

Sir Kenneth Fung Ping-Fan

A Prominent Rotarian of the Rotary Centennial

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

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Dr. The Honorable Sir Kenneth Fung Ping-Fan (馮秉芬爵士), Kt, K.St.J., C.B.E., O.B.E., LL.D., D.S.Sc., J.P., (1911-2002), a prominent politician and businessman, was selected by Rotary International “A Prominent Rotarian of the Centennial” representing the Hong Kong SAR of China. That was the Rotary Centennial in the Year 2004-2005. In recognizing Rotary’s 100 years of services, Rotary International selected a list of prominent Rotarians, representing various fields and professions, including individuals who were or had been active or honorary members of Rotary clubs around the world.

Kenneth was, by far, the youngest Rotarian in the Rotary Hong Kong history. He joined The Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社) at the age of 23. He served the Club as President in 1949-1950, and later was elected District 345 Governor in 1961-1962. He participated in the election of Rotary International directors for 1965-1966 and 1966-1967, but was not successful.

As one of the Hong Kong's outstanding leaders in banking, commerce and industry, Kenneth possessed in abundance those qualities of personal endeavour and initiative which our fellows could be advised to emulate.

While Kenneth was still a student in the School of Chinese Studies (香港大學中文學院), which his father, a noted philanthropist and benefactor of the University of Hong Kong so richly endowed, he was given the responsibility of administering an intricate business organization, a task which would have daunted any man. From the beginning, he displayed an unfailing confidence in the future of Hong Kong and showed such powers of leadership that he inspired others to a new sense of purpose in their affairs. By his example he had built up Hong Kong’s economic well-being, giving Hong Kong an

international outlook and position, in support of which he had led trade missions and delegations abroad.

Kenneth's particular contribution, again by the force of his personal example, had been his staunch support of the concept of service to the community, on which, the welfare of Hong Kong depends. To this end, in addition to the service to Rotary, he had invested his time, the most valuable of his resources, in the most valuable of Hong Kong commodities, the aspirations of the young. He had devoted himself to the improvement of the welfare organizations and to the establishment of schools via the San Wui Commercial Society (新會商會). He had involved himself closely in the work of the Scout movement and of the Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association). He was a past Commissioner of the St. John Ambulance Brigade and was the first Chairman of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme in Hong Kong. At the same time, he had taken a full and active part in the cultural life of the Hong Kong community, offering his support to numerous societies concerned with music and the arts.

In the field of higher education Kenneth had offered the benefit of his guidance to the two universities – The University of Hong Kong (香港大學) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學). Kenneth had been a member of the Hong Kong University Court (香港大學校董) since 1948. From 1962 to 1972, Kenneth was Chairman of the United College Board of Trustees (聯合書院董事會主席). The United College was one of the three foundation colleges in the establishment of The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1963. Since then, Kenneth served as an Ex-officio Member of the University Council (香港中文大學當然校董).

He had the distinction of having been the first Chinese to serve as Honorary Aide-de-Camp (香港總督榮譽副官) to four successive Governors and Officers Administering the Government of Hong Kong.

From 1951 to 1960, Kenneth was appointed a Senior Unofficial Member of the Urban Council of Hong Kong (香港市政局首席非官守議員). In 1952, Kenneth received the life appointment of Unofficial Justice of Peace for Hong Kong (香港非官守太平紳士) from the Hong Kong Governor. He was appointed to the Legislative Council of Hong Kong (香港立法局非官守議員) in 1959, in which he served until 1965. From 1962 to 1972, he was the Unofficial Member of the Executive Council of Hong Kong (香港行政局非官守議員).

Kenneth was an environmentalist who was the founder and president of Hong Kong's World Wild Life Fund (世界野生生物基金會) in 1961 – the former organization of World Wide Fund for Nature (世界自然基金會) (WWF) since 1986. He also was a co-founder of the Ocean Park Hong Kong in 1971 and served as the first chairman of the Park.

Kenneth has added lustre to the name of one of Hong Kong's most respected families, and by virtue of his personal achievement he has moved to the forefront of Hong Kong's affairs.

Giving the perspective illustration about Kenneth and his family, a Hong Kong writer Victoria Bernard contributed an article 《Sir Kenneth Ping-fan Fung -- Hong Kong's Man of Action》 to 《The Rotarian》 magazine in May 1984. Readers may find the full text of which is attached after Page 4.

The Road of Fame

1911 Kenneth was born on 28 May 1911 as one of the three sons to Mr. Fung Ping-Shan (馮平山), a co-founder of the Bank of East Asia.

1931 Kenneth was still a student in the School of Chinese Studies (香港大學中文學院), University of Hong Kong. His father passed away. He was given the responsibility of administering an intricate business organization demised by his father.

1934 Kenneth joined The Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社) at the age of 23, the youngest Rotarian in Hong Kong history.

1939 At the age of 28, Kenneth established the Fung Ping Fan Group.

1947-1997 Director, The Bank of East Asia, Ltd., concurrently the chief manager from 1965 to 1969.

1948-2002 Life Member of the Court, The University of Hong Kong (香港大學終身校董).

