a year ago. The profit on paper was a healthy three hundred and fifty thousand but I suspected it to be about even after factoring in the high interest rate when the property was purchased on mortgage and the inflation over a period of thirty-five years. The major mistake I made was leaving the management to my semi-amateur friends, leading to the hefty repair bill at the end. Unfortunately I got the lesson and message too late. As I have a decent superannuation account, I distributed thirty thousand of the sales to each of our three grand children, following my previous practice of helping Ronald and Donald with a part-deposit to purchase their first homes. Vivian and I kept a hundred thousand each in term deposits as emergency funds.

Towards the end of 2017, our travel ambition inflated. We booked three tours within a short period of time for the following year before I reach the blessed age of eighty years when the cost of travel insurance would make a big jump. I was then just a few months short of seventy-nine. The first was an ocean cruise in Southeast Asia on board *MS Queen Mary 2* from March 23rd to April 5th, the second, a land tour with Insight Vacations in Italy from Rome to Venice, followed immediately by another cruise with

SeaDream along the Mediterranean coast of Spain from Málaga to Barcelona; together they took us from September the 3rd to the 22nd.

Zhihua's Shocked Exit

On the 19th of April 2018, two weeks after our return from the QM 2 cruise, I got an unexpected text message from Zhiling who used to have a monthly lunch meeting with Zhihua, Helen and Anita (Zhiyi's daughters). This time Helen did not come, as she had to attend the funeral of her fiancé's sister. So only the other three were present. They walked up a short flight of stairs together and exactly on the landing Zhihua suddenly fell on her right side hitting her head on the uncarpeted ground. No one apparently saw her trip or cry out before the fall. She uttered a few words, quickly lost consciousness and never regained it.

She was taken to the Royal North Shore Hospital and a CT scan showed extensive bleeding in the left side of the brain with no detectable fracture in the skull. It was not clear whether the fall led to the haemorrhage or vice versa but the neurologist's opinion was that there was nothing possible to save her or even worthwhile to keep her on life support, which was shortly turned off with the family's consent. We were all shocked by the tragic news but could just manage to focus our attention on the coming funeral service.

We were the earliest to arrive two days later on Saturday morning and checked into the Quest Service Apartment in St Leonard. The next day we had a take away dinner gathering in Edwin's new home in Northbridge. The house was in an elevated position and had a good view of the famous Long Gully Bridge, which is a sandstone suspension bridge, built privately in 1892 and of the federation gothic style with medieval motifs. It was bought by the State Government in 1912 and is most beautiful when seen at night from the house. We met Frank the following morning at his home to talk about the funeral arrangements. He was very depressed in the beginning and wept quietly a few times but was much better when we left after our lunch with him and his family in a nearby Italian restaurant. His family, Helen and her fiancé, Gilman, joined in for the lunch and helped in pacifying Frank's mood.

Shengduan and Laurene arrived from Canada on Monday and stayed in Zhiling's place. We did not meet until the next morning in the Northern Suburbs Memorial Gardens and Crematorium in North Ryde, where the funeral service was held and which was the same as Mum's eighteen and a quarter years ago. I was the first to start the eulogies and my presentation ran like this:

“Ms Gavran (the celebrant), Frank, Edwin, Ling and family; good friends and dear relatives:

I stand here today, not so much to mourn the loss of my sister, Susan, as to pay my respect to a remarkable and very determined lady, whose life of over three quarters of a century was exemplary and entirely devoid of luck.

Susan was born from a poor and old-fashioned family in a tiny village in southern China during the Sino-Japanese war when the Japanese imperial army had overrun a large part of China. At the age of four years, she suffered a near-death illness, which took her more than three months to recover. Then came the civil war and the change of government to communist rule. Through no fault of hers, Susan got caught up in the tangle of persecution, open trial and psychological trauma in the turbulent period of land reform, three- and five-antis, because our father owned 4 acres of farmland and had a handgun during the Japanese occupation. Father and I were in Hong Kong at the time; so the rest of the family bore the blunt of the punishments under the new regime.

After three years of living in fears and tears, and with a little planning and outside help, they managed to escape to Hong Kong. Susan had finished her primary school in the village but was two years over the high school entrance age. Being a girl in a traditional Chinese family, she was not given a chance to make up or catch up. Instead she had to help with home duties, earn her pocket money from some handicraft work and learn English in night schools. Realising the hopeless situation, she determined to take destiny in her own hands. After deciding to follow a nursing career, which suited to the teeth her character of always doing things meticulously to her satisfaction, she was forced to accept the only avenue available to her. Having no formal high school education, she had to start as an auxiliary nurse and be trained in Chinese language. That was Hong Kong as a colony in the 1950's when every job had two discriminative grades dependent on whether English was a requirement. Susan did not despair at the poor treatment; she strived hard and succeeded not only in attaining the status of a certificated Enrolled Nurse but also being one of the few in her class chosen to study for the BTTA (British Thoracic and Tuberculosis Association) Diploma. For the latter, lectures were given, and candidates' competency was assessed all in English! She easily passed the hurdle and became a specialist thoracic nurse with a qualification recognised anywhere within the Commonwealth.

Her highest academic achievement was yet to come several years later when she was awarded a three-month scholarship to study cardiothoracic surgical nursing in Sydney. This turned out to be the most memorable event in her life. She met Mr Frank O'Young in a social occasion and the rest, as you all know, was history. Five years of perfect and happy family life in glamorous Sydney followed, only to be shattered when Susan was

diagnosed to have breast cancer towards the end of her second pregnancy. I got the devastating news in a long distance call and could not believe how calm she was in accepting the fate and how determined she vowed to beat the disease, a condition at the time still carrying with it a high mortality even without the complicating pregnancy. Quietly Susan went through the full menu of medical onslaught from radiation, chemotherapy, radical mastectomy and induction of labour to total hysterectomy. The pain, the anguish and the sufferings were beyond imagination. She withstood all these without a sigh and at the same time looked after, and brought up two beautiful and intelligent children, Cynthia and Edwin.

After the cancer was finally declared a cure and Susan's general health continued to improve, we all thought that, for her remarkable endurance, she would be rewarded a "happily thereafter" ending. This was sadly not to be the case and instead, she first noticed the gradual and increasing weakness in her right arm to a total loss of function over the years, the result of damages to the shoulder region from the radiotherapy. An operation to reconstruct the chest wall only provided temporary false hopes. This was followed 15 years later by the heart-breaking loss of Cynthia, her talented and accomplished daughter and an Emergency Medical Specialist also to cancer. Then her advancing age was not ignored either. Like most of us she encountered the usual suspects of diabetes, heart and blood vessel problems requiring coronary angioplasty. One would think, with all these she would be at the last straw and her fighting spirit would crumble, but no, not Susan. As happened so many times before, she picked up the pieces all the way, recovering every time, and recovered well. She trained her left arm to do all the house work as perfectly as before; she trained her left hand to write like she were born left handed; she trained her left fingers to master the skills to use the common apps in smartphones and computers. She even passed the test for a special drivers licence.

Oh, Susan, my dear sister, you have inspired us how a life should and could be lived richly under any circumstance. You have more than fulfilled your part in this world. So allow me to give the last bow and bid you farewell. May you rest in peace!"

We left Sydney three days later with a heavy heart but not for long. Shengduan and Laurene had arranged a round trip to Singapore for a week, then Perth for another week before returning home through Sydney. Zhiling was persuaded to join them and all stayed in our place while in Perth. The sudden loss of Zhihua was stressful but we came to realise that time is running out for us as well. We should, from now on, make an effort to get together more often or for longer periods as much as circumstances would allow. At this late stage of our age cruises appear to be the most appropriate. With us living thousands of kilometres apart, however, this may prove to be a great challenge.

CHAPTER X: NINTH DECADE 2019-2024

Travel Madness and the Broken Norwegian Cruise

The passing of Zihua must have a great effect on our drive as within three months we were able to work out a Norwegian cruise under the Holland American Line, called “Voyage of the Midnight Sun” for July 7 to 21, 2019. It was also the maiden voyage of MS “Nieuw Statendam” to the Arctic Circle. This was the best compromise for the three couples, separated by thousands of kilometres.

The tour began in Amsterdam and we arrived there two days earlier for another short visit of the city, mainly on the cultural side. Embarkation was in the evening on the 7th of July. As the ship was huge and the land excursions many and diverse, we could only manage to meet at dinner times, and even so, for only two nights. Our well-planned trip for six was unexpectedly disrupted.

Shengduan had developed a headache before boarding, which did not stop with Panadol and sleep. At first it was bearable; so he started on his chosen land excursions like the rest of us. On the third night it got so bad that he had to consult the ship’s doctor who transferred him the next morning from the port to the Alesund Hospital for brain scan. Afterwards he was flown to the Haukeland University Hospital in Bergen with a diagnosis of subarachnoid haemorrhage in the mid-brain area. He was kept under intensive observation to assess whether surgery was required. His condition fortunately remained stable and he was discharged fit for travel after eight days. Both he and Laurene had lost the greater part of the tour.

The arrangement of his home return was not straight forward though under a well-organised scheme by the travel insurance company. Two days earlier Laurene was to take all luggage from the ship to a ferry which left Flam to Bergen that evening. On the morning of discharge a nurse from the insurance agency accompanied them to the Bergen Airport where they took the plane back to Toronto via Iceland. The nurse and the patient were in business class but Laurene economy. On arrival at Toronto there was an ambulance waiting to take Shengduan straight to the Markham Stouffville Hospital for further assessment and care. All medical and transfer expenses were covered by the travel insurance. It took another two months of rehabilitative care before he was finally home again. This was, however a really lucky escape, as subsequently the bleeding was attributed to, up to then, undiagnosed Factor VIII deficiency (von Willebrand disease), a condition with a tendency to spontaneous bleeding.

The Coronavirus-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 (coronavirus-19) epidemic started in December 2019 in Hunan, China, and rapidly spread to become a pandemic, resulting in border lockdowns enforced by an increasing number of countries and jurisdictions. Before that, and despite or because of Shengduan's mishap we had taken the Douro River cruise in Portugal, followed by a land tour in Madrid, Spain in October/November 2019.

