

Dr. The Honorable Sir David Akers-Jones  
New Territories Rotary Club Honorary Member

By Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒)

(New Territories Rotary Club Director/Secretary 1983-1987)

25 December 2019



Dr. The Honorable Sir David Akers-Jones, KBE, GBM, CMG, *HonDSocSc (CityPolyHK)*, *HonLLD (CUHK)*, *HonDCL (Kent)*, *HonRICS*, MA (*Oxford*), JP, (鍾逸傑爵士) (14 April 1927 - 30 September 2019), Briton, was a career colonial administrator. He was elected Honorary Member of the Rotary Club of New Territories (新界扶輪社) during his tenure as the Secretary for the New Territories (新界政務司) from 1974 until 1981. It is the tradition of the Rotary Club, since its inception in 1969, to invite the highest government administrator of the territory as Honorary Member.

Akers-Jones as a linguist was well-known. Besides Anglo-Saxon, Old English, Old French, Hindi and Malay, he also knew Hokkien (福建話), Chiu Chow (潮州話), Hakka (客家話), Cantonese (粵語) and Putonghua (普通話). His knowledge of the Chinese languages also extends to literature. He was a Knight of the realm, former Chief Secretary (香港布政司), Acting Governor (署理香港總督), Advisor to the Governor, artist and architect of district administration and representative government, the man most responsible for the phenomenal development of the New Territories.

### [An Administrator of the British Crown Colony Hong Kong](#)

Born on 14 April 1927 in Worthing, England, Akers-Jones was educated at Worthing High School. He first set eyes on the Far East during the Second World War as a young man of 17 who was then serving in the merchant navy of the British India Steam Navigation Company.

After the War, he entered Oxford and read English Language and Literature up to the death of Chaucer, and obtained in his Master of Arts (MA) degree from Brasenose College (*English 1949*), Oxford.

It was at Oxford that he met and fell in love with a beautiful young actress who was appearing with the Liverpool Playhouse. This was Miss Jane Spickernell, daughter of Admiral Sir Frank Spickernell. Not long after, they married and the young Akers-Jones joined the Foreign Office.

By order of the Foreign Office, United Kingdom, Akers-Jones arrived in the British Crown Colony Hong Kong and joined the Government in the summer of 1957, after 3 years in the Civil Service of the British Federal Malay States. In Hong Kong his first posting was to the Department of Trade and Industry where he was put in charge of Hong Kong's emergency rations. From Trade and Industry, David Akers-Jones moved on to become, successively and successfully, the District Officer (理民官) of Tsuen Wan (荃灣) (1959-1961), the Islands (離島) (1961-1962) and Yuen Long (元朗) (1962-1967). In the Yuen Long tenure, he was sent to the University of Kent in England to study a diploma course on "The Comparative Study of Local Government and Politics" prior promotion to Deputy District Commissioner in 1967, Principal Assistant Colonial Secretary (首席助理輔政司) for 4 years in charge of lands affairs, then District Commissioner (新界民政署署長) (5 November 1973 - 31 March 1974), and Secretary for the New Territories (1 April 1974 - 30 November 1981). Except for a four-year spell in the Lands Department, his career in the New Territories spanned some 18 years. Finally, he became the first Secretary of the City and New Territories Administration (政務司) (later retitled Secretary for District Administration) (1 December 1981 - 10 February 1985). Akers-Jones was instrumental in turning small villages into "new towns" in the New Territories, teeming with factories and apartment blocks to reset the slum-dwellers from the hillsides of Hong Kong Island. He led the local administration in Hong Kong, implemented a representative political system on a trial basis, and held the first 18 district councils election.

Akers-Jones was also briefly Secretary for Home Affairs (民政司) and then was promoted to Chief Secretary (布政司) (10 June 1985 - 11 February 1987). After the sudden death of Sir Edward Youde, 26th Governor of Hong Kong (第 26 任香港總督尤德爵士), Akers-Jones became Acting Governor of Hong Kong from December 1986. After retiring from the post of Chief Secretary on 11 February 1987, he remained as Acting Governor until April 9, then became Special Assistant to Sir David Clive Wilson, the 27th Governor of Hong Kong (第 27 任香港總督衛奕信爵士), for 6 months. Certainly, Akers-Jones had been an Official Member sitting in both of the Hong Kong Executive Council (香港行政局) and Legislative Council (立法局) for years.

