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Fulfilling the Dream
Rare Stamps Find
Their Way Home
A Life of Dedication



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Scientist Returns Home

After more than 20 years abroad Fuchun Zhang considers that he has come home to China but the new Chair Professor at the Department of Physics is still searching for the Holy Grail of science.

Zhang is at the frontier of physics with his sights firmly locked on understanding and predicting novel superconductors or materials that can transport electricity without wastage or resistance.

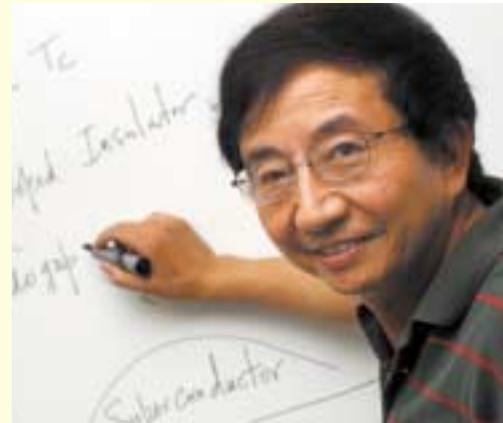
He said: "There are a lot of Nobel laureates working on this! As a theoretician we try to build on what exists, explain it and try to predict (which direction scientists should follow).

"It is not always a success but if you get it right you will be recognized.

Born in Shanghai Zhang was one of the first students to leave China in 1980 when he went to study at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute before moving through a series of universities in the US.

After a short break in Switzerland in the late 1980s Zhang moved to the University of Cincinnati where he became a professor and spent the remainder of his American career there.

He said: "I came back because at this stage of my career I felt that HKU provided me with all the things I wanted – not least I want to build an institute of theoretical physics and help develop a theoretical community here."



Fuchun Zhang

Frontline Fight Should Inspire Leadership

The Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui has told the next generation of graduates that they should be inspired by the University's frontline fight against SARS.

Only by combining the spirit of teamwork with an independent mind can today's undergraduates become the successful graduates of tomorrow.

Highlighting the crucial work by the University's medical and research teams in fighting the epidemic Professor Tsui said this should act as a beacon of excellence.

The packed Loke Yew Hall was told that only the broadest and most challenging approach to education would ensure that students measure up to society's needs.

He said: "University education is not just education in academic terms it is education for life. It teaches you to socialize and teaches independence of mind and thought.

"I want you all to become future leaders when you graduate from The University of Hong Kong... Being a member of HKU brings with it a duty to self, to your family, to the university community and Hong Kong.

"You owe it to yourselves to give of your best. We are fully committed to excellence. So should you be."

The Vice-Chancellor dismissed criticism that standards were deteriorating in higher education as 'too simplistic' or 'some would say shallow and naive'.

Both research students and undergraduates had exhibited their commitment to the community by helping combat SARS in and out of the research laboratories.

He said: "I was proud of the way students displayed compassion and leadership during this crisis."

But the SARS epidemic also illustrated the need for creative thinking and this, in turn, meant that students must have a broad base of knowledge beyond their own subject.

Biology and medicine – the critical disciplines in the fight against SARS – were just two examples of the broad array of knowledge required in the modern world.

The Vice-Chancellor said that only by taking full advantage of the diverse courses on offer, however, could students ensure they had the foundations to support this knowledge.

Students' Union President Raymond Mak echoed this plea.

He said: "Why are the mass media criticising universities claiming they are becoming factories? The main problem is that students are too career orientated and have no intention of questioning themselves and society.

"If getting a good job is the aim of university it is definitely a disaster for our tertiary education."

University Welcomes Distinguished Visiting Professor

Belgian born but with dual US and French nationality, Professor Paul Vanhoutte is a one man walking, talking United Nations who has pioneered research on heart disease.

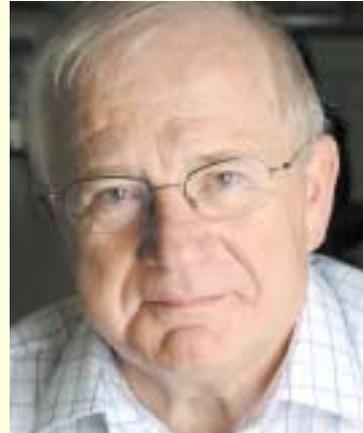
Newly-installed as the Distinguished Visiting Professor to the Department of Pharmacology with a special interest in bio-pharmaceutical development, he brings with him an impressive reputation.

Vanhoutte also comes with a CV that stretches to 146 pages and takes in Rwanda, Poland, China, Denmark, and Switzerland as well as a

wide body of published papers.

He said: "I decided to come to Hong Kong because I had research links to China. I thought Hong Kong would provide the ideal platform for all those different elements – east and west.

"With that in mind I could not refuse the offer to come here."



Paul Vanhoutte

New Communications Director Sets Her Goal

Newly appointed Director of Communications Karen Tang Shuk-tak has pledged to make the University a byword for excellence on the world stage by selling its successes and achievements more effectively.

Karen Tang styles herself as a 'facilitator' to unite members of the University through improved internal lines of communication as well as

enhancing their communication with the wider community.

She said: "We want to centralize information rather than power. It has to be a partnership so that we can have synergy and so maximize effectiveness. It is about information sharing."

Hong Kong born and bred, the sociology graduate from the Chinese University has a Masters degree in Public Administration from The University of Hong Kong.