When Australia began to implement travel restrictions on international travellers in March 2020, cross-border control between the States and Territories was also gradually introduced. Travels within and outside the country became an unattractive endeavour. Life for the retirees, suddenly turned aimless.

To add further insults, a year later Xiehe passed away on the 29th of May 2021 at the blessed age of eighty-eight years. The funeral service was scheduled for 15 June with live online podcast. We paid our respect through wreaths and condolences but decided to leave the interactive ceremony entirely to the immediate family members. On the wreath from us I wrote:

“To: Peiwen, Helen, Anita, Benson & the Wang Family

Grief and sorrow are but temporary;
Sadness will in time ease always.
His shining life shall stay in the memory
For as long as we live out our days.

Rejoice! For he has lived well and fully
To the very great age of eighty-eight.
And you should all be proud and truly
Strive to match lest it be left too late!

With deep sympathy and condolences,

From Vivian, SC, Ronald, Jo and the Pang Family
Perth June 2021”

Peiwen was Xiehe's second wife; they were legally married in China and had lived together for many years. When later Xiehe was forced to stay in Sydney on medical grounds, Peiwen was unable to join him due to aversion to flying and an elderly mother to look after in Shanghai. They were never formally divorced either. Therefore I felt that I

had to do the right thing by addressing the widow in the condolence card. Apparently, this was against the wish of the Wang family and her name was erased by Helen.

This sad event was followed less than two years later by a happier but equally unexpected one.

Zhiling's "Happily Thereafter"

On the morning of 18 February 2023 I got a WhatsApp call from Zhiling, saying that Tony wanted to speak to me. This was a big surprise and I reflexly expected something sinister. They both have been walking with bad medical conditions for many years. When the call was finally shifted, I was relieved to learn that Tony was asking for my permission to have Zhiling's hand in a formal marriage. To me that is a chivalrous behaviour of a gentleman. Sure enough and not long after, I received a formal invitation to attend the ceremony on April 11, 2023 at 11.30 am in the Water Terrace Kirribilli Club at Lavender Bay, NSW 2060.

We then had two months to think of a nice present, decide on our accommodation and to face two issues with Helen created by me. For the wedding gift we had in mind the choice of a jewellery or a hotel suite with champagne and breakfast in Perth. Nevertheless when I ask her, Zhiling preferred a poem for the occasion; this was a surprise request I could not refuse. We booked the Star Hotel for our stay to take advantage of its convenience to move around. The contention with Helen started when I commented on Xiehe's behaviour in the Tai Wah business and aggravated lately by my inclusion of Peiwen as a member of her family.

The marriage celebration was an abridged version of a combined religious and legal ceremony. The program was drawn up by Helen/Gilman who suggested Ronald to be the Master of Ceremony, and there was a privately hired Celebrant to fulfil the legal side. Naturally I was the one to give away the bride and one of the two proposers for the toast. The other was Tony's second daughter, Kety. The meeting was a pleasant one between the two families and our first encounter with Tony's grown-up children.

With the previous disappointed performance in mind, I prepared myself well this time with what I considered a light-hearted speech (not my usual style) as follows:

“Honoured guests, friends and relatives, beautiful girls and handsome boys, good day!

My name is Sheng Zhen and friends call me SC. I am Susanna's big brother, big not being in size or power but in age number. I live in Perth.

Relax; I shall be brief. I am not going to say anything about Tony and Susanna since you Sydneysiders know more than I from the Wild West. Nor would I talk about their affairs as they were ancient history and of course you all know that #CancelHistory is the trend nowadays.

Instead I am going to tell you something between Tony and me. Now, now, now, don't get excited; this is not what you think. When Tony called me one sunny morning asking for permission to tie the knot with my little sister, "Oh dear me!" I was stunned to say the least. "What the heck does this man think he is doing!" I mean, well, to their credit, they have known each other for donkey years and in two overseas tours we'd travelled together, I had learned how much they valued each other, but forfeiting voluntarily a man's total free will for a piece of useless bureaucratic paper, and in this woke era? I found it hard to believe my ears. Instantly my scam pack booted up, searching ferociously over the basic "why, what, who how's", through the usual suspect to conspiracy theories. Sensing my hesitation, Vivian, my companion and partner, whom I used to call wife in the good old days, whispered gently, "They might have reached their age of consent." O-M-G! What can I do, and what can I say except "Yes. Congratulations" loud and clear. Fast forward 4 weeks, here I am rambling a Clayton speech in this important legal ritual, conspiracy or not.

Tony, Tonci, Ante Lucic and Susanna DL Pang, to vouch for the sincerity of my yes vote, I wrote you a short verse to commemorate this your big occasion, which I would like to share with all present today:

To Susanna and Tony
On their Wedding

A time the whole world is boiling,
A time global climate rage extreme;
Lands are flooding, animals a-starving
And one could hear human scream.
With God's blessing, Susanna and Tony,
Your love rules supreme.

In time commitment is not enough;
In time devotion not just a two-person team.
Marriage! Yes, old-fashioned marriage!
Your union will be enshrined esteem.
#CancelCulture? Not a chance!
Hail! Your love rules supreme!

Without further ado, I invite all of you to join me for a toast to this lovely couple; we wish you both the happiest times thereafter, together, forever, always, etc etc. To the bride and groom! Cheers!”

Right Knee Replacement

Despite the three years of reduced activities due to the covid-19 epidemic, my arthritis in the knees continue to deteriorate, more so on the right. I had a precautionary steroid injection before attending Zhiling’s wedding without any effect. After returning home I decided to undergo a total right knee replacement, which was easily arranged for September 11th. The waiting period was necessary due to a prior intra-articular steroid treatment.

The procedure appeared nice and simple, but the post-surgical pain was so severe that both strong analgesics and an ice cuff were required. For good joint functions, I was required to mobilise the knee as early as the second day after the operation. It was a very painful first two weeks before the condition began to improve. All physiotherapeutic exercises were graded and strictly according to a program. Recovery was slow at first but by six months pain in the right knee was minimal with only numbness and stiffness of any bother.

The Diamond Jubilee Reunion

In early 2024 I received regular emails from my 1964 medical classmates in Hong Kong that there would be a Diamond Jubilee celebration scheduled for October. There were planned four activities plus a photo-album for our participations:

1. Reunion reception and dinner at the Hong Kong Sanatorium Restaurant,
2. Lunch at Shangshui (上水) Jockey Club and Visit to Hong Kong Wetland Park,
3. Revisiting the Hong Kong Medical School and meeting with the current Dean, and
4. A 7-day Tour of Guangzhou and the Great Bay Area.

It so happened that I had to renew my Hong Kong Identity Card and Entry Permit to Mainland China before February 2025 and November 2024 respectively. Therefore I had no hesitation to put our names up for all the functions. The decision having been made, the arrangements were simple though time consuming. All official appointments were booked online and generally available only within a period of four to six weeks. Overseas

residents, therefore needed to check the website regularly to avoid missing vacant spots during one's stay in Hong Kong.

To make up for the three years of covid-19 isolation and to assess the result of the knee replacement, we had already booked two tours for the year before we knew of the diamond reunion. The first was a repeat of the Alaska cruise but with Silversea this time and beginning from Anchorage on May 16, 2024. It finished on the 27th of the month when we would take the chance to visit my brother in Toronto and George, Vivian's brother in Vancouver. Then from August 8th to 22nd we took the Scenic Eclipse II cruise for the Kimberley Coast followed by a private flight to Kakadu Park from Darwin.

EPILOGUE

I started on this biography after I retired from the Chest Clinic in 2000 and had been chronicling retrospectively at varying speeds until October 2017 when I realised that I would be eighty years old in about fourteen months. As all things, good or bad, trivial or glamorous, must end, and the idea to continue the narration until my last day in this world is not entertaining and certainly not romantic, this instant should be a great time to stop. Nevertheless, with the unexpected and sudden passing of Zhihua, I had to postpone the finish to May 2018. This was not only because she was closest to my age but also out of my deep respect to her character so distinguished among the siblings. The first version was printed out just before 2019 as my eightieth birthday tribute to the family members and close relatives.

Unfortunately the book had many typographical errors due to my poor editing. I decided to rectify them but my slow action resulted in a long delay, consequent upon which several significant happenings in the family demanded their inclusion. At the end I was forced to extend the period to the end of 2024. I took the chance to amend a few details.

The Puzzle about Tai Wah

After the renewed version was completed, I would like to supplement an explanation on why I felt uncomfortable about the excessive generosity from Zhiyi towards her four siblings and their spouses.

In the first family reunion held at the end of 2014 and early 2015, Xiehe claimed in front of the gathering that he went to Hong Kong with only HK\$200 in his pocket and then “single-handedly” established the Tai Wah Electronic Trading Company to a billion-dollar enterprise. No one said anything then; such is the reserved nature of most Chinese by tradition. The matter subsequently sprang up in an email conversation among the surviving siblings. We all had a letter {Appendix I¹³} from Dad in 1975 informing us that Tai Wah was actually set up with a contribution of HK\$10,000 each from him and Zhiyi, and with Xiehe as the business manager at the end of 1969. The initial contract, however, was signed with Zhiyi and Zhihua as the joined proprietors (one of Dad’s eccentricities of avoiding, as far as possible, his own name in anything legally related). Dad even gave up the idea of purchasing a flat for his family in the midlevel of Hong Kong Island to conserve cash in case of urgent needs from the budding business. This was soon after the infamous 1967 Hong Kong riot when property value was at the lowest. He later twice helped Xiehe and Zhiyi to buy into firstly the Prince Edward Road flat and then the posh Yau Yat Chuen house with his savings (forfeiting the bank interests in order to lower their

mortgage repayments). In return he was offered the apartment in Prince Edward Road that they left behind at a lower than market price.