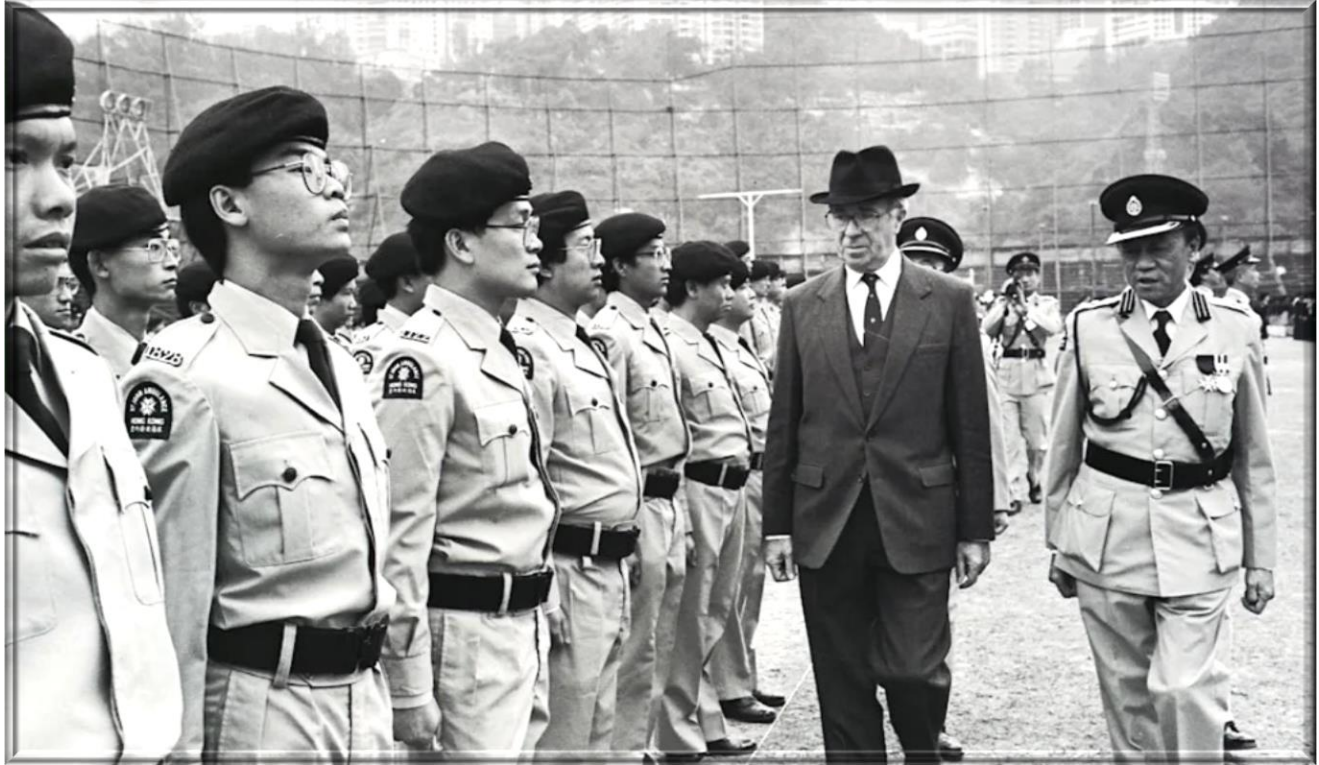
Leaving the government establishment, Akers-Jones was later the first non-official Chairman of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (香港房屋委員會) from 1987 to 1992. After he relinquished the chairmanship, in the years leading up to the transfer of sovereignty from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China (中華人民共和國) (PRC) on 1 July 1997, Akers-Jones was appointed as a Hong Kong Affairs Advisor to the Central Government of the PRC, from April 1993 to 1997. In 1996, Akers-Jones was appointed by PRC Central Government a member of the Selection Committee to elect the first Chief Executive of the future Hong Kong Special Administrative Region which would be established on 1 July 1997.



*Yuen Long District Officer David Akers-Jones was the guest-of-honor attending the traditional Chinese event.*



*March 1979 -- David Akers-Jones, Secretary for New Territories (left) at a public housing project Lek Yuen Estate in Sha Tin with Prince Charles of Wales, listening the report by Donald Liao, Director of Housing (right).*



*Acting Hong Kong Governor Sir David Akers-Jones inspects the St. John Ambulance Brigade.*



*Memorial plaque commemorating the official opening of the Sha Tin Town Hall officiated by Acting Governor Sir David Akers-Jones on 16 January 1987*



*Acting Hong Kong Governor Sir David Akers-Jones presides the Legislative Council. (Photo: SCMP)*



*Acting Hong Kong Governor Sir David Akers-Jones inspects Correctional Services Parade. (Photo: SCMP)*

## A Politician in the Chinese Hong Kong

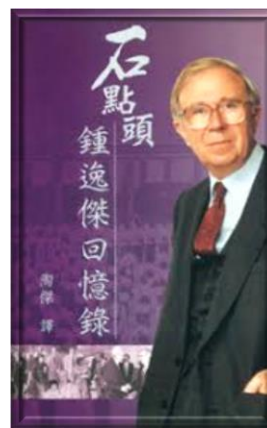
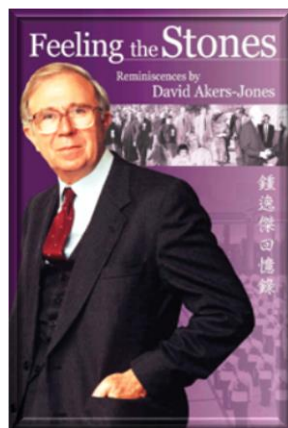
The Hong Kong Handover, domestically known as the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong, was the formal passing of authority over the territory of the then British Crown Colony Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China at midnight on 1 July 1997. This event ended 156 years of British rule in the former colony. Hong Kong was reestablished as a special administrative region of China, and partially continues to maintain its economic and governing systems distinct from those of in the Chinese mainland. Akers-Jones retired and lived quietly in Hong Kong.

