

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
FIFTY-SECOND CONGREGATION
Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*
A Citation



Lee Hon-chiu, DBA, JP

A well-known entrepreneur, Mr. Lee Hon-chiu was born in Hong Kong in 1929. His is a well-established and distinguished family originating from Xinhui of Guangdong Province. Early this century his grandfather — the famous Lee Hysan — bought the entire hill which later became known as the Lee Garden Hill and established a base for the family in Hong Kong. The Lee family started full-scale development of the site after the Second World War, and laid the foundation for the thriving and prosperous Causeway Bay we know today.

Though born with a silver spoon in his mouth, the young Lee Hon-chiu had to experience the trauma of the Japanese invasion in his childhood. To escape war he travelled far from Hong Kong to Guilin and then to Chongqing, where he continued his education. Not yet 10 and he had gone through all kinds of hardships on his way. Through the baptism of war he realized that nothing can be taken for granted. Life involves struggle and hard work.

At the age of 11, Lee Hon-chiu decided to dedicate himself to academic studies. As a student in Chongqing's Nankai Middle School, he was known for his excellent grades in mathematics, physics, and chemistry. After the war in 1948, he returned to Guangzhou where he enrolled at Lingnan University. He later satisfied the United States Consulate that he was a suitable candidate for studies at the famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering in 1952 and pursued postgraduate studies in electronics at Stanford University. It took him only one year to get his Master of Science degree.

Upon graduation, Lee Hon-chiu joined the burgeoning electronics trade in the United States of America and was engaged in research on semi-conductors. After obtaining practical experience for two years at Westinghouse, he joined RCA as an electronic engineer. There he was actively involved in the development of installation devices for semi-conductors. The fruits of his labour were put to good use by the Apollo Space Mission and so were instrumental in man's conquest of the moon. When the American astronaut Neil Armstrong set foot on the surface of the moon on 20 July, 1969, he remarked, 'That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.' This famous sentence was broadcast back to millions on planet earth through devices that Lee Hon-chiu had taken part in designing. Since time immemorial man has aspired to fly to the moon and the dream eventually came true that year. History was made, man's future was being unfolded, and Lee Hon-chiu had the rare opportunity to participate in this unprecedented venture. As a young scientist he contributed in no small way to human progress.



Mr. Lee's outstanding achievements in the field of electronic engineering were due of course to his ambition, industriousness, and his forward-looking temperament. He never rests on his laurels. His uncles encouraged him to return to Hong Kong in 1976 to take part in the running of the family business. As a novice at a completely new trade, Mr. Lee learnt what he needed to with great patience and at a fast pace. Very soon he knew by heart the workings of the market economy and had the art of business at his finger tips. A structural reorganization of the family business in 1981 resulted in the establishment of the Hysan Development Company Limited, a publicly-listed business venture of which Mr. Lee became managing director. He also took over Dr. R.C. Lee's duties after the latter's death in 1983, and later succeeded his uncle Dr. J.S. Lee as chairman of the entire company. Under his leadership, Hysan Development Company Limited grew bigger and bigger, and is now one of the top 10 property investment and development companies in the territory, whose stocks have become Hang Seng Index constituent stocks, and whose operation is closely linked to the economic prosperity and social well-being of Hong Kong.

Currently chairman and managing director of Hysan Development Company Limited, Mr. Lee is also non-executive director of Hang Seng Bank Limited, Cathay Pacific Airways Limited, the Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited, Ryoden Development Limited, Sime Darby Hong Kong Limited, and Maersk Hong Kong Limited. He was once non-executive director of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited and of the Management Committee of the Securities and Futures Commission of Hong Kong. He has recently been appointed non-executive director of the internationally-reputed Imperial Chemical Industries plc, being the first Chinese to assume such a post.

Mr. Lee is also active in public service. He chairs the Executive Committee of the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children and the Standing Committee on Directorate/Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service, and sits on the Council and Executive Committee of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. He has been appointed a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference by the Chinese Government since 1993.

A member of the academic elite on the one hand and a business genius on the other, Mr. Lee excels in everything he does. The drastic change of career in mid-life only brought him to new heights in personal achievements. Mr. Lee's success is tied to three of his traits. First of all, he is in the full conviction that far from being a rose garden, life is a rough sea with huge waves of obstacles. Some try to duck the waves and go under. Some judge the surf accurately and ride the waves to success. He exhorts young people to set their goals early in life and be constantly prepared. They should use their shrewd judgment to take the current when it serves them and sail before the wind.

Secondly, Mr. Lee believes that single-mindedness and perseverance are the requisites for perfection in any pursuit. He loves growing orchids in his leisure time. Orchids take years to cultivate but they bloom for a mere three to four weeks. The pleasure and satisfaction of watching them bloom can only be keenly appreciated after one has tended them unquestioningly without any expectation of reward.



What applies to growing orchids applies to managing human affairs. What Mr. Lee pursues in his life is that sense of complete satisfaction and achievement after perfection has been attained through unremitting efforts.

Last but not least, Mr. Lee is an easy-going gentleman with patience and forbearance. He manages his business with ease and facility, he combines work with leisure in his daily life, he is both sympathetic and reasonable, he is an accomplished entrepreneur with a happy family. In short, he is on all fronts what a successful person should be.

Mr. Lee at present sits on both the Council of The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Court of the University of Hong Kong. He also chairs the Chinese University's Terms of Service Committee and the Campus Planning and Building Committee and is a member of the Committee on Donations. Over the years, he and other members of the Lee family have generously supported various academic and research activities of the University through the Lee Hysan Foundation Limited. Just recently another major donation was made by the Foundation to fund the construction of a very well-designed and well-equipped concert hall on the Chung Chi campus.

Mr. Chancellor, Mr. Lee Hon-chiu is an accomplished entrepreneur who abides by his convictions, who strives persistently to broaden human horizons and bring prosperity to this city. He is also a keen supporter of higher education. Because of his significant contributions to this University and to the community at large, Mr. Chancellor, it is with great pleasure that I present Mr. Lee Hon-chiu for the award of the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.