Then in 1973 Tai Wah was changed to a limited liability company and reregistered with Xiehe as the sole owner! The action was blatantly a breach of trust bordering onto a theft, since there was no discussion (in Dad's letter) with him before or after the fact. How such a change in ownership could be carried out legally without the knowledge of one of the original registered owners is beyond me. When he learned about the treachery from a third source, Dad did not even ask for an explanation. His excuse, again from the letter to us, was that they were so closely related that both Xiehe and Zhiyi should have the decency to act properly. They did, with three million Hong Kong dollars at the wake dinner after Dad's cremation in 1985, two shared "world trip" tours in 1991 and 1992 respectively as well as the many luxury gifts that they showered over us and our spouses whenever we held a gathering. None of us could argue on the money as the right moment had gone and Dad owed Zhiyi a great favour for looking after his family in the 1950's. We only felt deeply sorry for our father that he received no apology from his son-in-law when he was alive and no tribute to his contribution and commitments to the business after his death. Admittedly they had always been generous towards us, and we had no grounds to complain. Sadly Zhiyi was left carrying all the burden of a self-imposed guilty feeling to the dying months of her life. She repeatedly asked Shengduan whether her illness and sufferings were the punishment for the manner she had treated her father. If she had lived to be present in the family reunion, this account of mine for the record would most likely be unnecessary.

The issue was strongly defended by Helen, denying any truth of the matter and I have so far not had the chance to explain in person my reasons. I shall do it here in fairness and for the sake of all parties concerned.

Firstly Dad had tried many endeavours in his life to improve the living conditions of the family but all failed badly including his farming where he was talented. He had never considered setting up a restaurant as well probably from his physical limitations. Tai Wah was his last and very successful attempt and even so he humbly admitted that he was just lucky to be in the right place at the right time. Hence, I simply cannot turn a blind eye and ignored it in my narrative.

Secondly the business was definitely a joint venture. Dad's letter stated a contribution of HK\$10,000 each from Dad and Zhiyi though essentially it was a partnership between the Wang and Peng families. Strong supporting evidence to his included:

1. The name Tai Wah (大華) must be nominated by Dad as it signified a combination of Big Sister, 大(家姐) which was how we addressed Zhiyi, and Zhihua (秩華),
2. Zhihua was summoned to the lawyer's office to sign her name alongside Zhiyi's on the contract, one day before she flew to get married in Sydney in 1969, and
3. The three million Hong Kong dollars to us were offered by Xiehe at Dad's wake dinner *voluntarily* with the words, "for your father's share...."

Thirdly, in 1985 when I returned home after Dad's passing and checked the Hong Kong Government business registration website, Tai Wah had only one proprietor which was Xiehe, confirming Dad's words in his letter.

Finally it must be stated that all Xiehe did was, strictly speaking, "legal and generous in our favour" since the original contract could not be traced and substantiated. Nevertheless the partnership was indisputable and Xiehe had no right to claim, "I single-handedly..." One could argue, of course, that Dad might have mistaken any discussions on the change of ownership, but, if so, how this could ever be done without involving Zhihua cannot be explained.

For reasons unclear to us Tai Wah ran into serious financial troubles quite suddenly two years after my sister passed away, so much so that it had to declare bankruptcy. Xiehe was forced to sell his prestigious Windsor Lodge in Hong Kong and the extravagant mansion in Sydney to repay the bank mortgages. Nonetheless, after the event Xiehe was still in direct or indirect possession of around ten properties in Shanghai, Sydney, Britain and Hong Kong. Undoubtedly these were a mere shadow of his wealth in the glorious days, as my Mum used to jibe, "What Zhiyi had brought to the Wang family in this world, she took them with her on leaving."

A Mismatched Marriage

There is a wise Chinese saying, "Marriage results from pretences and divorce from understanding (因誤會而結合, 為了解而分離)."

The relationship between Vivian and me is unusual and deserves some elaboration as it was typical of most Chinese marriages in the good old days. I had very early on been aware of our totally opposite personality, hobbies, ambitions, views and ideals but the inexperience in courtship and the strong hormonal attractions blinded us. There was no doubt that we enjoyed thoroughly our company for the first two years. Our differences actually accentuated the force due to a sense of new adventures and excitement. There

were many social activities like window shopping, late night movies and dining in expensive restaurants that I would not have done on my own volition. In fact it was Vivian who led me to discover for the first time that life could have such an enjoyable side.

The childish row on our wedding night sounded the alarm bell and exposed the fragile foundation of our marriage. My discomfort and worry, nevertheless, was quickly put aside with the upcoming of a year in the United Kingdom for my course of study. It was a tight schedule in the preparation and a busy running around after arrival before we could settle down and concentrate on the serious business at hand. The support and the company of Vivian made a lot of difference in adapting ourselves to a foreign environment. The long stay became so pleasant and my hard study as well as the important career-changing examinations so smooth that full credit must be bestowed on her unique and open character. The birth and death of Valarie, our only daughter, was a sad loss to both of us but the pain was shared equally in our hearts and brought us some kind of sympathetic resonance.

When we returned home, a series of happy events awaited us. To begin with it was the birth of our first son, Ronald, then my big career promotion and finally the birth of Donald, all within two years. Unfortunately when life was back to normal, our conflicting personality and obstinacy resurfaced. Disharmony or arguments erupted at regular intervals and each spell lasted for a couple of weeks, during which verbal communication was non-existent. There was no marriage counselling at the time. The frictions were not forgiven due to our pride and stubbornness; we just took our time to forget them. It was very unpleasant and looked obvious that we were forced to take one of the two possible choices, to separate or to endure the conflicts until and if, one or both yielded. A separation or divorce was not in the Chinese culture and would deeply hurt our parents and relatives who cared about us. Besides this might affect the well being of our sons and we both love them too much to even think about it. We were therefore left no option but continuing to suffer from our occasional outbursts. Fortunately these lasted for no more than a few years when we made the courageous decision of emigration to Australia.

After the move everything took on a very different perspective, including work, study, finance, home management and life styles. We had to stick together and support each other to overcome the initial stressful period of cultural shock. We did not have the luxury to spoil our tempers. After we gradually settled in, our family life had taken a new direction from what it used to be in Hong Kong. In fact we had no arguments at all in Townsville and the early years in Perth, and disputes subsequent to that became milder and less often. The leisurely Australian attitude and the fact that we were both working full time must have led us to become more patient with each other.

Among the long list of our contrasting characters and interests, there are at least three areas where we fit in well. We both liked our salaried job and put family value ahead of the monetary rewards of private practice. The regular working hours of public service allowed me to do research and to publish, and Vivian to take better care of our children. We also enjoy good food and spend a lot of time searching for eating-places with famous or special dishes. Finally we are fervent travellers and take great joy in visiting different places and acquainting other cultures. Few as they are, but believe me, they seemed sufficient to steer us clear of stormy situations from the 1980's to our retirement. Minor disagreements and disputes, however, continued to prop up occasionally until this day. There is nothing much we can do about our personality, can we?

Both Ronald and Donald had long left home when our professional careers ended. Signs of advancing age started to bite and we not only needed companionship but also became dependent on each other both mentally and physically. The increasing number of our medical appointments and hospital procedures required mutual support or assistance in transportation. Medications and morning walks occupied large parts of our daily routine in addition to the regular dine-outs. Suddenly I came to realise how meaningless it was to win over these disputes and how foolish it was to maintain any egocentricity at my age. From then on I simply walked away from any argument or kept the disagreements within myself. Whether by luck or by design, I have succeeded in preserving a lousy and rash marriage intact for fifty-five years.

Cultural Impact

Finally I need to spill out the loss at my hands of the Chinese culture in the family. When I decided to emigrate I did not expect this to happen. We had made all the preparations we could think of to continue teaching our sons Chinese at home. We did not realise a straightforward task like this could become insurmountable in the absence of necessity, incentive and utter dedication. I alone must be held responsible. Before I left Hong Kong I was already a Sino-British by-product as a result of the colonial education I received. To attain the level of my achievements in Chinese literature, I had to devote so much of my time to the detriment of my chosen professional career. I was therefore never enthusiastic enough in forcing my sons to follow the same path (or mistake) as mine. Then there is the added Western concept of allowing children free developments, with which I agree. Nonetheless Donald did become aware of the heritage and had taken the initiative to have Chinese lessons in evening classes before he developed leukaemia. This was adorable although I could never find out his exact reasons. Ronald has managed to retain his Cantonese in ordinary conversations, thanks to Vivian's insistence but our grandchildren could not find any incentive to make Chinese their second language in school. Whether this will have any effect on their future, or whether like Donald, they may find the urge to recapture their roots later in life, I cannot foretell or control.

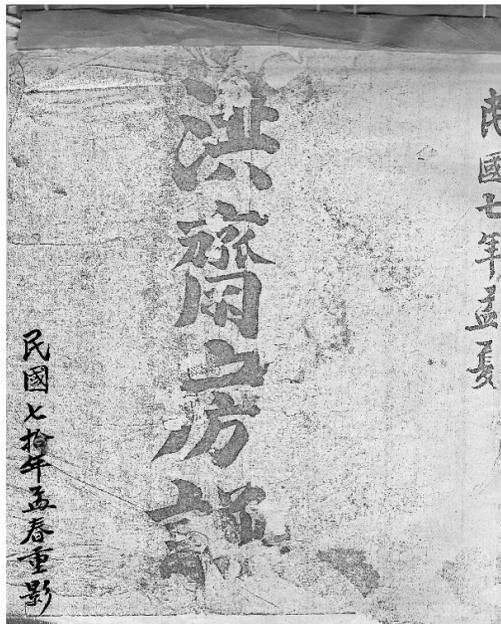
So in four generations the culture of the family changed from pure Chinese to exclusively Western, although on the way I did succeed in achieving a high level of “duo-culturalism” for over half a century. Whether the change is for better or for worse, no one knows. Subconsciously I feel that the issue may be less serious than I first thought as the world is gradually trending into cosmopolitanism. However, in 2023 Australia held an “Indigenous Voice Referendum” under the Labour Government to change the constitution to confer special privileges to the first nation people over the rest by birth or by immigration. This resulted in a deep division of the nation and sounded the wake-up call to me; therefore, when I renewed my Hong Kong Identity Card I have no hesitation in keeping my duo-nationality status.

