

# The Birth of The Hong Kong Island West Rotary Club in 1954 and its Charter President Fung Hon-Chu, OBE, JP

by Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian)

1 April 2014

The Rotary Club of Hong Kong Island West (香港西區扶輪社) was admitted to Rotary International on 12 April 1954. It is the 4<sup>th</sup> Rotary club formed in Hong Kong and was by then a non-districted club. Later on 1 July 1960, it became one of the 16 constituent Rotary clubs from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao to form the new District 345 of Rotary International (re-numbered to District 3450 on 1 July 1991). The Club was organized under the baton of then Rotary's Administrative Advisor to China George E. Marden (馬頓) (*Hong Kong*), and the charter was presented from the hands of Rotary International President's Special Representative Wei Tsen-Fu, Charlie (韋增福) (*Taipei*). Technically speaking, the Club was given birth by 2 former Shanghai Rotarians: (1) "Gem" George E. Marden (*Shanghai Rotary Club President 1928-1929; District 57 Governor 1949-1950; Rotary International Director 1951-1952*), and (2) "Charlie" Wei Tsen-Fu, (*Shanghai Rotary Club President 1946-1947; District 97 Governor 1948-1949*). The Charter Presentation Evening was held jointly with the Rotary Club of Hong Kong Island East (香港東區扶輪社). Read the story on the annex, after Page 2, the article 《Hong Kong Has Twins》 which is describing the highlights of the event.

During an official visit of Rotary International President Joaquin Serratosa Cibils (*Montevideo, Uruguay*) to Hong Kong in November 1953, he suggested the extension of more clubs since there were only 2 clubs in the then British Crown Colony: Hong Kong Rotary Club (香港扶輪社) and Kowloon Rotary Club (九龍扶輪社). Immediately after the presidential visit, the Rotary Club of Hong Kong decided to sponsor two new clubs, one in each of the Western and Eastern districts of the Hong Kong Island, and two extension committees were appointed. For the Western district, after a few months' work of the committee, a new club formed under the name of the Rotary Club of Hong Kong Island West, of which its inaugural meeting was held on Friday, 26 March 1954. The first provisional regular Club meeting was held on Friday, 2 April 1954 at the Golden Dragon Restaurant (金龍酒家), presided by Charter President Fung Hon-Chu (馮漢柱). The membership application was soon approved and was admitted to Rotary International on 12 April 1954.

By provision of rules of those old years, the service territory of a Rotary club must be declared on the application form. Hence, the territorial limits of the Hong Kong Island West Rotary Club were written like this: "*All that of the Island of Hong Kong west of the eastern territorial boundary and north of the southern territorial boundary -- The eastern territorial boundary is defined by a line drawn between the Victoria Peak and the Queen Victoria Street. This boundary shall travel along Queen Victoria Street northeastwards until it reaches Victoria Harbour. The southern territorial boundary is defined by a line drawn between the Victoria Peak and the Junction of Pokfulam/Mount Davis Road; this boundary shall travel along Mount Davis Road westwards until it meets Victoria Road, and the boundary shall travel further from this point in a straight line up to where the western harbour boundary meets the Hong Kong Island and any further extension thereof*".

Hong Kong Island West Rotary Club is the first Chinese speaking (Guangzhou dialect) Club in Hong Kong, and is one of the earliest clubs in Asia in sponsoring Rotaract soon after its inception in 1968 – The Rotaract Club of United College (聯合書院扶輪青年服務團). United College is one of the three foundation colleges of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學). There may be some reasons that aroused the Club's decision on the sponsorship of such a youth organization: (1) The then United College campus was located at Bonham Road of the Western District; (2) The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of United College was Past District 345 Governor Dr. The Honorable Fung Ping-Fan, CBE, KStJ, LLD, JP (議員馮秉芬太平紳士), who was also an Ex-officio Council Member of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.



*Campus of United College on Bonham Road (1962-71)*

The Charter President of The Rotary Club of Hong Kong Island West, Mr. Fung Hon-Chu, O.B.E., J.P. (馮漢柱太平紳士) (27 January 1911–9 August 1994), was a businessman and Chairman of the Li & Fung Limited (利豐有限公司) -- a global supply chain manager primarily for US and EU brands in Hong Kong.

Fung was born in Guangzhou in 1911 as the third son to Fung Pak-Liu (馮柏燎), the founder of the Li & Fung Limited. He joined the family business as manager and arrived in Hong Kong in 1935 and set up a branch there in 1937. He succeeded his father as the director of the Li & Fung in 1945. In 1975, he became the chairman of the Li & Fung.

In community services, Fung was also president of the Hong Kong Cotton Merchants Association (香港棉業商會) and member of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries (香港工業總會). He became a director of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (東華三院) in 1951 and became its chairman in 1953 before he joined Rotary. He was also vice-chairman of the Hong Kong Football Association (香港足球總會); chairman and president of the South China Athletic Association (香港南華體育會).

From 1960 to 1966, Fung was a Member of the Urban Council of Hong Kong (香港市政局議員). In 1962, he was first appointed as provisional member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong, and became the full Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council (香港立法局非官守議員) in 1964 until 1970. He was an Unofficial Justice of the Peace for Hong Kong (香港非官守太平紳士) since 1960, and was decorated the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1965 by Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.

Read the attached article 《A Family of Hong Kong》 from the June 1962 Issue of 《The Rotarian》 Magazine for the story of Fung Hon-Chu and his family in photos.