Akers-Jones became a businessman and was a co-founder and the former President of the Business and Professionals Federation of Hong Kong (香港工商專業聯會), and he was also the independent non-executive chairman of Hysan Development Co., Ltd. (希慎興業有限公司) in January 2010. In his later life, Akers-Jones supported Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and expressed his opinions on different matters. For example, he commented on the review of the functions of district councils in 1998 and after the Occupation of Central in 2014. On the other hand, Akers-Jones penned occasional letters to the *《South China Morning Post》* and wrote occasional columns there and at *《The Standard》*.

Akers-Jones criticized Hong Kong's post-colonial government for continuing a policy of maintaining high property prices, its lack of urban planning, and frequently ill-conceived plans to reclaim land in Victoria Harbour.

Akers-Jones advocated converting the Election Committee into a committee which would nominate suitable candidates for the post of chief executive for election by the public. He further believed in preserving functional constituencies but that they should be turned into an Upper House in a bicameral legislature instead of abolishing them.

In 2004, he published a volume of reminiscences, entitled *《Feeling the Stones》* 《石點頭 — 鍾逸傑回憶錄》 in both English and Chinese editions published by the Hong Kong University Press:



*“The story starts with his leaving the Sussex Downs to serve as a young Merchant Navy officer in the last years of World War II. As his ships tramped around the ports of South East*

*Asia, his life-long enthusiasm for Asia was born and, talking with the seamen, his facility with Asian languages. But most of the story takes place in Hong Kong and China, and especially in the New Territories where he spent a large part of his career. There, as development spread from the packed streets of Kowloon to the paddy fields, he developed the trust and affection for the Chinese people of Hong Kong that has been such a characteristic and formative part of his attitude to Hong Kong and its future.*

*Growing out of his work for the Yuen Long football team, Sir David became an active participant in the international organization of soccer. This led to opportunities for wide travel in China and exceptional opportunities to learn directly about the People's Republic, experiences that set him apart from his colleagues in the colonial administration. These experiences give a distinctive perspective to his account of the events leading up to 1997 and the controversies of that period."*

## Founder

### The Outward Bound Hong Kong



Akers-Jones was instrumental in the founding of the local chapter of Outward Bound, the Outward Bound Hong Kong (香港外展訓練學校), in 1970 and served as its honorary president, and had always been a guiding influence throughout the past 50 years. Back in the 1960s as Hong Kong underwent rapid urban development, many people started to move into high-rise buildings. Akers-Jones recognized the importance of connecting Hong Kong's youth with the outdoors and set an ambitious target of bringing the Outward Bound experiential learning model to Hong Kong. After gathering the support of key people, the Tai Mong Tsai (大網仔) base which was at close proximity to shores and mountains was chosen. The first course was held in 1970 and more than 200,000 people have taken part in outward bound courses since then. They have been benefitted from Akers-Jones' patronage and dedicated support for the past five decades. Sir David Akers-Jones was conferred the "Kurt Hahn Award" for his contribution to Outward Bound movement at the Board meeting of Outward Bound International in November 2018.

Outward Bound is an international network of outdoor education organizations that was founded in the United Kingdom by Lawrence Holt and Kurt Hahn in 1941. Outward Bound remains the largest and most established non-profit-making organization in the world specializing in outdoor experiential education with more than 50 training centres in over 30 countries. Outward Bound courses follow a kind of recipe or formula, termed the Outward Bound Process Model which is well described by Walsh and Golins (1976) as:

*Taking a ready, motivated learner into a prescribed, unfamiliar physical environment, along with a small group of people who are faced with a series of incremental, inter-related problem-solving tasks which creates in the individual a state of dissonance requiring adaptive coping and leads to a sense of mastery or competence when equilibrium is managed.*

*The cumulative effect of these experiences leads to a reorganization of the self-conceptions and information the learner holds about him/herself. The learner will then continue to be positively oriented to further learning and development experiences (transfer).*

## Operation Smile China Medical Mission

Operation Smile China Medical Mission (微笑行動中國基金) (OSCM) is a non-profit organization that provides reconstructive surgery for the underprivileged children with cleft lips and/or palates in China. As a co-founder and chaired by Akers-Jones, OSCM has provided over 26,000 free cleft surgeries to date since founded in 1991 in Hong Kong. To enhance long-term capabilities of local medical professionals in China to treat cleft lip and palate, OSCM also provides intensive resident and surgical training programmes. The organization receives support from worldwide volunteers and donors.



