

Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales

Rotarian served as the First elected Chairman of the Hong Kong Urban Council

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*Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales speaking at an Urban Council meeting in 1979 as chairman of the Council.
(Photo: South China Morning Post)*

Dr. The Honourable Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales (沙利士博士) (1920-2020), GCIH, GBM, CBE, HonDSocSc (HKBU), JP, affectionately known as “Sonny”, joined The Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社) after he has retired from the World President of The Junior Chamber International in 1956. Later, he was elected to serve as Club President in 1965-1966.

Sonny was for many years the Unofficial Member of the Hong Kong Urban Council (香港市政局) and became its first non-official but elected Chairman from 1973 to 1981. He was also a Hong Kong sports figure who was chairman of the Hong Kong Olympic Academy; co-founder and former president of the Amateur Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong (香港業餘體育協會暨奧林匹克委員會), which gave local athletes the chance to compete under their own flag. He was also a former Commonwealth Games Federation president, presiding over Hong Kong’s last Commonwealth Games in 1994. Sonny was also a member of the Hong Kong Basic Law Consultative Committee (香港基本法諮詢委員會) from December 1985 until 4 April 1990.

Chairman of the Hong Kong Urban Council

Sonny was appointed by Hong Kong Governor Sir Alexander Grantham (香港總督葛量洪爵士) a member of the Urban Council of Hong Kong since 1 April 1957. Simultaneously a member of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (香港房屋委員會), Sonny was already heavily involved in the sports movement and in a densely populated metropolis advocated for areas where Hong Kong citizens could relax in a cleaner and greener environment. He immediately targeted, then

transformed many well-located sites, some originally designated as military bases into public parks, developed pedestrian zones and established green zones throughout the city.

Sonny was the Urban Council's chairman elected by the member from 1 April 1973 until 1981. He was the first civilian elected to serve as Chairman of the Council, of which the former chairmen were entirely government officials since the inception in 1883 the earliest.

During Sonny's 8-year office, the Council was responsible for the building of many public swimming pools and sporting facilities that stand to this day. Sonny pioneered the construction of public swimming pools throughout Hong Kong in prime locations that were easily accessible to residents. His contribution to Hong Kong's aquatic development was so great that International Swimming Federation awarded the "Highest Merit" in 1978 in honour of his achievement in constructing the greatest number of swimming pools in any world city in 1977.

In 1973-1974 the first year of Sonny's chairmanship, 19 cultural and recreational facilities were completed. It was abundantly clear to him that not enough resources were being allocated by the colonial authorities to the benefit of Hong Kong and he decided to take matters into his own hands.

Sonny decided to put the hard-earned Hong Kong reserves to good use and during the era of his chairmanship of the Urban Council, Hong Kong's recreational and cultural facilities witnessed a rapid growth. His approach was uncompromising and he tread on the toes of many a colonial bureaucrat as he pushed through his projects. By the last year of his tenure, 1980-1981, 57 projects were completed costing HK\$418m including HK\$180m for two large indoor sports stadia and 2,276 items of recreational and cultural capital expenditure. This represented a 167-fold increase in financial resources dedicated to the benefit of Hong Kong people.

Sonny's drive and resourcefulness as Urban Council Chairman pioneered many new civic venues. The Queen Elizabeth Stadium (伊利沙伯體育館) opened in 1980; the Space Museum (香港太空館), 1980; the Hong Kong Coliseum (香港體育館), 1983; the Ko Shan Theatre (高山劇場), 1983; and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (香港文化中心), 1989, all bore his imprint. The Jubilee Sports Centre (銀禧體育中心) in Sha Tin (沙田) dedicated to elite sports training was a signature project that broke ground in 1977 during his tenure and was completed in 1982.

Sonny initiated the first Festival of Asian Arts (亞洲藝術節) in 1976 and the first Hong Kong International Film Festival (香港國際電影節) in 1977. Under Sonny's aegis, the Urban Council set up three professional performing groups, namely the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (香港中樂團) and the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre (香港話劇團) in 1977, and then the Hong Kong Dance Company (香港舞蹈團) in 1981. This cultural legacy continues to this day.