APPENDIX I: Scans/Photographs/Footnotes

¹Original cover pages of Dad's manuscripts 1983



²Hongzhai Genealogy (photocopy in 1981 of original hand copy in 1918)



³Author's grandmother, Huo Shandi; Chinese writings on top from Dad



⁴The family in Hong Kong 1939



From left to right: Back row – Deng Daosheng, Dad, Jianliao, and Yayin;
Front row (seated) – Jinlan, Mum with me, Grandma, He Xiaoying with Zhilun;
Front row (standing) – Jinlan’s daughter and Zhiyi.

⁵Author (1947) in Shigen Central Primary School



6Peng Bank and the creek in 2007



7The perfect Ten 1960



From left to right:
Back row – author, Shengduan, Shengkang;
Middle row – Zhituan, Zhihua, Shengzhong, Zhiyi;
Front row – Zhiying, Shengzhi, Zhiling.

⁸The marriage 1969



⁹Dad's eightieth birthday celebration in Xintongle Restaurant 1983.



Back row from left to right: Shengduan, Zhihua, Zhiling, Zhiyi and author;
Front row and sitting: Mum and Dad.

10A list of the author's scientific publications:

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15. Lee YCG, Runnlon CK, Pang SC, de Klerk NH, Musk AW. Increased body mass index is related to apparent circumscribed pleural thickening on plain chest radiographs. *Am J Ind Med* 2001; 39:112-6.
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17. de Klerk NH, Musk AW, et al. Crocidolite, radiographic asbestosis and subsequent lung cancer *Annals of Occupational Hygiene* 1997;41(S1):134-136.
18. de Klerk NH, Musk AW, et al. Vitamin A and cancer prevention II: comparison of the effects of retinol and beta-carotene *International Journal of Cancer* 1998;75(3):362-7.

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13Dad's letter to us

至大華廠因地方不敷本月正德蔡回新地
地方有未三千方寸寬敬足敷申復取
需目下仍未擬清積存用料致建設尚未
備事一西需財需力才一慨也二大華有
今日才一西需財需力才一慨也二大華有
三財力支撐想當重組近址許放道時
始用彭錦華全義全東其美秩華并未
律而祇似余與秩儀每人一萬元云基金但
似以余財力隨時支撐局面故全錢上并
托振之故由是借人債賴而至於今後後
最近因數次大如年財能及外多向同國
似以應急需者為栽培事業及向輩已書
似以應急需者為栽培事業及向輩已書
似以應急需者為栽培事業及向輩已書

至於昨午重切實購置又一村花園房時當
醞釀許多時日當家批買者保太公道在一層上
高宅任預接連天台甚裝飾費累者不知如何
是時儀曾對余謂此果買幾時女子道儀給
這便十萬元時便當此不止此數因儀當日
子道儀時余便負他四萬元下完此此峰不
故儀受惠不忘公道此歷依定儀余方便也
在昨天余付十萬元他支付一村接儀余看
雙方美收祇有儀性良份儀善將所有提
取者足此數而由儀份儀十萬元數其二三
元外作新儀但今日所有手續及持契良數
理妥當儀此既與婦女之間一言全流與
苗苗肉唾罵余幸以坦蕩高潔以對人斗
余不為之依謂將相肚裡之撐餘亦將相
究他才是此中樞字稍長老人遠靜一正
親緒當要吾如該此份存今不過此中
一定要認記心中他自有根據難難
忠情而在天際常存他日身外久遠
要色謂儀女目下已達五萬家財他
宜直插守酒金要亦委此買彼是而
究仍用意年不傳而知在數十小
現金應付其財才對年福財要
善是十二夥久以存不易但完
大約都在此十萬之內其
恒形。則去其半任權借續付
已影機之說以善及儀儀善
對一一定要說知家者少年
鳴子 啟六月廿三

APPENDIX II: My literary writings

This is a collection of my writings since the high school years, running parallel both in time and in events with my life story. They reflect my basic bilingual education in the colonial days of Hong Kong and reveal the development of my mind with age.

守愚文雜

序言

余幼受舊庭訓。稚齡啟蒙，強誦古文詞而莫知其義。六歲進小學，白話文早成國語。十一歲離鄉赴港；兩年後就讀喇沙書院，始得涉獵古典文範。亦不外選篇課程，略識皮毛而耳。終未得承師授，難登大雅之堂。然醉文之苗已長；雖西校西言西業，未能扼殺。積年累月，興之所至，或機緣巧合、或心境順逆、或人際浮沈、常寄懷詩文以自鳴。故所記錄，實屬鄙生縮影；則雜亂無章，言粗意淺，亦有其留存價值焉。

無才書生多別號。守愚乃余書名；初用於中學投稿，為進身文學領域先河。又因體裁不純，除正統詩詞較多外，還加新詩、自度曲、對聯、小賦、以至祭文英文等。非雜為何？故名守愚文雜。

有道十年樹木百年人。文章隨歲月與歷練而成長。故編理稿件時，不以類別，而用年代為界。則作者文風與思想，因時移地轉而蛻變，亦易於洞悉明察矣。

[壹] 1952-1958：喇沙時光 (College Years in La Salle)

“中學，在教育三個階段裏，是最令人懷念的。

正如建築大廈一樣，小學是地基的安奠，中學是層樓的疊起，大學則是各種的安置和裝飾。社會的嘗試就好像風雨對大廈的考驗；直接接受這考驗的，不是地基，更不是裝飾，而是那受人注目的軀體。

在時間上說，中學是智慧啟發的時期。每個學子求知的慾望都達到了頂端，知識的吸收更是快得驚人。因此，無論從那方面看，中學的生活都是最豐富和最健康的。

喇沙，這個令人嚮往的樂園，就是我渡過那耐人回味的中學生活底母校了！”

節錄“學校生活的回顧—為慶祝喇沙銀禧而作”

〔一〕舊照

這本是——

人世裡的弱絮殘英，
生命中的雪泥鴻爪；
卻變成了永恆追憶的泉源。

〔二〕笑

我為以往的不幸而笑，
因為它把我鍛鍊成人；
我為現實的殘酷而笑，
因為它使我成為勇敢的戰士；
我為未來的虛渺而笑，
因為它將令我一生倍加豐富。
「生命究有甚可戀呢？」你也許會問，
我就愛那份從奮鬥中會得到的自信！

〔三〕待

延頸殷殷張望，
幾度門聲迴盪了心脾；
終於．．．
還須要經過多少失望與牽掛呢？

〔四〕與永輝同窗

友情之花永開燦爛
誼愛之火輝吐爛芒

〔五〕觀微〔擬譯〕

棄糶活鳥黍 迴思嚙怒語 籽發麗春花 滴水成甘澍
閒雲損日色 虎將賴謀儒 堅橋獨木架 微笑愁懷舒

原文

A crumb will feed a little bird,
A thought prevent an angry word.
A seed bring forth a lovely flower,
A drop of rain bring a shower.
A little cloud the sun will hide,
A dwarf may be a giant's guide.
A narrow plank a safe bridge form,
A smile one cheerless spirit warm.

〔六〕五七聖誕送別梁國治老師(二首)

(1)

六載春風坐 仰沾化雨霖 感恩中篆泐 惜別悵難禁

(2)

去程門路遠 再立雪無期 萬眾狂歡日 同窗黯黯時

〔七〕遣懷 中學會考後

前時對卷氣蒿萊 此日優閒一樣哀
真是濁醪存妙理 伯倫必我作輿臺

〔八〕無題

落落冥居識杜康 昏昏好睡夢黃梁
為貪醉裡常歡笑 長使雄懷壯志傷

〔九〕一九五八元旦隨筆

一曲迎春喜氣洋
五民此日齊歡慶

九天洞府樂聲鏘
八面笙歌醉玉觴

〔十〕戊戌新歲雜感(四首)

(1)

除夕苦瀟瀟
誰憐販卒淚

花街嘆寂寥
和雨渡殘宵

(2)

去夜褐衣對雨愁
皇天慧眼存青白

富人今日好春遊
世上公平何處求

(3)

豔陽高普照
絕俗餘杯盡

大地喜春回
悅無知己陪

(4)

莫道新年好
爆竿驚曉夢

新年最損神
塵網困纏身

〔十一〕初冬

麗日穿雲炫萬里
西山十月滿秋意

銀鱗閃耀盪波心
南國霜寒無處尋

〔十二〕獅子石

背新鄉庶沃
號萬獸之王

臨港水深綠
霸山頭雄伏

〔十三〕南歌子 遙寄

送伯勞東去，將執手何時？縱鴻雁代訴衷辭，怎似長依廝守、不分飛！
離別原無恨，蕭風惹遠思；一朝冬盡萬花嬉，煮酒西庭槐下、候歸期。

〔十四〕西江月 秋夜

把酒東籬微醉，漣漪冷浸秋山。西風流水落花顏，斜照黃沙寂雁。
月魄荒唐柳上，碎陰滿地花間，流螢飄舞去珊珊，促織聲聲叫慢。

〔十五〕謁金門 不寐

風不定，樹倦欲眠難靜；狂絮逐塵香透領。禪房傳夜磬。
輾轉衾幃易冷。往事何堪重省；夢隨露華凝翠嶺。小樓空弔影！

[貳] 1959-1964：灣仔餘情 (Lingering Friendship in Wanchai)

五十年代末至六十年代初，家碎人離。慈母、長姊、弟妹居鄉受土改煎熬；父親與長子的我，在港相依為命。生活所逼，分別寄居於行友籬下；父留上環，我遷灣仔。三年劫後全家復合於西環，惟與新識鄰家兄弟，友情尚存多年。

〔一〕 問訊

閒箋兩寄若流煙 故友靈心覺黯然
青鳥殷勤三致意 問君甚事把身纏

〔二〕 心聲 致友

惟十旬之相別兮，雖咫尺而天涯；緬三載之共聚兮，冀重溫於何時？
念故舊之分飛兮，縱佳節而氣衰！顧前路之茫茫兮，傷願成於無期！
世道險而艱虞兮，信外物之難持；誼情深而恆永兮，豈歲月之可移。
效流風之遞簡兮，心耿耿而題辭；索枯腸而塗抹兮，聊以寄吾幽思！

