

District 345 of Rotary International

A General Picture in the Years 1976-1978

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Except here below is a report given by S. H. Sung (宋常康), of Hong Kong Rotary Club (香港扶輪社), District 345 Governor 1975-1976, at the “Voices of Asia” Session during the 69th Rotary International Convention in Tokyo, Japan, on 14-18 May 1978. The Session was moderated by Bhichai Rattakul (陳裕財), of Dhonburi, Thailand.



S. H. Sung (宋常康)

I am a Chinese, one of over 800 million, the most numerous race in the world. My Rotary District 345 includes the Republic of China, Hong Kong and Macao, with a population of over 21 million. Out of a total of 3,750 Rotarians, less than 200 are non-Chinese. Because of this, Rotary in District 345 has always characterized Chinese thinking with Chinese philosophy as its motivating force.

Rotary came to China in 1919 when the first club was chartered in Shanghai. Extension was at a very moderate pace until the Second World War, which saw the suspension of all Rotary activities within the occupied territories. Rotary entered a new chapter when the Rotary Club of Taipei was chartered in Taiwan in 1948, with the present President of the Republic of China as charter president, after the central government of the Republic of China moved to Taiwan. We became District 345 in 1960 with 17 clubs and 767 members. We now have 83 clubs: 69 in Taiwan, 13 in Hong Kong and 1 in Macao.

In view of the unstable political situation in many parts of the world, Rotarians in my district realized that permanent peace in the world could be achieved only through real understanding and friendship between peoples of different nations. We adopted the twin objects of internal Rotary extension and external people-to-people diplomacy through

Rotary. Accordingly, we chartered 19 new clubs with a membership growth of 22.4% during the last Rotary Year. The previous year the growth was 11% with 8 new clubs chartered.

On 30 June 1977, 57 of our clubs had 124 sister-club relationships with clubs abroad. It is expected that another 40 new sister-club relationships will be formalized within these two years. Sister clubs exchange group visits regularly and have youth exchange programs during holidays. In most cases, they participate in joint community service projects quite apart from the world community service projects of Rotary International.

Che-Hsia, a disciple of Confucius, made the statement: "We are all brothers within the four seas." We practice this principle of world brotherhood, and for the well-being of our brothers within our district we are spending this year about one million dollars on community service projects covering practically all aspects of need in modern urban and rural communities. Rotarians and Rotaryannes together give themselves through intensive personal involvement to implement these many projects.

We took an active interest in the well-being of our brothers abroad during the last few years by participating as givers of assistance in world community service projects of Rotary International. We have clubs receiving and giving assistance at the same time. My advice to clubs in my district has always been guided by the teaching of my late mother: "If you compare yourself with the more affluent, you have not sufficient; but, if you compare with the less fortunate, you have in spare." When we accept the truth of this statement, how can we find excuses not to be concerned with our less fortunate brothers elsewhere and refrain from extending assistance, even in small measures?

Frequently we hear the statement that the future belongs to the youth of today. We consider contribution to The Rotary Foundation investment in youth and see no more effective means of promoting international friendship and understanding than through the programs of the Foundation. Our Rotarians have been motivated in contribute generously to the Foundation during the last few years. By the end of the current Rotary Year our total contribution will be very near the US\$1,000,000 mark, if not exceeding it. Last year our contribution was US\$243,460.24, that is US\$82.10 per Rotarian with the increase of 235 Paul Harris Fellows. The Rotary Club of Hong Kong Island West holds the record of having 88 Paul Harris Fellows with a membership of 68. The Rotary Club of Kowloon East with 56 members follows with 59 Paul Harris Fellows.

The Republic of China has a G.N.P. per capita of US\$1,000 and Hong Kong one of US\$2,000. The significance of our financial involvement could only be realized when judged against these very moderate earning capabilities.

A popular folk saying in South China is that "Only your own brothers will fight the tigers with you." As we look around the world, we find much that need be done and many fierce tigers obstructing our efforts. Seemingly insurmountable obstacles have to be removed before real understanding, friendship and goodwill amongst peoples of different nations could be cemented. If we believe in Rotary, we must not hesitate to serve to unite mankind. Let us be constrained by the love of our brothers within the four seas and take courage to fight with them the many tigers and conquer them to make this world a better world. Thank you!