*Akers-Jones provided scholarships for training of medical personnel from Shanghai No.9 People's Hospital.*

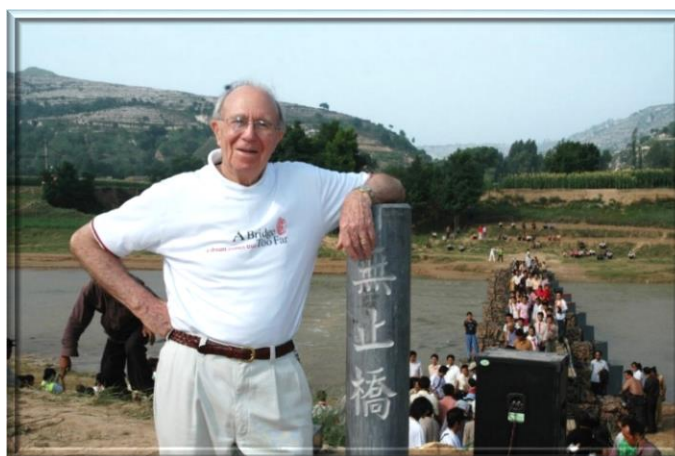
## INVOTECH

In 2014, Akers-Jones founded Invotech (創科匯), a do-tank to spread innovation and technology in Hong Kong.

At a meeting between the Business and Professionals Federation of Hong Kong (BPF) headed by Sir David Akers-Jones and the then-candidate running for the office of Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr. C. Y. Leung (梁振英), innovation and

technology were identified as areas that could prevent Hong Kong from losing its competitive edge to its neighbouring regions. Consequently, members of the BPF set up a Standing Committee on Innovation and Technology in 2012. The Committee later produced a report “Igniting Innovation”, which provided five examples showing how the course of innovation could be shaped. To maintain momentum, a one-day conference, “Tipping Point”, was held in September 2013 and attracted more than 300 enthusiastic participants. Innovation leaders from new and existing industries came together to ignite “fires” in Hong Kong. At the end of the Conference, it was decided that a do-tank be set up to spread the flame of innovation. As a do-tank, INVOTECH co-creatively help students develop an entrepreneurial mindset, help fledging startups connect, help SMEs learn about new possibilities, advocate innovative spirits in large corporates.

### Wu Zhi Qiao (Bridge to China) Charitable Foundation



Akers-Jones was, founder, mentor and former Chairman of Wu Zhi Qiao (Bridge to China) Charitable Foundation (無止橋慈善基金), which is a charitable, non-profit organization based in Hong Kong dedicated to building footbridges in rural areas in the Chinese mainland.

As early as 2005, it was the vision of Professor Edward Ng (吳恩融教授), School of Architecture of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學建築學院). In Gansu Province (甘肅省) of northwest China, the Po River separates a remote and humble village, Maosi (毛寺村) into two parts. Given the limited types of local construction materials, local people resorted to a primitive and unstable foot-bridge made simply of mud, straw and tree branches over the waters. This was the only crossing for village children to go between school and home. Wading across the river was their daily ritual. Slipping, falling, bruises and cuts were not uncommon. During every rainy season, the bridge would be washed away. The school children could not but suspend classes, stand at the riverside and watch the flooding waters resignedly.

In view of this, Professor Ng initiated a joint-university bridge building project entitled “A Bridge Too Far, A Dream Comes True” (良橋助學夢成真). With the support and endorsement of Akers-Jones, gathering the synergy of professionals and students from various universities in

Hong Kong and the Mainland, Professor Ng and over 60 volunteers from both Hong Kong and the Mainland erected a permanent 90M long bridge with their bare hands in 7 days. The project was developed in such a way that all the parts have very low costs and could be transported and assembled with a minimum of mechanical devices, operated by volunteers without the need for professional training. This bridge project was financed by Chan Cheung Mun Chung Charitable Fund (陳張敏聰夫人慈善基金). Akers-Jones participated with volunteers in the building. He insisted to go on site to ensure quality control and to encourage the volunteers. He saw its inception and its growth, and he loved the students and volunteers.

Inspired by the above dream of success realized, chaired by Akers-Jones, Wu Zhi Qiao (Bridge to China) Charitable Foundation was incorporated in 2007 as charity in Hong Kong (number: 91/8739) as a long term resources. It aims to encourage and finance the cooperation between Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong university students. In order to improve the villagers' living condition, volunteers of the Foundation will, in an environmental protection way, help building bridges and village facilities in remote rural and underprivileged areas in Mainland. Participants can improve inter-personal communication skill, enhance mutual understanding, strengthen connection, and build a spiritual bridge together.

When the Foundation went on the 12th anniversary year, there have been over 4,000 volunteers involved in the past projects. The Foundation has successfully completed 24 bridge projects and 1 post-earthquake reconstruction demonstration. During the construction of the bridges, villagers have been encouraged to start some achievable small-scale improvement activities in the village, such as renovation of village schools, basic health and hygiene education, disaster prevention training, delivery of materials to keep warm, etc.