The Urban Council was a municipal council responsible for municipal services on Hong Kong Island and in Kowloon Peninsula (including New Kowloon). These services were provided by the Council's executive arm, the Urban Services Department (市政總署). The equivalent body for the New Territories and all off-shore islands was the Regional Council (區域市政局).

The Urban Council provided many services to the Hong Kong people over the 116 years. The Urban Services Department was the executive branch of the Council to implement policies and services. In 1997, it had about 16,000 employees, according to its published leaflet of 《Service Promises》. The Council's services included: recreational venues and activities, museums and entertainment venues, wet markets, hawker registration and control, street cleansing, issuing licenses, operating abattoirs. The Urban Council played a significant role in the cultural development of Hong Kong. It managed the Urban Council Public Libraries system in Hong Kong Island and Kowloon which, upon the dissolution of the municipal councils, was merged with the Regional Council Public Libraries to form the Hong Kong Public Libraries. The Council held the Festival of Asian Arts every year since 1976. The Council sponsored the International Film Festival, which took place annually mid-year and which gave Hong Kong people a rare chance to see a range of international film making, as well as Chinese films.

The Urban Council was first established as the Sanitary Board (潔淨局) in 1883. In 1887, a system of partial elections was established, allowing selected individuals to vote for members of the Board. On 1 March 1935, the Sanitary Board was reconstituted to carry out the work which remained much the same until the Pacific War (1941-1945) broke out. The Board was renamed the Urban Council in 1936 when the Government passed the Urban Council Ordinance, which gave legal motive to the expanding range of services provided by the Council.

After the Pacific War, the Council returned to its pre-war form but without any elected members. The work of the Sanitary Department of the Government began to separate out from the medical and health service. On 28 May 1946, the Council met for the first time after the Japanese Occupation. It was given power to carry out all its former duties---cleaning, burying the dead, running bath houses and public lavatories, hawker control---as well as some new ones, such as the use of bathing beaches throughout Hong Kong. Only in May 1952 did elections return to the Urban Council. Two members were elected. In 1952, the number of elected members was doubled, their terms of office extended to two years and the franchise enlarged. By April 1956 half of the members of the Urban Council were elected, but by a minority of the population.

In the 1960s, the duties of the Urban Council continued to multiply; the City Hall (香港大會堂) in Central was opened in 1962, followed by the first multi-storey markets in Jardine's Bazaar (渣甸街) in March 1963. In 1973, the Council was re-organized under non-government control. It was given financial autonomy, which meant the budget could be planned without the approval of the Legislative Council (香港立法局). It was no longer in charge of housing. From onwards, there were no government officials on the Council and both the chairman and vice-chairman were elected among the 24 members. Originally composed mainly of ex-officio and appointed members, by the time the Urban Council was disbanded on 31 December 1999 following the "Transfer of Sovereignty" it was composed entirely of members elected by universal suffrage.





May 1975 -- Urban Council chairman Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales escorts Queen Elizabeth II to her seat to watch cultural parade in Nathan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong. (Getty Images)



October 1986 – Former Urban Council chairman Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales escorts Queen Elizabeth II during Her Majesty's second Royal Visit to the British Crown Colony Hong Kong.

The story of Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales

Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales, ethnic Portuguese, was born on 13 January 1920 in Shameen (*Shamian*), in the French Concession of Canton (*Guangzhou*), Kwantung (*Guangdong*) Province, Republic of China (中華民國廣東省廣州市沙面法國租界), where his great great grandfather settled in. Sonny was the eldest of seven children, four boys and three girls, from a family with deep roots in Shameen. His great grandfather had been chief military officer of the French Embassy in the Shameen French Concession, and his grandfather was in the river shipping business based in Shameen. Although he enjoyed an idyllic childhood in that environment, by the 1930s China was immersed in civil unrest, prompting his family to move to the British Crown Colony Hong Kong when he was 9 years of age with his father who worked for Shell plc---the oil company.