〔三〕 寄意 五九聖誕遙寄南澳定科

昨夜夢魂逢舊雨 依稀神采倍撩人 關山萬里飛輕簡 麗澤千秋勝異珍
此際天涯翹首望 他朝咫尺玉觴頻 爐峰雞黍三年會 了願還期幾度春

〔四〕 咭上寄懷 致定晃

定鐘洪音前夕響 晃耀朝陽此日榮 恭逢佳節欣無限 祝望他年業有成
聖主慈懷長庇佑 誕吾不減摯友情 並肩把臂齊奮勉 賀闌山峻也踏平
新歲蒞臨催人長 年月飛逝不容情 盛矣誼愛何偉大 臻兮造極結華英

〔五〕 戊戌夏月記定波兄回港

鴻雁忽傳良友訊 春山頓啟喜難陳 恨無玳燕雙飛翼 欣見佳朋久別身
酒肆唏噓談往事 茶芽滑冽賽香醇 相歡款款猶懷憾 苦索方知少一人

[叁] 1959-1964 :大學生涯 (Life in Hong Kong University)

在當年，得入香港大學的人，被公認為天之驕子。但對家庭經濟拮据者而言，精神上的負荷，局外人是很難理解的。

[一] 庚子夏令雜寫

(1)

神智似濁還清，心境若醉若醒；
午夜痛下決心，覺來依稀猶在，
卻是無從追認

(2)

底下文潮洶湧，指中枯管難動。
偶或靈竅感召，換得惆悵悽然；
只為欲訴無從

(3)

讀徐速”星星月亮太陽”後
心頭燃起愛火！
“為親、為情、為物慾？”
愛只是這般狹窄的嗎？
一向脆弱幼稚的癡兒，
就不會在星星月亮太陽面前有所領悟？
“那麼．．．”
我在苦戀殘缺了的家園。

(4) 自度曲

樓頭懶睡醒，依舊驟雨頻仍。窗外煙山雲海，直是江南清明景。
遙想故國山川、家園風物，早已面目難認。捲卷溫枕埋首，
幾度重嚼，當年江畔雨釣游鯪。

(5) 溫黛(1)襲港

狂風——
挾雷霆威勢，
拔樹移山；
但拘不住無羈的心猿。

暴雨——
若白練排空，
敲窗欲碎；
卻洗不去腦海的陰影。
咆哮的怒風，
助紂的虐雨，
還有大地上生靈痙攣的呼叫，
都未能暫移焦躁煩悶的心田；
——一切只為了明春三月(2)！

註(1): Wanda, name of typhoon.

(2): 醫學士第一個考試。

(6)

華年熱血奇男志 家國瘡痍強涕零
奮臂狂歌誰擊筑 丹心何處更秦庭

(7)

偷得忙心一日閒 南郊初度逐波間 良朋促膝攻橋陣(3) 虐蝨聯群擾興顏
四美俱全忘俗念 千瀾壯闊耀中灣 明沙石棧多留意 月影殘雲伴我還

註(3): 橋牌

(8) 天仙子 閒居

渾嬾悶懷挑病意，默佇涼臺低弄字。蠶居應妒過雲閒。尋好寐，添憔悴；夢破書空情更脆！

孤潔蓬心猶未棄，靜抱頑靈飄逸志。倚欄重惹舊哀愁。浮生事，無由避；冷眼窗前雛逞翅。

〔二〕辛丑夏日隨筆

(1)

奮志芸窗十六秋 立言立德已皆休
從今棄卻青雲想 只願明心到白頭

(2)

金風振兮秋息聞；壯士千里兮意紛紜。
念河清兮未極；悲國故兮心慙慙！

(3)

雨淒淒兮夜風涼 輾轉不寐兮思路長
思路自長兮理自亂 剪不斷兮意漸狂

〔三〕憶贊育新交⁽⁴⁾

夫何匝月之別兮 幾度舊地夢臨
緬昔日之共事兮 感同人之悃忱
朋情高且坦蕩兮 薄俗世之孔壬
冀重聚之無期兮 心嬋媛而莫禁
情眷眷而不寐兮 步棲遲以低吟
蕪句知其不純兮 望郢斲之玉音
冒唐突而進詞兮 豈交淺而言深
索枯腸而苦綴兮 聊以舒吾幽心

註(4): 贊育醫院位於西營盤，乃當年婦產科訓練中心，
第四年醫科學生要在這裏實習四星期。

[肆] 1965-1969：初戀 (Charmed at First Date)

愛情豈只是盲目的，還有點肉麻骨痺呢！

贈英才 并序

丙午年五月初七日予小恙新痊慵懶鬱抑復感前路之迷茫心懷耿耿承友英才不鄙同遊竟日雖乏高山流水鳥語花香難得知己解人妙語連珠其淺笑也則清心悅目其輕言也則春風煦人其舉手也則翩翩闡範其投足也則玉步金波於是予胸懷暢然萬慮盡洗感激之餘無以為謝謹贈七律乙首以表寸心豈敢言報聊博一哂耳

幾回凝望幾回尋
淡淡清姿冰作影
花能解語輸風範
瑤圃英才蘭蕙質

仙子凌波帶笑臨
娟娟倩魄玉為音
月既怡情缺本心
秀華飄逸勝南金

[伍] 1979-1999 : 珀斯定居 (Residence in Perth)

事業正欣，高堂尚在，竟遠徙天涯，為何？
物離鄉貴，人離鄉賤，求安居自由，得乎？

壬申暮春 珀斯(1)寫懷

綠欄紅桃芳滿庭	居安樂命珀斯城
橫天越海尋清福	棄職拋薪捨祿名
午夜夢魂驚異域	一生離亂怕同聲
遍園花木有誰解	人老鄉心家國情

註(1): Perth, Western Australia.

因果

何求三生證	警諺釋宏旨	若問來世因	今生受者是
欲知來世果	今生作者擬	善惡循環報	因果存天理

杖鄉叟自嘲打油詩

眼矇耳聾關節痛	牙鬆步重尿難通
丹田氣短腦筋頓	飲食還防膽固醇

賀炳耀兄新居榮遷之喜

珀市鍾靈地	達溪(2)第一方	環瞰四鄰伏	遠眺萬戶當
藍天暉滿室	綠水映華堂	桂殿神仙府	鄧兄掌上藏

註(2): 即Dalkeith, 乃珀斯名區。

[陸] 1994：舊夢重溫 (Old Dreams Revisited)

一九九三年，大陸易政四十二年後，作一生第一次旅遊中國華東。翌年，乘回港參聚六四醫科校友珍珠禧聯歡會之便，返故鄉省視。門巷依舊，但人面全非矣！

〔一〕華東遊 并序

癸酉三月冬盡將春之時姻親兄弟姐妹六眾同遊華東兩省六市自香港飛北京沿大運河南下至寧波全程約千五公里費時八日觀覽神州山川名勝有若走馬看花緬懷中華歷代滄桑難免觸景傷情心感意發管動詞生豈敢言文聊托幽思耳

(1) 北京

歷朝帝主選 今祚殊榮褒 雪冷松柏秀 人和福壽高
棋盤道路網 槐桂春秋袍 萬里孤城寂 千年戰馬嘈
頤園血淚史 故殿肝腸刀 烤鴨飛霞享 尋經佛閣遶
明陵地下寶 石舫湖上豪 相遊永誌樂 執筆勉其勞

(2) 秦淮

萬里江山萬里遊 紫金城內暫棲投
夫子廟前有閒客 秦淮河上沒畫舟
笙歌風月今何在 韻事文章得永留
去國重歸翻舊夢 唏噓感慨復綢繆

(3) 姑蘇

姑蘇鬧市賞繡工 冒雨寒山學敲鐘
虎丘石嶺秋寅蹟 萬古姻緣盡巧逢

(4) 上海

滾滾黃浦水 奔騰長江頭 解履玉佛寺 登門慶齡樓
十里洋場地 百年故國仇 烘烘焚心火 伴我到杭州

(5) 杭州

堤上柳絲湖面雨 群峰欲現霧橫飄
雲林寶寺玄擘筆 武穆真墳忠義標
錢塘江濁無潮湧 碧隱茶清好品調
西子有靈應自問 當年艷色為誰挑

(6) 寧波

天閣范欽惠普羅

塔禪方丈登仙河

八日行程終覺短

依依惆悵別寧波

〔二〕 六四醫科校友珍珠禧聯歡會

緣結杏林 并序

甲戌年九月十二日港大醫科六四校友為紀念結業三十週歲聚宴於香港君悅酒店閣樓列席者來自三洲五國連配偶共六十一人盡歡而散預約五載後重會於加拿大之溫哥華市豐筵苦暫未克忘懷濃意綿長豈無記敘故竭鄙能恭疏短引免成七律乙首以誌其盛焉

故友緣慳三十齡

深秋結約聚香城

執手相看重相認

攬肩互訴復互盟

春葩妙舌哄堂響

鬢影斑衣繚室馨

今夜陽關高唱罷

明朝夢醒各奔程

[柒] 1995-1996 魂斷雪梨 (Tragedy in Sydney)

我家族的癌病遺傳因子很強。在這一代，長姊是第一個受害人。雖有二十世紀澳洲雪梨的先進科技，加上手術、雷射、化療齊施，亦走不出五年生存期限。

賀君漢新婚 沖喜

日媚風和好時年	凌歌河(1)畔朗園前
玉宇喜懸鴛鴦帳	瓊臺禮頌錦繡篇
地老天荒情永繫	海枯石爛愛延綿
香江雪埠同歡慶	百子千孫樂似仙
奉賀	

君漢賢甥新婚之喜 乙亥年二月寫于雪梨

註(1): Lane Cove River, Sydney.