*1 August 2009 -- This 27M long “Tàibái Wú Zhǐ Qiáo” (太白無止橋) in Gansu Province (甘肅省) was the joint project by students from The Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (香港理工大學), and Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology (西安建築科技大學).*



*David Akers-Jones, President of the New Territories Region Scout Council, chats with the boys.*



*23 March 2003 – Hong Kong Girl Guides Association Vice-President Sir David Akers-Jones greets the awardee (left) of the Chief Commissioner's Award at the Annual Rally and Presentation Ceremony.*

## Service to non-government organizations

Akers-Jones had spent plenty of his time and effort dedicating to a better community through the participation with various non-government organizations, including but not limited to:

(1) The Scout Association of Hong Kong (香港童軍總會) --- In 1973-1983, Akers-Jones supported the Hong Kong Scouting by serving as President of the New Territories Region Scout Council (新界地域會務委員會會長), and then Honorary President since 1983. In July 1980, he initiated the establishment of “New Territories Scout Development Fund” for the Association, and served as its Committee President until the last day of his life. The Fund is the financial resources for the local Scout units in running their own training and service programmes.

(2) The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association (香港女童軍總會) (HKGGA) --- Akers-Jones dedicated 37 years in Hong Kong Girl Guides development. He started as Honorary Vice President in 1982, followed by his role as Vice President and Executive Committee in 2002 and 2007 respectively, and continued to be Adviser since 2013. He was devoted to serving the Girl Guides by laying an important foundation for the establishment of the HKGGA new Headquarters and the Jockey Club Tung Chung Activity Centre (賽馬會東涌活動中心). In appreciation of his lifelong contribution to the Guiding Movement, he was awarded in 2016 with the “Asia Pacific Region Appreciation Award”, the highest award given by the Asia Pacific Region, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

(3) Akers-Jones was Honorary President (1992-2019) of Beam International Foundation (逸傑國際慈善基金會), which is a medical charity headquartered in Hong Kong (IR File No. 91/3709) to provide free surgeries for underprivileged children with cleft lips and/or cleft palates in China. Through its local entities and partner hospitals in China, BEAM organizes medical missions throughout China. Medical treatments are carried out by accredited medical volunteers with the support of non-medical volunteers. Volunteers come from China and overseas. BEAM also aims to build the long term capability of medical professionals in China through formal training, internship and exchanges between professionals.

(4) Akers-Jones was Chairman of The Hospital Authority New Territories West Cluster Hospitals Charitable Trust (善心醫療基金信託委員會主席). NTWC Charitable Trust was established in September 2007 to fund medical and treatment projects for the hospitals in New Territories West Cluster, including purchased new medical equipment, subsidized medical consumables self-financed by patients and sponsored hospital environment programmes. NTWC Charitable Trust endeavors to provide more affordable and better care to patients.

(5) Akers-Jones was Trustee and Vice-President of the Worldwide Fund for Nature Hong Kong (世界自然基金會香港分會)

(6) Akers-Jones was Vice-Patron and Honorary Life President of the Hong Kong Football Association (香港足球總會). He first served the Association as Vice-Chairman in 1973. His first achievement was the organization and establishment of the Yuen Long Football Team, the first in the District, when he was the Yuen Long District Officer in 1962-1967.

## Family

Born David Akers-Jones was son of Walter George Jones, manager of a brick and tile factory at Worthing, West Sussex, England, and Dorothy (née Akers), a schoolteacher. “Akers” being adopted as part of David’s surname later.

In 1951, Akers-Jones married Jane, daughter of Royal Navy Captain Sir Frank Todd Spickernell, KBE, CB, CVO, DSO, and maternal granddaughter of Sir Delves Louis Broughton, 10th Baronet. They had two adoptive children.

The couple believed in Jesus Christ. They were members of Christ Church in Kowloon Tong (九龍塘) --- an Anglican Church serving the local English-speaking community.

Jane Akers-Jones (鍾紫燕) was very active in various voluntary services. She was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Hong Kong. One of her most remarkable services was to serve the Hong Kong Girl Guides as Chief Commissioner (香港女童軍總監) for 10 years, in 1983-1994, the longest tenure of a Chief Commissioner in history. In recognition to Jane’s contribution to the colonial Hong Kong community, she was bestowed in 1988 Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE), by Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom.

Akers-Jones retired and lived quietly in Hong Kong. He and his wife bought the dilapidated secluded villa “Dragon View” (龍景), in Sham Tseng (深井). The couple renovated it and worked extensively on the garden.

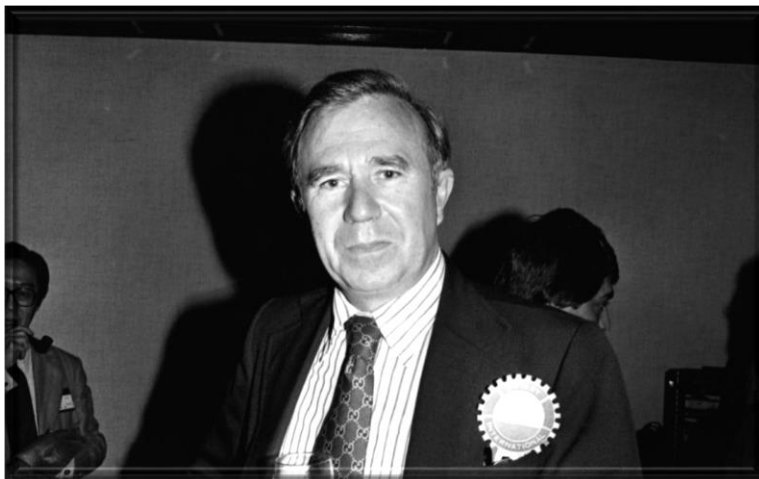
Lady Jane Akers-Jones, MBE, JP, passed away in 2002. Sir David Akers-Jones died from colorectal cancer at Queen Elizabeth Hospital (伊利沙伯醫院) on 30 September 2019 at age 92.