Sonny was one of the first batch of students to attend La Salle College (喇沙書院) in Kowloon City of Hong Kong in 1931, graduating in 1936. Afterwards he attended St. Joseph's Seminary (Seminário de São José) (聖若瑟修道院) in Macao where he studied anthropology and deepened his lifelong Catholic faith, under the guidance of Portuguese Jesuits. The famous Portuguese historian priest Padre Manuel Teixeira (文德泉神父) was his Portuguese teacher.

After return to Hong Kong, Sonny attended a business school to prepare for joining the family business. Like many Portuguese during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong in the Pacific War (1941-1945), the Sales family sought refuge in neutral Portuguese Macao. Sonny's fluency in English got him a job with the British Consulate in Macao, simultaneously furthering his tertiary studies at St. Joseph's Seminary. But after the War, Sonny headed straight back to Hong Kong. He initially worked with his father at Arnold Trading---a lesser known German counterpart of the 19th-century British and American trading houses.



Sonny married his childhood friend Edith Nolasco da Silva on 17 November 1946 at St. Teresa's Church (聖德肋撒堂), Kowloon Tong (九龍塘). The two had met during the War and in Macao their relationship blossomed. They moved to No. 105 Kadoorie Avenue (嘉道理道 105 號) in 1953 where he lived until his death 67 years later. This earned Sonny and Edith the distinction of the longest continuous tenants at the Kadoorie Estates.

President of Club Lusitano

Sonny founded his own trading business in 1955, establishing an office in Prince's Building (太子大廈), Central, that he also retained until his passing. He was a daily fixture at the Portuguese club, the Club Lusitano de Hong Kong (西洋會所) (16 Ice House Street, Hong Kong), taking the short walk from his Prince's Building office and lunching in the dining room whenever he was in Hong Kong. His table was reserved for his sole usage and he hosted many guests, friends and dignitaries there. Regardless of whether they were Governors, captains of industry, sports stars, royalty or Presidents, Sonny held court at Club Lusitano with his signature panache and grace.

Sonny helped the rehabilitating of the Club after the War, and participated in the administration of the Club and sports. The Club is one of Hong Kong's oldest and most celebrated social clubs, dating back over 150 years since the earliest years that Europeans settled in the former British Crown Colony. It was founded as a private members' club for the local Portuguese community and to this day retains its unique Lusitanian cultural identity through its language, cuisine and membership. Membership is open to the Portuguese community resident in Hong Kong.

In the post war period, the Portuguese community strived to rebuild itself and Club Lusitano was again a major focus. Those that had fled to Macao returned to Hong Kong to find their homes had been looted or in some cases destroyed. Many Portuguese from Shanghai (上海) and other parts of the China coast relocated to Hong Kong fleeing the events of 1949 in China and the rise of communism. Hong Kong was overwhelmed with refugees and members of Club Lusitano played a key role in the reconstruction of the Colony. Many members returned to serve in the Royal Hong Kong Regiment "The Volunteers" (皇家香港軍團「義勇軍」) providing a vital local militia to support the British Army. There were over 10,000 Portuguese in the community by the mid-1950s. Membership of the Club expanded rapidly and while there were constant political strains in China, in many ways the Portuguese community experienced a golden period of activity with members prominent in government, the professions, sports, and commerce.

Sonny served as President of Club Lusitano for 34 uninterrupted years from 1968 until 2002. Throughout these years Club Lusitano kept its strong links with Portugal and maintained its proud historical Lusitanian identity. In March 1991, Club Lusitano was awarded the prestigious "Honorary Member of the Ordem do Infante Dom Henrique" by the Portuguese Government for services in the expansion of the Portuguese culture, its history and its values (with a particular focus on its maritime history). In October 1994, a reception was held for Mario Soares, then President of the Portuguese Republic attended by over two hundred people. In 1995 there was a formal reception given to the Portuguese Prime Minister Cavaco e Silva.

Sonny retained his Portuguese nationality his entire life and was extremely proud of his Lusitanian heritage. In 1999 for his services to Portugal he was awarded the honour of "Grã-

Cruz da Ordem do Infante D. Henrique” that carried with it the title Comendador. He was fluent in Portuguese and took every opportunity to demonstrate his language ability especially during the annual Portuguese National Day celebrations at Club Lusitano.