1949-1950 Kenneth was President of Hong Kong Rotary Club, 57th District (South China) of Rotary International, when “Gem” George E. Marden was the Governor.

1951-1960 Senior Unofficial Member of the Urban Council of Hong Kong (香港市政局首席非官守議員)

1952 Conferred a life appointment of an Unofficial Justice of Peace for Hong Kong (J.P.) by the Hong Kong Governor Sir Alexander Grantham (香港總督葛量洪爵士).

1953-1958 Commissioner, Hong Kong St. John Ambulance Brigade

1958 Confrères of The Knight of Justice of The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem (K.St.J.) by Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom

1958 Decorated an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) by Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.

1959-1965 Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong (香港立法局非官守議員)

1961-1962 Served Rotary International as District 345 Governor, of which the territory was composed of: (1) Republic of China (*that portion of Taiwan Province*); (2) British Crown Colony Hong Kong; and (3) Portuguese Territory Macao. He was the second governor of this District, and was the first Hong Kong Rotarian who served the post. Theme of the Year was “ACT -- *Aim for Action, Communicate for Understanding, Test for Leadership*” (努力行動，對了解鋪路，提高領導).

1961 He was also an environmentalist -- the founder and president of Hong Kong's World Wild Life Fund (世界野生生物基金會).

1961 Founding Chairman, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Hong Kong

1962-1972 Unofficial Member of the Executive Council of Hong Kong (香港行政局非官守議員)

1962-1972 Chairman of the United College Board of Trustees (聯合書院董事會主席).

1963-1972 Ex-officio Member, Council of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學當然校董), in the capacity as Chairman of the United College Board of Trustees.

1965 Decorated a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.) by Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.

1965 Hong Kong chief delegate to Tokyo International Trade Fair in Japan.

1968 Conferred Doctor of Laws Degree (*honoris causa*) by The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

1969 Conferred Doctor of Social Science Degree (*honoris causa*) by The University of Hong Kong.

1969 Decorated an Order of the Sacred Treasure, 3rd Class (勳三等瑞寶章) by the Emperor of Japan.

1971-1974 Chairman, Hong Kong St. John Ambulance Association Council

1971 Kenneth was a co-founder of the Ocean Park Hong Kong (香港海洋公園) and served as the first Chairman of the Board, Ocean Park Limited.

1972 Bestowed a Knight Bachelor by Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.



1975 The Fung Ping Fan Group bought a McDonald's franchise and introduced the fast-food restaurant to Hong Kong.

1976 In recognition of long and meritorious service as Vice President of The Scout Association of Hong Kong, Kenneth was decorated The Silver Acorn by the British Commonwealth Scout Council.

1985 Decorated an Order of the Sacred Treasure, 2nd Class (勳二等瑞寶章) by the Emperor of Japan.

1985 Decorated the Golden Dragon Medal – highest award for lay members – by the Chief Scout Sir Edward Youde (尤德爵士), The Scout Association of Hong Kong.

1992 Conferred the title of Honorary Citizen of Xinhui City, Guangdong Province (新會市榮譽市民), China.

1993 Conferred the title of Honorary Citizen of Jiangmen City, Guangdong Province (江門市榮譽市民), China.

2002 Kenneth died on 16 May 2002 at the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital, aged 91.

PROFILE

Sir Kenneth Ping-fan Fung

HONG KONG'S MAN OF ACTION



In this 1972 photograph, Sir Kenneth, a longtime member of the Hong Kong Jockey Club and an avid horse racing fan, leads his prize race horse, Good Fun, to the winner's circle.



Sir Kenneth listens intently as HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, addresses the Hong Kong branch of the World Wildlife Fund.

by **Victoria Bernard**

HONG KONG—About five-and-a-half million people crowd this small British Crown Colony island, a bastion of capitalism next door to Red China. More than most societies, Hong Kong is a place created by trade and finance.

And few men have done more to shape modern Hong Kong than Rotarian Sir Kenneth Ping-fan Fung, one of the colony's best-known businessmen, and a leader—locally and internationally—in serving others.

As one of Hong Kong's chief financial architects, Sir Kenneth has played a prominent role in the city's commercial development since the 1930's. In was then, upon the death of his father, Fung-Ping-shan, that he found himself suddenly thrust into the business world. However, the elder Fung, a philanthropist and founder of the Bank of East Asia, had not left his 19-year-old son unprepared. Guided by the example of his father's sound business sense and spirit of service to the community, Sir Kenneth went on to become director and

chief manager of the Bank of East Asia, now one of the largest Chinese-owned banks in Hong Kong.

Today Sir Kenneth, a member of the Rotary Club of Hong Kong, is the bank's senior director. Under his aggressive guidance, the Fung Ping Fan Group, founded by his father, has also prospered, burgeoning into a leading "hong" (commercial investment firm) with 35 subsidiary companies and a host of business interests in banking, real estate, manufacturing, import/export, and restaurant and catering services, a number of which are joint ventures with major overseas companies.

A man with a global view, Sir Kenneth has, nevertheless, played a vigorous role in the educational, cultural, social, and political life of Hong Kong.

