

# When I was the President .....

我做會長的日子.....



**Sr PC Lau**

**Past President (1996-1997)**

*Interviewed by Christina Wong*

**30週年  
Anniversary**

測量師三十年 專業社會邁向前  
30 Years of Surveying Service with Pride,  
For the Community's Betterment We Strive

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of HKIS. As part of the celebration to commemorate this event we have invited one of our past presidents, Sr PC Lau, to share his memorable achievements with us. Sr PC Lau was elected HKIS president for 1996/97. He has nearly 40 years of experience in construction and property development both in Hong Kong and Mainland China. He is also a former Member of the HKSAR Legislative Council.

## **Q1: How your leadership changed the Institute?**

**A1:** My tenure was from December 1996 to December 1997 straddling the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong which took place on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1997. At that time, Hong Kong's housing and property market was mired in a state of speculative euphoria. HKIS Council and I spared no effort in raising public awareness to the potential risks associated with property bubbles in the making, guiding and alerting the general public towards basic fundamentals of supply and demand on land and housing, planning and development, as well as promoting protection of consumers' interest in property transactions. One particular example was the measurement of floor area for pre-sale of residential properties where HKIS had provided numerous inputs to and exchanged views with government, Legislative Council, Consumer Council, other professions and relevant concerned groups etc. Such tenacious and joint effort culminated in the ultimate legislation of the Residential Properties (First-hand Sales) Ordinance Ord 19 of 2012, thus offering legal protection to home buyers at large. I would thus say steering the Institute towards advocating for and protecting the greater good of the general public and society as a whole was my main calling at that time.

## **Q2: Can you share your main involvement with the Institute and the changing landscape of the Institute during your tenure?**

**A2:** The handover of sovereignty over Hong Kong was a long and bumpy process which started off in the early 1980s with Hong Kong society being immersed generally in

pessimistic antagonism when the issue was first brought up, which however was subsequently overtaken by overwhelmingly celebrative exhilaration as the handover date of 1st July drew closer, understandably from initial skepticism to the grand finale of certainty with joy. The surveying profession had contributed more than its fair share towards the smooth transition of Hong Kong's handover when, in addition to our advocacy for betterment of land and housing issues for society as we always do, senior members of HKIS such as Sr Kan Fook Yee (HKIS founding president 1984/85) and Sr Leung Chun Ying (current HKSAR Chief Executive and HKIS past president 1995/96) were actively involved in the handover process including being as advisors to Beijing, heavily involved in the consultation and drafting of the Basic Law, as members of the Provisional Legislative Council etc. Through their professional and expert advices and advocacy, a potentially explosive issue on land leases, in particular all those north of the Boundary Street, Kowloon, which were to expire on 30 June 1997, was resolved when a proposal to grant automatic extension to such expiring land leases for 50 years until 2047 was accepted by Beijing. The proposal was ultimately written into the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini constitution, the now famous Articles 120 and 121 therein, exonerating land owners from additional land premium for such extension and more importantly removing all future uncertainties as well as releasing large tracks of land in the New Territories which were so much in need for Hong Kong's economic and social developments. Inspired by my predecessors' commitment to serve the community, I subsequently ran for and successfully won the Legislative Council election in 2000 where I served one term until 2004 and where I became the first surveyor Member ever to represent the Architectural, Surveying and Planning Functional Constituency in the Legislative Council since the handover of sovereignty. Since then, we are now honored to have another surveyor Member, Sr Tony Tse Wai Chuen, to represent the ASP FC in the current Legislative Council. And with that I would encourage surveyors to continue to play a proactive role in serving the community and our motherland.



**Q3: What are the most challenging tasks that you experienced during the tenure?**

**A3:** Hong Kong society was overwhelmed in anxieties and uncertainties when the British and Chinese governments were entangled in grid-locked disputes over all sorts of issues during the one and half decades leading to the handover date of 1 July 1997. Jittery relatives and friends, some surveyors included, were migrating overseas for good. However, I had the opportunities of participating in the Mainland market in the early 1980s and witnessed the colossally rapid economic and social changes that were taking place all over the Mainland, so much so that I was deeply convinced that the only way for China was up. As such my family and I decided we would stay put in Hong Kong and to continue my conviction to serve the community. With three and half decades of reform and development, China is now the second largest economy in the world serving as one of the world's leading economic engines that is providing impetus for global economic growth. And Hong Kong as part of China since the handover has never failed those, me included, who voted to stay behind and sealed their faith with that of Hong Kong.

**Q4: After nearly 40 years with the surveying profession, what do you see are the challenges ahead?**

**A4:** Unlike some protected sectors, surveying is not a protected profession where we are open to competition from many other professions. As market liberalization is the global trend, such challenges will not subside but will continue to deepen. Faced with such challenges and in order to sustain the surveying profession's continual growth, we must strive to diversify into new services (eg infrastructure for QS; commercial, retail and other functional planning for GP; etc) and open up new markets (eg Mainland China, ASEAN countries etc). In addition, and building on our robust foundation and following our predecessors' footsteps, the surveying profession should strengthen our participation and role play in society, not only to influence the policy makers

and shakers but to become one of them, both for the betterment of society as a whole and the surveying profession.

Before the interview drew to a close, Sr PC Lau offered his piece of advice to our young surveyors, "Not only should you concentrate on and develop your own career and family, but you should also contribute towards serving the community and our motherland by participating in social affairs and offering objective and rational advices to government and the Mainland authorities."



*Luncheon Talk by the Chief Executive on Long Term Housing Strategy (2013)*



*10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Hong Kong Coalition of Professional Services (2011)*



*Beijing visit of the Hong Kong Coalition of Professional Services (2013)*