67-Year Leader of Victoria Recreation Club

In 1849, on the shoreline of Hong Kong Harbour where the City Hall stands today, the original Victoria Recreation Club (VRC) (域多利遊樂會) clubhouse was established. Having been in operation in Canton since 1832 the VRC is distinguished as the oldest sporting and recreation club in the territory. The primary functions of the Club were water sports, with rowing in the main. Early members also enjoyed social gatherings in a congenial colonial setting in the spacious and well-appointed clubhouse, highlighted by an annual Grand Ball. The Victoria Recreation Club is undoubtedly “The Father” of all sporting clubs in the former Colony having been founded under the name Victoria Regatta Club.

Some of the first recreational activities to take place in the Victoria Harbour were VRC competitions in swimming and water polo dating back to the 1850s. In the early twentieth century, the premises of the Club included a full-length swimming pool---practice ground for some of Hong Kong’s finest swimmers and divers---a badminton court, gymnasium, as well as ample storage facilities for rowing boats, outrigger fours, eights and sculls. The boats were used extensively in the Harbour as VRC Regattas were held regularly in Kowloon Bay (九龍灣).

The crowning achievement was the formation of the controlling sports body for the Colony soon after World War II: the Amateur Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, as it was called subsequently.

Of all the characters that have presided over VRC, none was more significant or colourful than Sonny. He was alternately honorary secretary, chairman or vice-chairman of the VRC continuously for 67 years, from 1946 to 2013, and he ruled the Club with an iron fist. It became a private fiefdom for the self-styled “mayor of Hong Kong”, who decreed how many people could join the Club and when, and where they could sit. Sonny turned down foreign members, i.e. non-Portuguese.

Under Sonny, the VRC played a key role in building institutions that would link Hong Kong’s sports enthusiasts with the world. He founded the Amateur Swimming Association of Hong Kong (ASA) in 1950, was on the executive committee that drafted the constitution of the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Hong Kong in the same year, and as honorary secretary of the VRC, applied for Hong Kong to join the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

When The Commonwealth Games was being held in 1950 in Auckland, New Zealand, and they got in touch with the VRC, asking if Hong Kong could send a team. Sonny was the honorary secretary of the VRC and he made an application to the IOC. The application was supported by Sandy Duncan, an official with the British Olympic Committee, and they became members of the IOC in 1951. The VRC was where Hong Kong’s first Olympic swimmers came to train. Sonny paid out of his own pocket to fly Hong Kong’s first four Olympians to the Helsinki Olympics, Finland, in 1952.

Sonny pushed the Government for a site that would enable the Club to maintain its role as the centre of Hong Kong sports. In 1961, he finally capitulated and began negotiating for the site in Sai Kung – Emerald Bay (西貢大網仔). When the new main clubhouse finally opened, on 24

April 1966, the Hong Kong Governor, Sir David Trench (香港總督戴麟趾爵士), by tradition the president of the VRC, put on a club tie and drove out to join the celebrations. Some of the Club's glamour had returned. Fragile and bedridden at age 93, Sonny remains Honorary Life President of the VRC after he stepped down as Chairman in 2013.

World President of Junior Chamber International



Sonny also joined the Victoria Chapter, Junior Chamber of Commerce (維多利亞青年商會) and served Chapter President concurrently National President 1952-1954 of Junior Chamber International (JCI) Hong Kong (國際青年商會香港總會). Sonny was awarded the “Most Outstanding JCI Member of Asia” in 1954. The next year, he was elected to serve its World President in 1956. He traveled to more than 80 countries in that capacity.

Co-founder of Hong Kong Olympic Committee



Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales in 1994 – the powerful leader of (1) Amateur Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong; (2) Commonwealth Games Federation; (3) Club Lusitano; and (4) Victoria Recreation Club

In 1950 Sonny assisted in the establishment of the Amateur Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong (ASF & OC) with other sports-conscious people in 1950. In 1951 he was elected as Honorary Secretary and in 1958 he inaugurated the Festival of Sport (FOS), promoting “Sport for All” to Hong Kong citizens that continues to this day. ASF & OC held initial meetings in the VRC and sponsored the Club with a strong group of sports leaders. Indeed, it was founded under VRC’s aegis; the first meetings to work out the original charter of the ASF & OC were held in the VRC clubhouse in Central District.