祭秩儀家姊文

維丙子年十一月一日，弟臻頓首，泣拜於 儀姊靈前為文以奉曰：

姊生寒門，自幼艱苦。童操粗役，任怨任勞。家教幸賴母祖；識見但憑勤修；塾書之學不及五載。能高天嫉，命途乖舛。日寇侵華，擾攘八年。神州易主，三反五鬥，姊首當其衝。願長護小。上有不通文墨之慈帷，下有侍撫之幼妹稚弟；既抗鄉人誣讒於前，復拒官關公審於後。心力交瘁。時余在港就讀。先父不欲亂吾神志，過後方知。終幸吉人天相，得脫虎口。猶接二連三，重回獸窟。帶出未逃生之親族弟妹。至情至性，捨己為人，直追前賢。弟愧不如也。

出嫁王家時，兩袖清風，四壁空虛。徒知克苦勤樸，勇往直前。姊相夫育兒外，復運籌建業大計，親力親為。經十數載耕耘，盤基穩定，安居樂業，子女成才。豈料驚弓之鳥，聞九七回歸而躊躇，遠徙雪梨。幸獲園林玉宇，橋影波間。樂得人靜氣閒。意以為可稍享清福。誰料天命難測，竟罹惡疾。僅五年而藥石無靈。

哀哉！問穹蒼何不公若此？以姊之賢，未蒙其澤；以姊之慈，未獲其壽。弟忝為骨肉。汝病吾不能醫；汝歿吾不在側。有負姊一生眷愛。此恩此德，惟望報諸來世矣。

嗚呼！言有窮而情無盡。姊英靈有知其能夢魂再續耶？

嗚呼哀哉！尚饗！

碑聯

典範長存赤手榮家恩慈綿世澤
儀和永伴青山樂土福慧蔭兒孫

[捌] 2000-2009：晚虹 (Evening Rainbows)

若得晚虹無限彩，何雖惆悵患黃昏。

〔一〕 港大六四醫科四十週年聚會對聯

一生敬業解痛扶危義及雲天杏林韻事傳萬代
五載同窗分甘共苦情如手足紅玉禧年慶今宵

〔二〕 庚辰冬旅加過港訪孟為⁽¹⁾

六載音容別	重臨大雅堂
采風仍若舊	行止獨達康
深談無倦意	呵護有紅粧
久恙不能屈	堅心勝異方

註(1): 陸孟為醫生，時患柏金遜症

〔三〕 香港回歸十年有感

十載認歸華夏民	逃居籬下自由身
相逢不論今朝事	已是天涯棄國人

〔四〕 齊魯行 并序

丁亥年九月二十三日澳港三十好友組團共遊山東從香港出發直飛青島再經濟青高速公路至省會濟南沿途訪站計有嶗山蓬萊濰坊淄博泰安曲阜及泰山等地全程約六百公里為時七日六夜暢遊春秋齊魯之邦團友全感不枉此行身舒神遂添廣見聞得益不淺確符走萬里路勝讀萬卷書之義老圃自慚才拙未能本末盡錄謹擇數地為題略誌其趣豈敢言文聊勝於無耳

(1) 抵青島

和風朗日臨青島	小魚山頭暮靄間
赤瓦青叢迎客館	藍天碧水匯泉灣
棧橋深處迴瀾閣	琴島岸前棄艦灘
百載滄桑新氣象	千年遺蹟遇求難

(2) 上嶗山

海上靈峰稱第一	名花古樹競爭奇
百歲山茶嬌六月	千齡漢柏傲三枝
銀杏婆婆雌雄別	蒼榆蹣跚龍虎姿
太清寶殿法壇會	始奠全真大道基

(3) 訪蓬萊

世外桃源境	天庭永樂橋	舊城護河築	新址畫棟雕
水池舟未放	高閣景堪描	溫風飄袂袖	良友共逍遙

(4) 吊馬坑

喜馬應惜馬	愛馬不傷馬	葬馬以奉人	蔑視天理也
千古吊馬坑	多少聲咒罵	杵臼若有知	贖罪九泉下

(5) 登泰山

岱宗五嶽首	雄逸鍾靈秀	古往帝王封	從來文墨茂
有幸得親臨	無緣空自疚	懸車送南門	徒步登北斗
晨鐘警頑心	字壁驚學究	丹崖瞭海深	紫殿覺雲厚
俯瞰群山微	高瞻萬事透	獨立頂峰巔	天地惟我有

[五] 三峽遊

(1) 長江新貌

一別長江十六秋	黃沙急湍不復留
三峽攔壩功和罪	百川灌湖喜或憂
多少民房埋水底	萬千生態逐波流
成敗到頭難知曉	放懷盡享畫舫遊

(2) 遊船自嘲

餐前飯後攤一攤	早午啡茶嘆一嘆
每天每日皆如是	優閒生活冇得彈

(3) 無題

鳳眼蛾眉櫻桃口	瓜仁粉臉雪後花
輕移蓮步回眸笑	我見猶憐俏嬌娃

[六] 賽馬車

良朋志趣味相同	賽馬車場週五逢
會員廂座客難滿	檯位面前杯不空
投注毫元君自擇	選名冷熱各依從
勝負輸贏且莫問	談歡說笑沐春風

[七] 韓日遊記

(1) 首爾清溪川

三山泉水匯清溪	六里鋼筋封舊堤
淘盡先民辛酸淚	有誰仍記席岸棲

(2) 濟州島

午辭赤立角	薄暮抵仁川	首爾奔上路	金浦轉南沿
濟州春四季	多有榜三專	仙境旅遊地	漢華渡假村
飲食無巧手	康療有溫泉	水濺筋絡活	泥塗面膚娟
氧音魂入定	禾稈魄迴旋	白浪將軍影	金陵石物園
觀熊泰迪館	賞瀑天地淵	日出城山頂	長今古俗村
奇路因錯覺	化龍且從權	千階尋窟寺	萬里問機緣

(3) 遊豐平峽遇雨

定山溪樹獻秋裝	千丈豐平紅襯黃
環嶺蒼松無顏色	滿湖綠水有壩藏
遊巴繞谷穿岩過	訪客攀欄取景忙
賞心那管天意向	狂雨顛風又何妨

(4) 小樽神仙沼

陰風冷雨渡原林	淺步低窪蘆竹深
三面谷峰枯樹影	一塘秋水淨梵音
沼內仙神無意現	人間濁物有心尋
大叫高呼難引領	徘徊澤畔獨沉吟

(5) 北海道溫泉浴

北海初嘗湯浴池	心存尷尬顯猶疑
寬衣不免斜眸盼	露體還須舉步遲
室瀾蒸霧氣神定	泉湧滾珠肌理弛
身靈舒泰無俗念	眼底盡皆臭囊皮

(6) 松島五色沼

斑斑紅葉話深秋	淡淡翠湖飄薄愁
留步泛舟尋幽徑	幾疑重訪九寨溝

(7) 食在日本

韓餐五日盡鍋燒	札幌先嚐拉麵條
函館鮮蟹雪毛字	仙台嫩牛松阪標
紅魚白鰻生煎炒	美果珍蔬醬芥椒
蠔鮑螺帶溫泉蛋	一應俱全任我挑

[玖] 2007-2009 : 無忘 (Etched in Memory)

可憐雙兒成獨出，餘生長恨失子琦！

[一] A Final Farewell to Donald

How we raised a beautiful soul like you,
We have not the slightest clue.
One thing we'll always recall:
Your spirit has inspired us all.

Your childhood gave no revelation,
Nor your adolescence, any aspiration;
Not a scholastic medal or academic prize,
That to you was no concern or surprise.

You took up any job you could find,
Or any venture that came to mind.
Your career constantly looked like a trailer,
You excelled admirably a beloved reveller.

Your talent in technology was pure gem.
Nothing excited you more than the RAM.
“Hardware, software, programs unable to install?
Calm down, I'll fix them after my volleyball”

The sudden strike by the cancerous disease
Set the greatest of your character on release.
You accepted the diagnosis in total serenity
And the prognosis, with utmost dignity.

You fought it with remarkable resolution
And its horrid treatments, humorous convolution,
Still the familiar smile and no tears,
Despite sufferings over five years.

The battle ought to have been won
For your endurance second to none.
Alas! An untimely infection made you fall,
Your stature stays forever high and tall.

Oh! Beloved Donald dear!
Worry not about us down here.
In time your eternal peace will ease our pain.
Farewell now until we meet again

Aug 2007 Perth

〔二〕七十誕辰

新遷方罷又辰禧	鐵樹掌球花競持
杖國晚年悲落寞	餘生長恨失子琦

〔三〕念琦

豁達平和情義深	才華未展運先沉
窮鬥癌魔千八日	永留笑面慰親心

[拾] 2010-2024 : 殘聲 (Fading Voices)

雄心已斂樂清休，飲食文娛遊畫舟；
殘生未了聲還在，一路聊談到盡頭。

[一] Donald Memorial Plaque

DONALD TK PANG

09.10.1972 12.07.2007

There's the water you researched
In the river you embraced
And the city you perched
To you the best spot we've traced

Love forever

Mum Dad Ron Jo

[二] 三年

公元二零一零年七月十二日為二兒離塵三週年是日零晨季候性風暴進襲西澳南岸珀斯亦遭波及晨起但見橫雨灰雲遍園落葉更添愁緒觸景牽情不能自己耿耿白頭人悼青髮兒之念欲訴無從惟低吟一絕以發幽思焉

傷心淚盡又三年
冥冥宇內知我意

昔日風華歷目前
苦雨淒風抵千言

[三] TO MAURICE (1)

Roaming the world as if you were a gazelle,
Did you ever intend coming here to dwell?
The place looks très belle;
Its culture barely fills a dell.
The landscape charms like a spell;

Its ruggedness hides a silent knell.
 The seasons are mild and generally excel;
 A rare summer day could be hot as hell.
 You arrived with little more than a shell.
 You work hard when circumstances compel;
 You get a mere inch tho' deserving an ell.
 You tried to settle and settled well.
 You depart and have lots to sell,
 And in time, much more to tell.
 Hugging your kin, emotions swell;
 It's touching, tears hard to repel;
 Let's then allow all feelings flow, and yell,
 "Goodbye Maurice, good luck and farewell!"

Note (1): Maurice Brown, my in-law.