*6 October 1988 – Accompanied by Lady Jane, Sir David Akers-Jones was conferred Doctor of Laws (LL.D.) honoris causa, by The Chinese University of Hong Kong.*

## Honors

- (1) 1958 – Justice of the Peace for Hong Kong, appointed by Sir Robert Brown Black, Governor of Hong Kong (香港總督柏立基爵士)
- (2) 1978 – Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George (C.M.G.), bestowed by Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom
- (3) 1985 – Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (K.B.E.), bestowed by Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom
- (4) 1987 – Doctor of Civil Law (D.C.L.), *honoris causa*, conferred by University of Kent, England
- (5) 1988 – Doctor of Laws (LL.D.), *honoris causa*, conferred by The Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學)
- (6) 1991 – Honorary Member, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, United Kingdom
- (7) 1993 – Doctor of Social Science (D.Soc.Sc.), *honoris causa*, conferred by City Polytechnic of Hong Kong (香港城市理工學院)
- (8) 2002 – Grand Bauhinia Medal (大紫荊勳章), awarded by the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, People’s Republic of China



*Honorary Rotarian David Akers-Jones attends the regular weekly meeting of the New Territories Rotary Club.*



香港中文大學  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

36th Congregation --- 6 October 1988

Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*

### Citation

When future historians come to write the history of Hong Kong in the last twenty-five years, from 1963 to 1988, they cannot but credit our city with the speed and magnitude of change over a time span which is no more than one generation. In these twenty-five years, we have grown from an entrepot to a manufacturing, business and financial centre, to the world's leading container port, and leading exporter of garments, toys and electronic goods. What impresses is not just the skyscrapers, first-class roads and magnificent shopping arcades, impressive as these may be. What also impresses is the phenomenal expansion in the provision for housing, hospital care, social welfare and of course, education. To give but one example, the quaint and cloistered setting that was Chung Chi College in 1963 has been transformed into the expansive and magnificent Chinese University campus you see today. In a world given to euphemism, the term developing territory is often a misnomer. But in the case of Hong Kong, we are a developing territory in the true sense of the term and associated with many if not all of our breathtaking developments over the last twenty-five years is Sir David Akers-Jones, a well-known and much-respected figure in our community.

David Akers-Jones first set eyes on the Far East during the last world-war as a young man of seventeen who was then serving in the merchant navy of the British India Steam Navigation Company. After the war, he entered Oxford and read English Language and Literature up to the death of Chaucer. One might perhaps assume from that anything after *《The Canterbury Tales》* is too unexciting to be of interest to this undergraduate. It was at Oxford that he met and fell in love with a beautiful young actress who was appearing with the Liverpool Playhouse. This was Miss Jane Spickernell, daughter of Admiral Sir Frank Spickernell, now Lady Akers-Jones. Not long after, they married and the young David Akers-Jones joined the Foreign Office.

He was enrolled in the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London to learn Mandarin as it was called in those days, but after a year of hard work and having made some headway with the language, he was promptly despatched to Malaya where the ethnic Chinese spoke Hokkien. Barely four years later, just when he had mastered Hokkien, David Akers-Jones was, again, transferred to Hong Kong where the lingua franca of the local population was Cantonese.

In Hong Kong in 1957, his first posting was to the Department of Trade and Industry where he was put in charge of Hong Kong's emergency rations. In those days, this consisted of 10,000 tons of firewood, 20,000 tons of soya beans, and 500 tons of corned beef --- supposed to be sufficient for a city of nearly three million people for six weeks if the need ever arose. The use of firewood as fuel for our stoves may be unthinkable to some of our younger graduates today. But those of us who do remember do so with great relief. We have come a long way.

From Trade and Industry, David Akers-Jones moved on to become, successively and successfully, the District Officer of Tsuen Wan, the Islands and Yuen Long, then Deputy District Commissioner, District Commissioner, and Secretary for the New Territories. Except for a four-year spell in the Lands Department, his career in the New Territories spanned some eighteen years. Finally, in 1981, the Government in its infinite wisdom decided to give him the freedom of the city as well. He became the first Secretary of the City and New Territories Administration, and in 1985 Chief Secretary. For his dedicated and distinguished service to the Crown and to Hong Kong, he was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1958, made a Companion of the Most Excellent Order of St. Michael and St. George in 1978 and was knighted in 1985 shortly after becoming Chief Secretary.