By holding the position of President of ASF & OC, Sonny brought international sporting recognition to Hong Kong. From 1967 to 1998 he served as President of the ASF & OC, now known as the “Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC)”. During his service in the ASF & OC, he frequently led Hong Kong delegations to participate in international sports events. Sonny was a member of Hong Kong’s first ever Olympic team as a delegate in the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games. He served in the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games as Chef de Mission for the Hong Kong team and reprised this role for 6 more Olympic Games.

In the 1972 Munich Olympics, Federal Republic of Germany, Sonny took up his role again as Chef de Mission of the Hong Kong delegation. He demonstrated enormous bravery by confronting the armed Palestinian terrorists that were holding the Hong Kong, Uruguay and Israeli teams hostage. He managed to secure the Hong Kong team’s release only after putting himself in great personal danger. Subsequently 11 members of the Israeli delegation and one German policemen were murdered and 5 of the terrorists killed in a raid by the German police. It was known as the “Munich Massacre” incident.

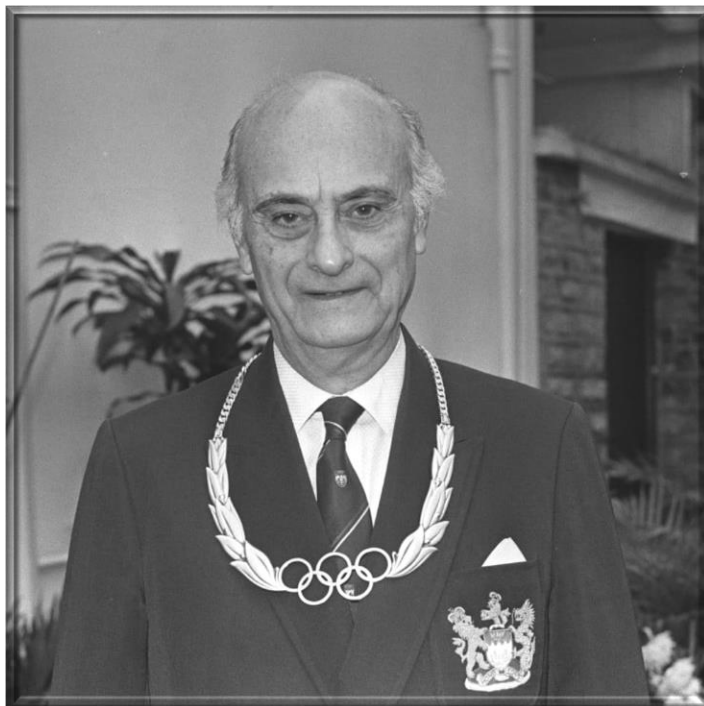
In early July 1997 with his close friend Mr. Juan Antonio Samaranch Torelló, President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Sonny secured for the ASF & OC, the right for Hong Kong athletes to continue taking part in the Olympic Games and in all international competitions as a separate entity, under the name of “Hong Kong China”. This he considered one of his greatest achievements for Hong Kong sports.

Sonny’s long-standing contribution to international sports extended well beyond Hong Kong shores. Sonny held key posts in the Asian Games Federation (AGF) as Vice-President from 1962 to 1970 and Honorary Life Vice-President of the AGF and the Olympic Council of Asia from 1970. His lifelong sports love was for swimming and he served as Vice-President of the Federation Internationale de Natation Amateur (FINA) from 1964 to 1972. Remarkably for someone from the then British Crown Colony Hong Kong he served as Chairman of the Commonwealth Games Federation from 1990 to 1994.

Sonny was the Recipient of Olympic Order (Silver) in 1982. The Olympic Order, established in 1975, is the highest award of the Olympic Movement. It is awarded for particularly distinguished contributions to the Olympic Movement, i.e. recognition of efforts worthy of merit in the cause of sport.