[四] 自訴

轉眼浮生見盡頭	無功沒業把名留
才低也曉將勤補(2)	氣短何曾俯首求(3)
五門(4)歷劫傷絕患	三代(5)漂離覓金甌
難通靈運迴天術	且把時光盡倒流
註(2): 母訓。	註(3): 父訓。
註(4): 七叔家，前列腺癌，胃癌，胸腺癌； 長姊家，乳癌二人； 我家，白血球癌； 三妹家，乳癌，膀胱癌； 五弟家，前列腺癌。	
註(5): 自祖父，父親，叔伯至我兩兄弟，皆離鄉謀生。	

[五] 贈李兄群弟(6)

遊滇道上初相識	未問寒暄辨短長
談高論遠呈本色	舌巧唇乖顯鋒芒
製碟加音賢內助	馴駒試賽馬車場
豪氣干雲行我是	管他掃否瓦前霜
註(6): Mr. Henry Li, an IT nurse from Hong Kong and a local harness racing celebrity, is good at turning pictures of all kinds into DVDs.	

[六] 黃山杭州上海旅遊記趣

(1) 宏村

皖黟桃源里	其勢若伏牛	楊杏樹為角	雷崗山乃頭
月沼胃中水	南湖肚外兜	古橋四蹄臥	迂圳迴腸溝
典雅農舍屋	堂皇承志樓	開卷以文院	賞荷木蘭舟
風和靈氣聚	地傑瑞雲留	悠悠宏村韻	未得畫裡收

(2) 詠觀音石

慈悲一念下凡塵	百丈溶巖軀殼身	遠離庵廟逃香火	廣結善緣返璞真
背負滿嶺人間孽	前瞻千秋世道輪	絕谷深山為誰隱	生民苦難何處伸

(3) 黃山遊

軒轅幻境耳熟詳	老大蹉跎願終償
座落江東茂原地	週圍水利魚米鄉
關山遠渡不嫌苦	勝地高攀難好強
牌門公路專車送	陡嶝險崖慢步量
萬級梯階沖天走	千叢壁樹滿目彰
橫空索道新形象	到處亭臺古色香
三大主峰嵐煙繞	四環幽谷鳥獸藏
仙人曬靴靈蹤杳	猴子觀海雅量汪
頑石飛來佇蝸后	勁松迎客羞孟嘗
鰲魚嶺脊金龜立	始信峰巔白髮揚
摸黑晨行雙頰冷	迎新日出半天黃
筋疲還能撐拐柱	力竭不用躺兜床
神州壯麗歎觀止	晚景餘年豪氣長

(4) 杭州

晚抵杭州雨浙浙	紅騎 ⁽⁷⁾ 滿道如游鯽
巨宅豪園遍城街	西湖勝景全失色

註(7): 紅色公用單車。

(5) 上岳墳有感

智勇雙全文兼修	親民愛國俠士流
三十功名如塵土	八千里路為帝仇
鐵血頻殲金兀朮	丹心錯效宋王構
愚忠換得世人歎	曠主庸臣無別謀

(6) 十月十三日上海世博行(仿杜甫兵車行)

風飄飄 雨瀟瀟 遊人裝備掛滿腰
爺娘妻子走相叫 人擠不見牌門標
拖男帶女當道搶 搶先要上九雲霄
道旁過者問遊人 遊人但云購票輪
或從四月求旅社 便至十月仍糾纏
來時滿懷興沖沖 到後仍然不著邊
邊際排隊若長蛇 主管增柵意未已
君不聞 上海世博三百家 熱館日夜人不止
縱有健漢飛馬蹄 難分場地東北西
況復導領曾數至 團員不異犬與雞
長者雖有恨 誰敢開聲問
只得一日遊 未肯片時卒
雖是自由行 隻身焉敢出
信知趕場難 反是休閒好
休閒樂得快朵頤 趕場雙足踏火草
君不見 浦東頭 到處爭建摩天樓
新廈更高舊廈倒 財資自需密密籌

〔七〕悼甥女蔚思⁽⁸⁾

哀聞噩訊痛失聲	悼念陰陽兩孤伶
蔚然家業南柯夢	思望愛親越世情

註(8): Dr Cynthia Ouyang was an Emergency Medical Specialist in Gosford Hospital, NSW, Australia.

〔八〕贈摺紙大師何佐杰 并序

週日晨行例息於博是活賭城(9)啡茶小點談天說地之餘何兄每摺紙自遣疊砌出各式模型維肖維妙其手法精嫻若流水行雲其成竹在胸則深如丘壑觀者惟張口結舌驚奇嘆服焉

人皆迷魔幻	少識賞藝晶
一葉紙拈手	三方摺定形
無物不能仿	有題當可成
莫作雕蟲技	胸藏百萬經

註(9): Burswood Casino, Perth.

〔九〕賀李群弟誕辰

春秋六秩轉瞬間	花甲添籌再三番
慶會叨陪揚頌禱	齊天福祿壽南山

〔十〕賀朱安華甥新婚之喜

細雨連綿絲絲情	仙靈閣(10)上繫赤繩
璧合聯儀(11)盟誓永	同諧皓首福康寧

註(10): Synagogue.

(11): Dual wedding ceremony (Chinese and Jewish).

To Stella and Benjamin on their wedding

Drizzles have been persisting,
Like filaments of love everlasting,
Blessed in the temple of God,
You receive the divine sacred nod.
The seal of holy union is in perfect harmony;
Oh! What a magnificent dual ceremony!
We wish you forever together always find
Good luck, good health and peace of mind.

Melbourne 04.03.2012

〔十一〕賀東

恭奉衷心一點情	賀箋未摺鳳凰繩
佐兒立室宗永續	杰子成家脈相承
新人超逸天仙配	翁媳洽調日月明
之筵慶會齊舉盞	喜滿眉梢福盈庭

〔十二〕佐杰過訪

酷熱家居懶洋洋	山灰 ⁽¹²⁾ 賞駕篷筆光
一壺清茶閒話盡	高誼款款意難忘

註(12): 佐杰兄別號。

〔十三〕初訪容居

容家大府氣堂皇	陋室謙名難掩藏
實木傢私親手造	鮮瓜菜果自身秧
芳菲圃植前後苑	綠蔭盆栽東西廊
開陽高雅新貴地	萬載福緣壽而康

〔十四〕照上題詞

(1) 情侶石并序

友子君兄乃攝影高手偶遊塔士文於海邊懸崖上獵得異常岩塊肯認為情侶石歸示求詞余遂胡謔五律一首以成其美焉

初逢桃源島	邂逅塔水 ⁽¹³⁾ 汀	愛苗根易長	緣份世難清
偎崖牽子手	對海誓鴛盟	人間無容地	共化石鑄情

註(13): Tasman Sea, Tasmania, Australia

(2) 晨行偶拾

鵝河 ⁽¹⁴⁾ 美若畫	影物相連掛
獨樂泛孤舟	天地為我也

註(14): Swan River, Perth.

[十五] Ode to the HKU Medic Class of Sixty-four

(A memoir fifty years late)

Do you still remember?
It all began in September
And the year nineteen fifty-nine.
Anyone could see our faces shine,
Reflecting a smile we proudly wore
To form the medic class of sixty-four.

In the dissection hall we acquainted one another;
Around nameless cadavers we grouped together.
Sitting on stools to take up the task,
We could not help whispering to ask:
“Which is the one with the highest score
To lead the medic class of sixty-four?”

Has anyone forgotten the remarkable teacher
Who turned Organic Chemistry into a torture?
She rubbed off as quickly as she could write;
We had no chance to get the formulas right.
Alas, the subject stood guard the lone door
Between us and the medic class of sixty-four.

The first hundred days passed, as did Organic Chemistry;
The focus moved to Anatomy, Physiology and Biochemistry.
Sentiments ran wild when the viva results were out.
The top dogs were always the same, we had no doubt;
The rest reluctantly waited for our turns to stack the floor.
Those were the hectic days in the medic class of sixty-four.

The preclinical curriculum was a cramming game;
Any dyspepsia or amnesia would taint your name.
The First MB was rapidly approaching;
There was no time for self-reproaching.
Sleepless nights we struggled hard to take in more
Lest we missed out in the medic class of sixty-four.

The journey to achieve our ambition was tedious;
Hurdle after hurdle we persevered to be studious.
Pharmacology, Pathology and Disease Prevention
Following the heels of the First MB examination,

Heralded our next path forward to the core
That finalised the medic class of sixty-four.

The clinical course was exciting with lots to cover;
Time was regularly short with so much to discover.
There was a “mind” guy in the High Street Clinic;
His manner was comedic and his tutorial pure tonic.
He talked on Koro from mystical Chinese folklore,
And brought giggles in the medic class of sixty-four.

There was this easy going “skin” man;
He was usually late for the clinics he ran.
He touched and probed many florid lesions
But never washed his hands in the sessions.
We enjoyed a few laughs but did not care to implore;
We were busy tending to the medic class of sixty-four.

We can never forget the one hundred metre mad dash,
To avoid the quick-tempered Professor’s verbal bash.
It took place every Thursday precisely at ten a.m.;
The race was explosive and definitely not a sham.
It was no fun and the whole body could feel the sore;
‘Twas the way of life in the medic class of sixty-four!

We served clerkships to acquire clinical skills
But ended up mostly swallowing humble pills.
Did university lecturers of the day like to be sadistic
Or, simply confuse being humorous with sarcastic?
Stern or concerned, they were a breed we loved to adore;
They sharpened our wits in the medic class of sixty-four.

Clerkships had ranks of junior and senior divisions;
Specialties and subspecialties got their provisions:
Surgery, Internal Medicine, Gynaecology, Obstetrics,
Radiology, Orthopaedics, Oncology and Paediatrics;
You name it; it was a spectacle of institutions galore,
Meant to mould us into the medic class of sixty-four.

The Obstetrics clerkship came in the fourth and final years;
The four-week resident experience was all joy without tears.
The friendly Unit Interns gave us no strife
And we had good support from the midwife.

We would have cried out and requested an encore
But for the schedule of the medic class of sixty-four.

At last the grand final was here;
The moment of truth was near.
We kept our nerves and held our breath;
The battle was a matter of life and death!
We must succeed and be greeted with the roar;
Our destiny lay in the medic class of sixty-four!

