

RIDING TO VICTORY

A ROTARIAN EQUESTRIAN
TRAINS FOR THE PARALYMPICS
BY ABE PECK

Nelson Yip arrives for breakfast at the Cosmopolitan Hotel, across the street from the Hong Kong Jockey Club, a major racing venue. Although Yip has cerebral palsy, he moves briskly off the elevator. He will be the only qualified equestrian representative from the Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China in the 2008 Paralympics. It's a pretty big deal here: A multistory blue banner hangs from the club's facade, proclaiming "Hong Kong The Equine Capital," with the red 2008 Olympic logo imprinted below. Slender and handsome, 39-year-old Yip negotiates his way to our table, his legs trailing behind him; he puts aside thin walking sticks as he sits. Yip will go for the gold in the Paralympics dressage competition here in Hong Kong. And he only started training seven years ago. The 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games will be held 6-17 September in venues in Beijing and Hong Kong.

Yip focuses on his equine quest, even as he heads up businesses and travels the world. Confidence and self-esteem are his bywords; he wants to win, but prizes the ride.

"When I was an infant, I got a fever that further affected my lower limbs," he recalls matter-of-factly. "After a major operation at seven, I needed walking sticks."

Yip was briefly introduced to horseback riding as therapy, but his parents couldn't afford for him to continue. The impression remains almost centaur-like in his mind: "Blue sky and clouds. The image of freedom. Being part of the horse."

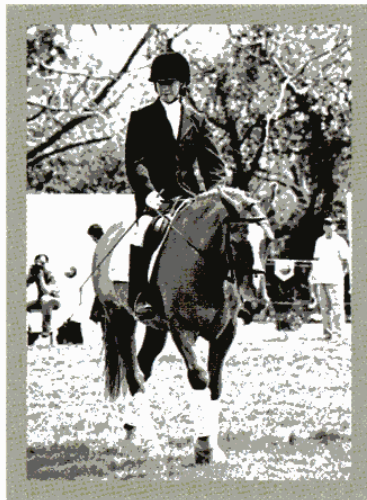
He also noticed that even the same horse can ride differently from week to week. "I was interested in why."

Yip's education reinforced that analytic bent: He received a bachelor's degree in statistics and computer science from Chinese University, a master's degree in quantitative analysis in business from City University, and an MBA from Chinese U. Now, Yip is CEO of three companies: EP Power Company Ltd., which provides energy sources to toy and appliance manufacturers; Appetizup, an electronic components vendor; and the EP Venture consultancy.

The potential of power excites Yip. "My dream is to combine lighting and humanity," he says. "There are so many poor countries that don't have lighting."

It was Yip's interest in others that led him back to horsemanship. While executive director of Hong Kong Rehabilitation Power, he significantly expanded the organization's programs for the disabled. In 2001, he began supporting team activities with the Riding for the Disabled Association, through which he'd ridden as a child. "Horse riding is not that easy. It was about having the heart and passion to try a new challenge. If they do it, they can take the second step in the journey of their lives."

One day, someone asked him, "Why aren't you riding?" That was all it took to get him back on a horse.



It wasn't about the competition. It was, 'How can I have that kind of riding – fabulous riders, well-trained horses?'

While Yip needs a helper to hold the horse still, he mounts like any able-bodied person. In 2002, he rode in Wales, where the lifestyle of those on the circuit impressed him. "It wasn't about the competition. It was, 'How can I have that kind of riding – fabulous riders, well-trained horses?'"

Coaches and riding consultants, swimming, and tai chi have enhanced his form and strength. In 2003 in Kyoto, Japan, Yip scored the highest of any disabled rider in the Japan Asia Pacific Dressage competition. Wins in Australia followed in 2005. Then Yip earned a 61 percent atop a horse named Blue in the Pacific Rim International Para-dressage Event, in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. He'd qualified for the Paralympics.

He'd also impressed his colleagues. "Nelson is not only an accomplished horse-

man but also a very kind-hearted person who is always prepared to help others," says John C.C. Chan, chair of the Hong Kong Jockey Club and president of the Riding for the Disabled Association. "His achievements should be an inspiration to all of us."

Yip also has drawn strength from his involvement with the Rotary Club of Mid Level. He has been a member since 2004 and has served as secretary and vice president. "I value Rotary a lot. Members are from different industries, and we can learn a lot from each other. There are so many club functions, services, community projects – a lot of fellowship. I like the spirit."

Rotary compatriots like Yip's spirit. "Because of his background and achievements, he is a speaker at many Rotary club meetings and events," says Past District Governor Peter Wan, current chair of District 3450's Adopt-A-School project. "He was invited on a number of occasions to share his experience with young people in Hong Kong, including student participants [in this] signature district project."