In December 2012, Sony was awarded the IOC Trophy for “Sport and Sustainable Development” in recognition of his six decades of accomplishment in local and international sports development.





*Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales – 1982 Recipient of Olympic Order (Silver)
The Olympic Order, established in 1975, is the highest award of the Olympic Movement.
It is awarded for particularly distinguished contributions to the Olympic Movement,
i.e. recognition of efforts worthy of merit in the cause of sport.*



*1983 -- Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales (right) has a meeting with
Mr. Juan Antonio Samaranch Torelló (center), President of the International Olympic Committee.*



1996 -- Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales, Co-founder of Hong Kong Olympic Committee, gave his motivating words of encouragement to the 23 Hong Kong athletes to compete in the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. Ms. Lee Lai-Shan (李麗珊) (R1), windsurfer, was in the Game the first and only Hong Kong athlete to win an Olympic gold medal. This was the last time Hong Kong competed as a British Dependent Territory in the Olympics.

Honours

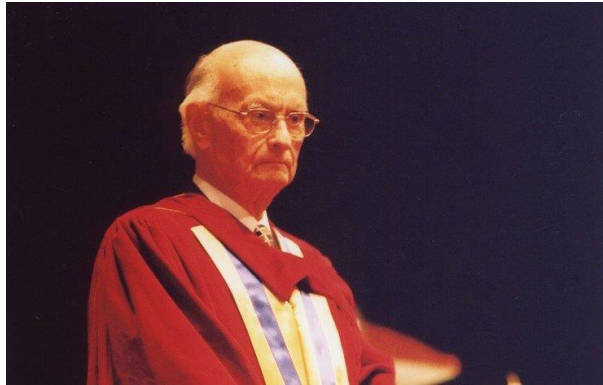
On 30 May 1961 Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales was appointed Justice of the Peace for Hong Kong (J.P.) by Hong Kong Governor Sir Robert Brown Black (香港總督柏立基爵士). Sonny received numerous honours for his public service including but not limited to:

- (1) Honorary Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.); and later elevated to
- (2) Honorary Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.) in 1975, both of which were appointed by Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.
- (3) Comendador, Orden del Merito Civil of Spain in 1972
- (4) Recipient of Olympic Order (Silver) (1982)
- (5) Grand Bauhinia Medal (大紫荊勳章) (G.B.M.) was conferred in 1998 by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, People's Republic of China.
- (6) Grand Cross of the Order of Prince Henry (Grã-Cruz da Ordem do Infante D. Henrique) (G.C.I.H.) conferred in 1999 by the Grand Master of the Order, i.e., the President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio.
- (7) The degree of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa* was conferred by Hong Kong Baptist University (香港浸會大學) in 2001.
- (7) A signal honour was granted to Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales in 2010 when he was made an Affiliated Member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It is the highest honour of the Institute and carries the title AFSC.



香港浸會大學

HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



Press Release

17 September 2021

Dr. Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales was conferred the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences by HKBU in 2001 in recognition of his significant contributions to society.

HKBU has received a bequest of HK\$3 million from the late Dr. Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales, of which HK\$1 million will be used to establish sports awards to recognise students' outstanding performances in competitions organised by the University Sports Federation of Hong Kong. A further HK\$1 million will go towards supporting the Student Development Endowment Fund of the Faculty of Social Sciences, while the remaining HK\$1 million will be designated for the University's strategic development.

Professor Daniel Lai, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Sales. He said: "‘We Dare to Care!’ is the theme of the Faculty's 50th anniversary this year. We work together and engage with others to offer care to our students. Dr. Sales's donation will definitely help our students reach their full potential with our whole person education and strive for excellence."

Known as the "Father of Hong Kong sport", Dr. Sales was one of the founding members of the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong. He devoted more than half a century to the development of sport in Hong Kong and other countries around the world. He provided tremendous support for the undergraduate physical education programme offered by HKBU. In 2006, he established the Mrs. Edith N de O Sales Scholarship to support outstanding postgraduate students of the Master of Social Sciences in Sport and Leisure Management programme.

Dr. Sales passed away on 6 March 2020 at the age of 100.