Just when Sir David Akers-Jones was ready to serve out his last days in the Hong Kong civil service as Chief Secretary, a dramatic turn of events catapulted him into the highest office in the territory. The sudden death of Sir Edward Youde left Hong Kong bereaved and without a Governor. And so, from December 1986 and your own arrival in Hong Kong in April of last year, Mr. Chancellor, Sir David Akers-Jones was Hong Kong's Acting Governor for five months during which time he acted as a Governor should. He ensured that, in the words of the Hon. Lydia Dunn, then Senior Member of the Legislative Council, that there was "no slackening of the vigorous and progressive pace at which the government worked" and he delivered to you "a thriving, energetic and wellogoverned society".

Mr. Chancellor, the facility of Sir David Akers-Jones as a linguist is wellknown. Besides Anglo-Saxon, Old English, Old French, Hindi and Malay, he also knows Hokkien, Chiu Chow, Hakka, Cantonese and lately Putonghua. His knowledge of the Chinese languages also extends to literature. For a man who is so well-versed in the language of the Chinese University, it is interesting that he should have chosen the following epigrammatic advice of Lao Tzu for the wall in his office. The passage from chapter 60 of the *Tao Te Ching* reads:

「治大國若烹小鮮」《道德經》六十章

"Governing a large state is like boiling a small fish."

Mr. Chancellor, I do not know how British people boil their small fish or if they boil them at all, but Professor D.C. Lau, in his translation of this passage of the *Tao Te Ching*, found it necessary to explain that "a small fish can be spoiled by being handled". Sir David Akers-Jones does not need to read this footnote. He understands the ethos and sensibility of the Chinese people and their modus operandi. Perhaps he knows that when it comes to politics, Americans run for public office, Britons stand for election, but Chinese people wait to be drafted, or they engineer themselves into positions of influence.

With consummate skill and characteristic detachment, this master administrator went about building up the district administration scheme into a blue-print for representative government. At first the members of the District Boards were drafted. They were then persuaded to stand. Perhaps in 1991 some of these will get up and run. As the Chinese translation of Sir David's English name suggests in the Cantonese dialect - 鍾逸傑 - he was in the thick of things every day, initiating, persuading and orchestrating - all in the interests of Hong Kong, and always without losing sight of the ultimate objective. And at the end of the day, like a painter whose work is accomplished, he brings to mind this passage in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

*“The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.”*

We at the Chinese University remember Sir David Akers-Jones particularly fondly for his five month tenure as Chancellor during which time his single most important contribution was that he left us alone. As the Hon. Lydia Dunn said on another occasion in praise of the wisdom of letting things be, “Government should be given credit not only for what it does, but also for what it does not do”. Receiving the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Laws from the University of Kent in 1987, Sir David himself had this to say about the magic formula which has made Hong Kong successful,

*“It is that the creative energy of its people is given full opportunity to flourish by pragmatic administrative policies which discourage unnecessary intrusion and interference in the management of human affairs.”*

At this our 25th anniversary, with the educational ideals and course structure of our University facing perhaps their most formidable challenge, I speak for many members of the University when I laud the wisdom of Lao Tzu and sing the praise of Sir David Akers-Jones for their profound knowledge of the art of government.

With these words, Mr. Chancellor, I present Sir David Akers-Jones, 鍾逸傑, the reclusive sage, a Knight of the realm, former Chief Secretary, Acting Governor, Advisor to the Governor, artist and architect of district administration and representative government, the man most responsible for the phenomenal development of the New Territories, now Chairman of the Housing Authority, painter and Hong Kong believer for the award of the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.





## The Government of The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

The eulogy delivered by the Chief Executive, Mrs. Carrie Lam, at the funeral service of Dr. The Honorable Sir David Akers-Jones on Friday, 25 October 2019, at St. John's Cathedral:

Family and friends of Sir David,

Today, we gather here together to pay our final respect to a selfless leader, a great public servant and an inspiring mentor who will always be in the hearts of many of us. While we mourn the loss of such a distinguished, universally respected man, let us all take this opportunity to celebrate his numerous visionary and heart-warming achievements which no one could easily match. For those of us who had the good fortune of knowing him or working with him, the greetings of Sir David, David or 鍾叔 embraced a strong sense of bonding, friendship and trust which everybody was so fond of. This was no exception to those who had known him for over half a century or had had only a few encounters with him during his long, illustrious and delightful journey in Hong Kong.

Indeed, after coming to Hong Kong in the 1950s, Sir David had all along called Hong Kong his home. Before Hong Kong's return to the motherland, he served in various posts in the Government, the highest-ranking of which was the Chief Secretary. After retirement, he took up work on local youth and charities in the Mainland. Committed to serving the community all his life with distinguished achievements, Sir David was held in high regard by people of various sectors and from different backgrounds. He was awarded the Grand Bauhinia Medal by the Hong Kong SAR Government in 2002.

Serving the Government for 30 years before Hong Kong's return to the motherland, Sir David was the Chief Secretary from 1985 to 1987 and had been the acting Governor for a few months. He took charge of work in the New Territories in earlier years, during which he served as District Officer in a few districts there as well as the Secretary for the New Territories. Yuen Long was perhaps one of the NT districts that he was proud and fond of where he had mobilised community resources to build some much needed community and sports facilities. As a junior AO working in one of the NT District Offices in the early 1980s, I was invited to receptions hosted by Sir David at Island House. Such contacts with a super senior official were to me both educational and entertaining.