But Yip has yet to cross the finish line: He'll need to achieve at least 76 percent to finish first among 78 Paralympic riders, he believes. Moreover, he may well switch from his usual mount, Icy Bet, who, at 20, sweats a lot and sags a bit in the heat, he says. "Rider and horse have to be in the same places," Yip says, "to demonstrate the accuracy, the energy, the suppleness, the harmony. There's no fighting, no argument."

A few days after our breakfast, Yip was off to England to practice an activity he sees as "quite philosophical. I like to regard it as my own competition. The result is something like a bonus." ■

ABE PECK is professor emeritus and director of business communication at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University.

In September 2011, Rotarian Nelson Yip (葉少康), Rotary Club of Mid-Level, Hong Kong (半山區扶輪社), was conferred an Honorary University Fellow by the City University of Hong Kong (香港城市大學). Here below is the full text of the Citation read during the Congregation, in Chinese language only:

2011年9月，香港半山區扶輪社葉少康社員獲香港城市大學頒授榮譽大學院士。以下是大會期間宣讀的贊辭全文：



香港城市大學
City University of Hong Kong

榮譽院士葉少康先生贊辭

由伍錫洪教授撰寫及宣讀

副監督、校董會主席、校長：

葉少康先生是力爭上游的典範，憑不拔之志，克服殘疾，成就非凡。

葉先生幼患大腦麻痺，小學畢業於雅麗珊郡主紅十字會學校。由於好學不倦，一九八零年代末葉，獲香港中文大學取錄，攻讀統計及電算機科學，當時學生運動正風起雲湧。至今多年，葉先生仍然深信知識就是力量，而求知應以通識為基礎。

一九九一年，葉先生獲中大學士學位，先後受聘於中大及香港大學。以其專業及通盤知識，從事獲委派的研究，並教導學生。他修讀本校的兩年制工商數量分析文學碩士課程，由此與本校結緣。本校對

專業教育的熱誠，對他影響甚深，並激起他不斷進修的欲望。獲頒工商數量分析碩士學位四年之後，葉先生重返中大，攻讀工商管理學碩士課程。由於他有一份繁忙的全職工作，所以仍然以公餘方式進修。

目前，葉先生是幾家公司的董事長，包括恒源動力和商策顧問。「恒源」的理念是，賺錢之餘也造福社會，務求未用的資源得以善用，未發揮的有所發揮。這一理念見於恒源動力的智慧型 LED 照明業務，也見於商策顧問給予社會福利、青年事務等組織的營運建議。

葉先生還是誠信通有限公司董事長。該公司致力在電子及創新科技上，促進電子商務發展及應用。葉先生不但營商眼光獨到，富創業精神，更有強烈的社會責任感；因此，他和朋友合力創辦了兩個議事團體：節能關注聯盟創於二零零七年九月；香港電子科技商會則創於同年十一月。

葉先生曾在政府及不同社團的多個委員會或理事會任職。他為殘疾人士盡心盡力，尤其值得稱道，例如服務於康復諮詢委員會—就業小組委員會及殘疾弱能人士職業訓練委員會，對政府常有建言。

葉先生一九九五年創立香港復康力量，受助者至今以千百計。他又是香港傷健策騎協會復康、籌款兩個委員會的重要成員。他籌款的方式饒有創意，備受推崇，各方爭相借重。

葉先生的公共服務並不限於復康工作，還廣及公民教育以及社會福利。他有強烈的社會責任感，自然關心公民教育；有除舊布新的抱負，自然關心社會福利。葉先生出任公民教育委員會委員及整筆撥款督導委員會成員，是香港政府之福，也是香港市民之福。

葉先生擅長騎馬，受過多年騎術訓練，並學會和馬匹心意交通，有資格參加國際騎術比賽。花式騎術表演場中，他近乎人馬合一，隨着音樂，或策馬快走，或策馬慢跑，或勒馬止步，有如一件活動藝術品。

葉先生在殘疾人奧運會上的成就，見譽於香港，也見譽於外地。更值得他自豪的，是曾任二零零八年北京奧運會傳遞聖火的火炬手。

葉先生在教育、經商、公共服務以及運動上，成就均卓爾不群，證明人生的缺憾，不在於肉體之殘，只在於心志之喪。他的榜樣，可以立懦，可以啟頑。

副監督、校董會主席、校長，謹請頒授榮譽院士銜予葉少康先生，以表揚他的成就，以及對香港的貢獻。



This article was edited by Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian) on 1 January 2015.