The Second MB was over but the wait an anticlimax;
We all deserved a full bottle and a long holiday to relax.
Instead, most rushed around seeking their internship;
Others were getting set for a repeat of the hardship.
They needed six months of patience to let them soar
And re-join the party in the medic class of sixty-four.

A year of enforced hospital duty was the last obstacle;
We were titled Houseman but more likely an article.
We worked twenty-four seven with little break or rest;
Our dignity was non-issue and we could not protest.
We survived the ordeal but could barely restore
The high spirit of the medic class of sixty-four.

Thirty years on we celebrated the pearl anniversary;
Not all could attend and a few only by their obituary.
This was distressing and we felt the pain,
But it hardened our resolve to meet again.
Our bodies had weakened, our health not as before;
It's sad to see a shrinking medic class of sixty-four.

The ruby celebration was a great hit;
The wish to meet oftener was explicit.
We had been through tough times as a team;
We helped each other to realise a noble dream.
Now that we have reached l'anniversarie d'or,
Let's shout: Viva the medic class of sixty-four!

One's memory is limited and mine small;
Many names and events I cannot recall.
You are welcome to add, amend or delete
To make this narrative true and complete.

You've got the picture, I need say no more;
What a marvellous medic class of sixty-four!

〔十六〕滿江紅港大醫科六四班結業五十週年誌慶

半百華年、春去也，悠悠六四。心眷戀、會金禧日，緬懷舊事。五載醫宮甘與苦，一生管鮑誠和義。看今朝、散處遍天涯，情無棄。

飛萬里，殊容易。安慶典，推新意。得群英互展，詭奇才智。共坐瓊筵歡暢敘，重臨學苑難忘記。待從頭、結約再相逢，千千次。

On the Golden Jubilee of the HKU Medic Class of 1964

(Translated from the Chinese verse)

Half a century of our prime years have followed the lovely springs and gone forever. Nineteen sixty-four now appears ancient and yet it stays cuddled permanently in our hearts. This day, as we celebrate the golden jubilee, all the events come back vividly to our memories. We spent five full years together in the Medical School, sharing our gains and pains; we built a life long friendship on sincerity, honesty and integrity. Behold! To day, even when we are scattered all over the world, our affections remain firmly attached.

To fly from thousands of miles away to attend the re-union is an easy decision. To plan and run the program successfully requires innovation and dedication. We are lucky to be endowed with many ingenious and talented classmates. Their hard work has made it possible for us to enjoy a grandiose banquet and a wonderful gathering, not forgetting the unforgettable revisiting to the University. If we cherish these moments, then let us start afresh and pledge to meet again for another million times!

〔十七〕初訪莊居

康寧谷(15)上莊君邸	灑脫開明氣度彰
遊樂憩園相對面	濺珠泉水舞斜陽
雅室珍存稀世寶	書齋喜閱好文章
賓主盡歡憐日短	但祈重會細端詳

註(15): Canning Vale, Perth.

〔十八〕 楓葉寄情并序

公元二零一五年十月十日，為子為少君婚慶大典之期。眾親遠渡重洋，共赴加國多倫多市觀宴。禮成後，閒遊愛德華園(16)。時值仲秋。是日也，雨霽雲疏，陽暉間耀；映得滿山楓林如火。蒼松翠柳雜處其間，更增艷麗。漫步陰徑，小橋淺溪，遍地紅葉。頓覺暮氣迫人，愁緒入懷。楓枝明春能再發，明年健挺還幾人？慮思無所得，惟借楓葉且留痕。

千楓落葉秋令時 片片紅箋惹愁思
俯拾二三隨手贈 無需題畫獻相知

註(16): Edwards Gardens, Toronto, Canada.

〔十九〕 Wedding

You vow: We will never part;
I promise: Forever heart to heart
Our love is created, a heavenly art.
This day darling, our devotions start.

〔二十〕 敬謝耀南教授贈書題字

平生道路九羊腸(17) 喜有通靈飛步揚(18)
培德知行崇基定(19) 英華化雨大學張(20)
經史子集篇篇熟 賦文詞詩句句鏘
譽滿香江聞海外 南洲藝苑立門牆(21)

註(17): 陳耀南教授名著之一。

(18): 陳教授中學會考成績優異。

(19): 培英，德明，知行，崇基等學院。

(20): 英華教學至副校長後，轉入香港大學。

(21): 設南洲學社授徒於澳洲雪梨。

〔二十一〕 致耀南教授書

耀南教授雅鑒：

采風未睹，萍水待逢。余一介庸醫，寂寂無名；有幸忝列英皇家醫學院院士，實非博士也。退休於不見經傳之珀斯。竟蒙飲譽香江、聲震雪梨之陳教授寵惠。先後題贈珍留名著四冊。隆情厚誼，莫可言宣。奈無可回謝，惟銘諸五內矣。

余乃香港殖民地之標準「番書仔」，中西合璧之半桶水是也。中文全賴葉穎林與袁匯炳兩名師之熏陶感召。今始敢與教授對話。然亦僅三年之訓誨耳。堂奧未窺，經史不明。有違清聽處，萬祈見諒。

番書一世慢典文

老大知慚重耕耘

醫成猶幸登皇院

博士點名愧煞人

二零一八年五月十五日

珀斯盛臻拜上

[二十二] 剽竄李煜詞二首

冠菌十九肆虐三年無消散跡象地球氣候逆變到處水火災禍或亢旱糧盡今冬珀斯寒流驟雨越常困鎖家居復睹蘇俄霸侵小鄰通貨暴漲思潮起伏憶起李後主去國愁懷之句心有同感焉

虞美人困居寫意

寒鋒綿雨還多久？疫患何時走？小樓昨夜嘆書空，港九不堪回首夢魂中。
金迷紙醉應猶在，只是情懷改。問君能負幾多愁，恰似大江洪水向東流。

浪淘沙疫困念舊友

簾外雨潺潺，冬意闌珊。羅衾不耐五更寒。夜裏舊朋常入夢；一瞬心歡。
疏候愧疚羞慚，緣盡情慳；失時容易續時難。流水落花飄逝去，天上人間

[二十三] CELEBRATING THE FIRST GRAND CYCLE 【花甲】 ANNIVERSARY OF OUR GRADUATION AT THE HKU MEDIC CLASS 1964

The traditional Chinese almanac is a complex compilation consisting of the luni-solar calendar, time, astrology, horoscopy and the forecast of annual agricultural conditions. The calendar years are enumerated not by real numbers but through a combination of two sets of quasi-numbers called Celestial Trunks (天干) and Terrestrial Branches (地支). There are ten Branches called 甲 (jia), 乙 (yi), 丙 (bing), 丁 (ding), 戊 (wu), 己 (ji), 庚 (gen), 辛 (xin), 壬 (ren), 癸 (gui), and twelve Trunks named 子 (zi), 丑 (chou), 寅 (yin), 卯 (mao), 辰 (chen), 巳 (si), 午 (wu), 未 (wei), 申 (shen), 酉 (you), 戌 (xu) and

亥 (hai). The combination of the two sets, applying one from each in their exact sequence gives us the least common multiple of 60. The order of the years will run as 甲子, 乙丑, 丙寅, and so on for 60 years; then we return to and restart the cycle with 甲子, 乙丑, 丙寅, etc. In addition, the Celestial Trunks also represent the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac: rat (鼠), bull (牛), tiger (虎), rabbit (兔), dragon (龍), snake (蛇), horse (馬), goat (羊), monkey (猴), rooster (雞), dog (犬), and pig (豬), corresponding respectively to the order of the Trunks beginning with 子 (zi). Furthermore they also serve for the 24 hours of the day as follows: 子時 (2300-0100 hrs), 丑時 (0100-0300 hrs), 寅時 (0300-0500 hrs), 卯時 (0500-0700 hrs), 辰時 (0700-0900 hrs), 巳時 (0900-1100 hrs), 午時 (1100-1300 hrs), 未時 (1300-1500 hrs), 申時 (1500-1700 hrs), 酉時 (1700-1900 hrs), 戌時 (1900-2100), 亥時 (2100-2300 hrs).

Under the system, when, for example, a Chinese is born in the year 甲子 reaches 60 years of age, the year will again be 甲子. This is what I call the “Grand Cycle (花甲)” and has been generally accepted as a highly relevant milestone in a person’s life. That, of course, is easily understood since few people will live to celebrate their second “Grand Cycle”. It would be a miracle if any of us lives to witness our second “Grand Cycle” anniversary in the year 2084!

For the record and general interest, we entered the Medical Faculty in 1959 i.e., 己亥年, the Year of the Pig and graduated in 1964, 甲辰年, the Year of the Dragon. This year 2024, the first “Grand Cycle” anniversary of our graduation, has returned to 甲辰年, as well as the Year of the Dragon.

奉賀港大醫科六四校友

結業鑽禧聯歡會

杏林結業六十載
耄宿摯友蒙天寵
醫道半忘仁心在
今宵共歡珍離後

花甲禧年慶良辰
瓊筵優遊若世親
誼情長守義膽真
回首祈望百歲身

二零二四年十月

彭盛臻寫于西澳珀斯

[二十四] 自知

耳根長伴銀腰果	眼內暗藏膠鏡晶
心脈梗栓開胸換	膝關殘腐混鋼拼
滿口白冠還識味	半田丹氣不爭聲
下惠情操無可奈	放懷饌遊樂餘生

[二十五] 珠海漁女

香爐灣畔石礁磯	玉立輕紗豪邁姿
採來靈珠擎手奉	低問愛郎心可癡

[二十六] On Ian's Fortieth Birthday

So you turn forty years mature today,
Life and career reaching the prime.
You've searched and settled your way,
Striving to attain the greatest time!

You've found your love and multiplied it by three;
You've built a home that makes your world sublime.
Success in many disguises will befall unto thee;
Happiness reverberates soundly in heavenly chime!

Let's rejoice and celebrate this your very big day,
With prayers, music and blessings in angelic rhyme.
Happy returns for ever and ever, needless to say;
To you Ian, let's all toast the champagne with lime.

We wish you a jovial birthday, hear, hear!
We wish you a wonderful birthday.
We wish you an amazing birthday, Ian dear!
Good luck and health for ever to stay!

SC Pang, Perth
February 2024