Committed to advancing various developments to improve the lives of residents, Sir David took up a vital role in the development of new towns in the New Territories. Meanwhile, he attached great importance to the provision of accommodation to members of the public and took an active role in implementing a wide range of housing policies across different positions. Many of us would have heard the story he told us about a morning meeting with the then Governor to assess the housing shortfall where ambitious plans for public housing were laid out, and embarked upon without hesitation. His remarkable leadership and dedication during his public service laid an important foundation for the long-term development of Hong Kong.

Sir David continued to serve Hong Kong fervently after he left the civil service in 1987. He was the first non-official Chairman of the Hong Kong Housing Authority, and a Hong Kong Affairs Adviser, contributing to the smooth transition of Hong Kong. He established the Business and Professionals Federation of Hong Kong, a pioneering think tank, in 1990 and had offered valuable views for the Policy Addresses and on major social issues to the Government over the years. I often consulted him while I served in different posts, from poverty alleviation measures to retirement protection programmes. He seemed to have boundless energy to steer in-depth discussions and drive people around him to engage in creative thinking. I have to say that arguing with him was no easy task. I remember one occasion when I had to be armed with charts and diagrams to show him the scope of our social security programmes.

We all know that Sir David was particularly concerned about young people. To him, caring for young people meant listening to them and interacting with them. And Sir David was always surrounded by his young friends throughout the years. On a more formal basis, in addition to long-time association with the Hong Kong Girl Guides together with his late beloved wife Jane, Sir David founded the 10,000 Miles Friendship Trek, 同心同根萬里行, exchange programme, which has been held for 17 years to this year, to provide exchange opportunities in the Mainland for our local uniformed groups, sparing no effort in nurturing the younger generations. He attended the last flag presentation ceremony on 15 July this year at Government House despite his deteriorating health.

Sir David's care for the community did not stop in Hong Kong. He was also committed to charitable activities in the Mainland. The project "Wu Zhi Qiao" (Bridge to China) founded by him encourages university student volunteers from Hong Kong and the Mainland to design and build footbridges and village facilities in remote and poor villages in the Mainland in order to enhance the understanding of students about the Mainland and assist them in developing integrity and a commitment to society and life. I joined him on two of those trips and could only admire how an eighty-year old man could be so energetic and enthusiastic when surrounded by children who benefited from the programme. As he shared with us in one publication on this charity, "there is much more to building a bridge ... there is always a lasting of surprise and delight at having removed a barrier separating places or people from one another".

Another of his significant charitable endeavours is the Beam International Foundation which in the past 28 years has been devoted to organising medical volunteers from various places around the world to provide free surgeries for underprivileged children with cleft lips

and cleft palates in the Mainland. Having had the privilege to take part in the charitable activities he organised on many occasions, I hold deep respect for his devotion and passion to improve the well-being of people.

To appreciate how approachable, caring and ready to give Sir David was, I feel the best way is to listen to what one of his mentees has to say. And allow me to quote from her inputs to this eulogy.

“As part of the university’s mentorship programme, it was his weekly commitment to set aside an hour or two to grill me with challenging questions that could be about anything under the sun - ranging from local politics to Greek mythology to the meaning of life. I would be sitting on pins and needles throughout my sessions. But as the saying goes: ‘Good medicine is bitter to the taste’. I immensely benefited from these dialogues with him - it broadened my perspectives on the world, trained my critical thinking, polished my political acumen and reminded me that public policy makers must always put people first.

“I continued to receive his guidance on difficult choices in careers and in personal life, and Sir David was an unfailing source of wisdom. He never told me what to do, but offered thought-provoking perspectives.

“Mentorship aside, I will remember him for his generosity, for he shared more than insight and connections with me and my fellow mentees. For one, I know he was a philanthropist, standing quietly but staunchly behind several of our homegrown scholars to further their studies abroad. It was his firm belief that the vision and potential of young people must never be hampered by a lack of means.

“Sir David will be deeply missed as a great mentor to many, and as an eminent figure that shaped Hong Kong - not just in history, but also by building the younger generation of Hong Kong with painstaking love and care. This makes for an enduring legacy in this city that we all call home.” Unquote.

Although I had only a short stint of service overlapping with his, Sir David had all along been a senior whom, to me, was likewise approachable, caring and ready to give. During my days as the Chief Secretary, we had quiet dinners at Victoria House and he told me that the fish pond was actually dug by him. During his last few weeks, I visited him at his sick bed and was immensely moved by the support and sincere views given to me. On those occasions, I knew very well that he was saddened by what was happening in Hong Kong. He held my hand and raised his voice to say: help the poor and build more housing. And I promised him I would.

Sir David’s spirit in serving the community and his contributions to the Hong Kong society will stay in our hearts forever. And our deepest condolences go to Bryony, Craig, Amelia-Jane, Susanne and all other family members.

Sir David, David, 鍾叔, you will be sorely missed, always. May you rest in peace with abundant love of the Lord.

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