Over the years, he has generously devoted time to young people, through the Boy Scouts and the YMCA, and has helped found 12 primary schools and three secondary schools.

"The aspirations of our young people," Sir Kenneth says, "constitute the most valuable of Hong Kong's commodities. The welfare and future of our community greatly depends on them."



Family portrait—Sir Kenneth and Lady Ivy have four sons and one daughter (all married), and 15 grandchildren.

A founder council member of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Sir Kenneth continues to serve on the boards of no fewer than 11 educational institutions. He is also chairman of the Hong Kong National Committee of the United World Colleges, which are located in Singapore, Italy, Africa, the U.S.A., Canada, and Wales. Moreover, he has founded scholarships at these colleges for a number of Hong Kong's outstanding students.

Sir Kenneth has served Hong Kong's government with zeal and distinction equal to his business and educational efforts. He was for many years a member of Hong Kong's Urban Council and Legislative Council. Since 1962, he has been an unofficial member of the Executive Council. As aide-de-camp to four successive governors and officers administering the crown colony, he was at the forefront of Hong Kong affairs.

In 1971, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II invested Sir Kenneth, already holder of the CBE (Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) and other honors, with the title of Knight Bachelor. And upon his retirement from four decades of government service in 1972, the Queen granted Sir Kenneth the right to use

Below: A proud Sir Kenneth gives an Ocean Park tour to the visiting Duke (in glasses) and Duchess of Kent.



'Fundamental human nature does not change, and the application of the concept of selfless service which is integral to the philosophies of all major religions and which is the core of the philosophy I share with Rotary, will be needed even more in the future.'

the rare prefix of "Honourable" before his name.

Of great support and inspiration to Sir Kenneth throughout his career has been his wife, Lady Ivy, whom he married in 1933. Highly accomplished in her own right, Lady Ivy has been awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for her distinguished contributions to civic, cultural, and charitable causes. Like her husband, she is a Hong Kong justice of the peace. She and Sir Kenneth frequently travel abroad to attend meetings and conferences of international organizations. In doing so, they have met and befriended the leaders of many nations. In the midst of their busy life together, the couple remain devoted to their four sons and one daughter, all of whom now have families of their own (See photo on page 37).

One of Sir Kenneth's keen concerns is wildlife conservation. He is founder and chairman of the Hong Kong branch of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which has helped create a bird sanctuary in north Hong Kong's Maipo Marshes and worked on projects in the People's Republic of China.

Another of his most prized projects and an achievement of which he is especially proud is Ocean Park, a huge and magnificent complex of tropical gardens with birds, animals, and aquariums in a dramatic location on a headland jutting out into the sea on the south side of Hong Kong Island. As its founder chairman for the last 10 years, he saw it through its formative years. Today Ocean Park, considered to be one of the most outstanding examples of a marine park in the world, attracts thousands of tourists each day. In creating Ocean Park, Sir Kenneth has provided a major contribution to the cultural and leisure facilities available to Hong Kong's teeming millions. This alone would have constituted a lifetime achievement for most men.

One of the many reasons Sir Kenneth is so much in demand by various community service organizations is his success as a fund raiser. Friends call him Hong Kong's most persistent and successful "beggar." In 1981, Sir Kenneth raised more than \$2 million (HK) for the WWF—in just one week.

Yet, in the course of the man's broad and prolific public service career, there has always been time for Rotary—since 1935, when Sir Kenneth, then only 23, was admitted as the Rotary Club of Hong Kong's youngest member. During those early years, he was active in club projects, especially in helping to establish children's playgrounds and promote youth activities in Hong Kong and Kowloon. In 1949–1950, he served as president of the club, and in 1961–62 he was governor of R.I. District 345. "In the sixties," he recalls, "Hong Kong had only a few clubs. Now I am proud to see that it has 18 clubs; Macao has two, and Taiwan, many, many more."

Sir Kenneth played a key role in the Hong Kong club's support for construction of the \$2 million (HK) Technical Aids Research Centre in 1980–81, a joint project with the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation, which commemorated the 75th anniversary of Rotary International and the club's own 50th.

Says Sir Kenneth, "I must confess that what little achievement I have made during the past 48 years of my public life, I owe to Rotary's inspiration, especially its motto, 'Service Above Self.'"

Still a man of action at 73, Sir Kenneth finds time now and then to relax. He swims, plays golf, and is an avid fan of horse racing (he has been a member of the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club for 53 years.) Photography is another delight, as is preparing sumptuous gourmet Chinese dishes for family and friends.

Today Sir Kenneth stands out as an eminent leader in Hong Kong, whose welfare and social development he has generously served. A strong promoter of international understanding, he is especially sensitive to change in the world community and, for his part, has worked to help Hong Kong keep pace with it. Writing for the *Hong Kong Standard* in 1981, he said, "In the past 50 years great changes have taken place in the ways of life of all races, classes, and creeds, with the pace accelerating at what appears to many of my generation to be a frightening and uncomfortable rate. The ability of the human race to adapt to these inexorable pressures presents a challenge which, in its own way, Rotary will accept with courage and determination." ●

● Victoria Bernard is a Hong Kong writer.