Profile of S. H. Sung

from 《The Bulletin》 November 1972

The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce

The next time you meet Sung Sheung Hong, Managing Director of Union Metal Works Ltd., try asking him a question --- any question. Our bet is that you will get a well thought-out and highly individual answer.

Mr. Sung is to lead the forthcoming Chamber/TDC Middle East Trade Mission leaving in mid-November.

“We’re going there because we want to ‘explore’. We know relatively little about the region. Hong Kong can supply a lot of their daily requirements but we are not sure what they have to offer us in return. We are therefore going there with an open mind, especially where the smaller groups are concerned. They just might have something we want.”

S. H. Sung is a Cantonese born in 1917. He prides himself on being one of the very few local boys who took up engineering in the pre-war days and has stayed in it. “My old colleagues either became teachers or salesmen or something in that line.”

He graduated from the Hong Kong University’s Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in December 1937 and then went to the United Kingdom the following year to further his studies at the Manchester College of Technology and the Royal College of Technology in Glasgow. The balance of his training engineering production and management was accomplished through working with such large companies as Crossley Brothers Ltd. and Vickers-Armstrong Ltd.

He returned to Hong Kong in April 1946 and became part of the post-war building the new Hong Kong. His first post on his return was as representative of the British Oxygen Co., Ltd. and later he became the managing director of China Oxygen and Acetylene Co., Ltd., the first modern post-war factory in Hong Kong. He then took an interest in Union Metal Works Ltd. which at the time was manufacturing kerosene appliances only.

Man-Hour

“When I first join Union, it took 11 man-hours to make one lantern. Within a year, I managed to reduce it to 4 man-hours.”

Now, under S. H. Sung, Union Metal Works Ltd. has extended its operation to include stoves, heaters, gas and gasoline appliances, electrical appliances and soon, it will be branching out to manufacture a new type of product in which S. H. Sung sees great potential.

He is also Managing Director of Union Industrial Development Corporation which deals in the sale of machinery and raw materials.

Business is not the only thing in life for S. H. Sung. “I never work after 5:30.” He feels he contributes enough during normal hours not to have to work overtime. He travels every year because he believes in the “personal touch”. Friendship, to S. H. Sung, is the essence of business. “Oftentimes, I meet someone, end up doing no business with him but instead we become good friends. I think that’s more important.”

He has strong views on labour efficiency and has toured such areas as Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore to discover that our competition is like. He does not think that new industries are the answer for Hong Kong’s future. “Too many industries will make the labour problem even more acute. What we need to do is diversify within the present industries. We must try and consolidate what we have now.”

Management, to S. H. Sung, is not paperwork. “You have to get into the act, to be interested in your own work. Management consultants cannot do much for my company. They may cut a few dollars here and there, yes, but then again, it will cost me more to implement some of their plans.”

“What is really needed is direct communication with those under you, especially the department heads.”

An Individual

He has been a member of the Rotary Club for 16 years, and is a Past President of the Rotary Club of Hong Kong. He is also District Governor’s Representative of the Hong Kong and Macao area. He is involved in countless other organizations but limits he has little time to spare for these activities. He prides himself on the fact that he will serve only when invited to serve as an individual rather than as a representative of some organizations. Two examples are the Standing Committee for Technical Education and Vocational Training and the Trade & Industry Advisory Board.

He would like to see technical education expand in Hong Kong because it is what industry needs. However training isn’t enough, says S. H. Sung. “We want to train people to put their minds into industry and to use their hands. We must get them to work on the practical side of industry. Too many of them come out thinking that they’re going to sit behind a desk and do paperwork. When they find out that they have to use their hands some of the time, they start looking for another job which they think is a desk job.”

Religion plays a large part in his life. “I like to think of myself as a ‘practicing Christian’.” He devotes a lots of his spare time to church activities, rather than the round of the usual cocktail parties. He became in 1958 the Chairman and Superintendent of the Pentecostal Mission in Hong Kong. The Mission has two churches here, one in Hong Kong and one in Kowloon. S. H. Sung is active in both, and his Sundays are spent preaching there. “I devote Sundays to worship and Christian activities.” What does he do with his Sundays? “Prepare for Sunday, of course.”

He has two sons presently studying in the United Kingdom, one at university and the other in a public school. Another son, the youngest in the family, attends St. Paul’s Boys’ College here and his youngest daughter is now at Island School and hopes to take law or economics one day.