Tang came to the University after a long career in the private sector working on corporate development and a series of new media projects with the newspaper group Ming Pao, Hong Kong Telecom and Hutchison.

Tang believes that her experience in both the public and private sectors will enable her to bring a fresh approach to the job.

She said: "I have a lot of experience of strategic planning of which a key area is to develop internal and external communications."

It was a two month law course at Tsinghua University last year which gave her a taste for academia. On her return to Hong Kong she saw the advertisement for the communications job and decided this was for her.

She said: "I like to take something new and develop it. At HKU I would like to help to facilitate more regular dialogue between staff, management and students but conversely, they must accept democracy. Once a decision has been made we have to agree to disagree because we cannot satisfy all parties."

Good news needs good publicity and Tang wishes to encourage staff to let her and her colleagues in the External Relations Office of the Registry know of these successes and achievement.

Tang said: "The Vice-Chancellor said that you must 'sell success while you can because it will not stay that way for ever'. We need to remember this as we communicate the position of HKU on a global level."



Karen Tang

Chinese Premier Visits HKU

Premier Wen Jiabao praised the University's contribution to controlling SARS when he met with more than 100 students and staff during a visit in June.

The Premier gave an impromptu address during his meeting with medical students at the University's Yu Chun Keung Medical Library. He praised our success in helping to control SARS but at the same time reminded us that our mission, to develop a reliable diagnostic test, treatment and a vaccine, has not been fully accomplished.

During his tour, he visited the Cheung Kung Hai Conference Centre, the Genome Research Centre and the Yu Chun Keung Medical Library.

He was greeted by Pro-Chancellor Dr David Li, Council Chairman, Dr Victor Fung, Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui and Dean of Medicine, Professor S.K. Lam. He was also joined by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Professor Arthur Li and Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, Dr E.K. Yeoh.



Premier Wen

Radical Scheme Saves Energy

While the rest of Hong Kong was reaching to turn on the air conditioning over the summer, a radical new green scheme at the University helped save enough electricity to power a colour TV for 1,377 years.

The Energy Saving Measures scheme helped the University cut down on more than 1.68 million kilowatt hours (kw hrs) and save more than \$1.8 million from our energy bills, by simply switching off the power.

Professor Peter Hills, who is Chairman of the Working Group on Energy Saving, was behind the latest stage in the University's bid to cut down on the environmental impact and also trim expenditure in the process.

He said: "We have been pleased with this scheme because it has been reasonably successful and in keeping with the University's environmental policy to reduce our impact on the environment.

"We are one of the major users of power on Hong Kong Island and we have to recognise a responsibility environmentally. Plus saving energy has the additional benefit of reducing costs."

The taskforce targeted air conditioning, lifts and lighting as the main drain on electricity and began by assessing the University's needs building by building and department by department.

Hills said: "Even though summer is the hottest part of the year there is less activity during the vacation and a significant number of staff are away on holiday.

"We saw this as an opportunity to manage the availability of certain kinds of services and facilities that require energy but without being excessively disruptive."

At the end of June the taskforce began by cutting back the hours of air conditioning which were limited to core periods in many buildings throughout July and August.

For July, Hills has calculated that the University saved six per cent of its electricity consumption and this converted into savings of seven per cent on its power bill – in both cases year-on-year. This meant 670,000 kw hrs saved and \$820,000.

For August consumption dropped by more than nine per cent or one million kw hrs with a drop in expenditure of \$1.05 million or 9.49 per cent.

This converts into a reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 1,656 metric tonnes, a drop in nitrogen oxides by around 2.196 tonnes and sulphur dioxide emissions were reduced by 2.581 tonnes.

Hills said: "The point we want to get across is that all of us should try to manage our approach to the use of energy throughout the year.

"This should not be seen as an exercise for the summer and for that we need the active support of the staff, faculty and students."



Rocky Shores. Gray A. Williams
Hillstreams. David Dudgeon
Sandy Shores. Benny K.K. Chan & Kevin J. Caley
Hillsides. Billy C.H. Hau

Brought To Book

When academics at the Department of Ecology and Biodiversity set up an Internet-based virtual school four years ago, they hardly expected it to result in something as old-fashioned and three-dimensional as a book.

But the success of that venture has led to the publication of a full-colour series of field guides designed for secondary schools, undergraduates and the general public.

Taking their cue from undergraduates, who were logging onto the Virtual School of Biodiversity, printing off pictures of species and using them on field trips, the authors decided to produce a more traditional teaching and learning tool.

"These field guides are aimed at secondary school teachers and their students, as well as undergraduates and will help improve their knowledge of Hong Kong's biodiversity," Dr Gray Williams, one of the authors, said.

"We find that many teachers need to show students how to identify local species during their fieldwork, but there are no appropriate colour guides to help them do this."

The department held workshops for teachers to learn more about their needs and curriculum demands and spent a year sourcing hundreds of photographs and illustrations.

The first two guides in the series, *Rocky Shores* and *Hillstreams*, were published in July this year and *Sandy Shores* and *Hillsides* in September at \$60 each.

Each guide is bilingual and extensively illustrated, and has colour-coded tables on such information as the habitat, size, diet and abundance of each species of animal, insect and plant.

Professor David Dudgeon said the guides contributed to the main mission of his department, that of nature conservation through biodiversity.

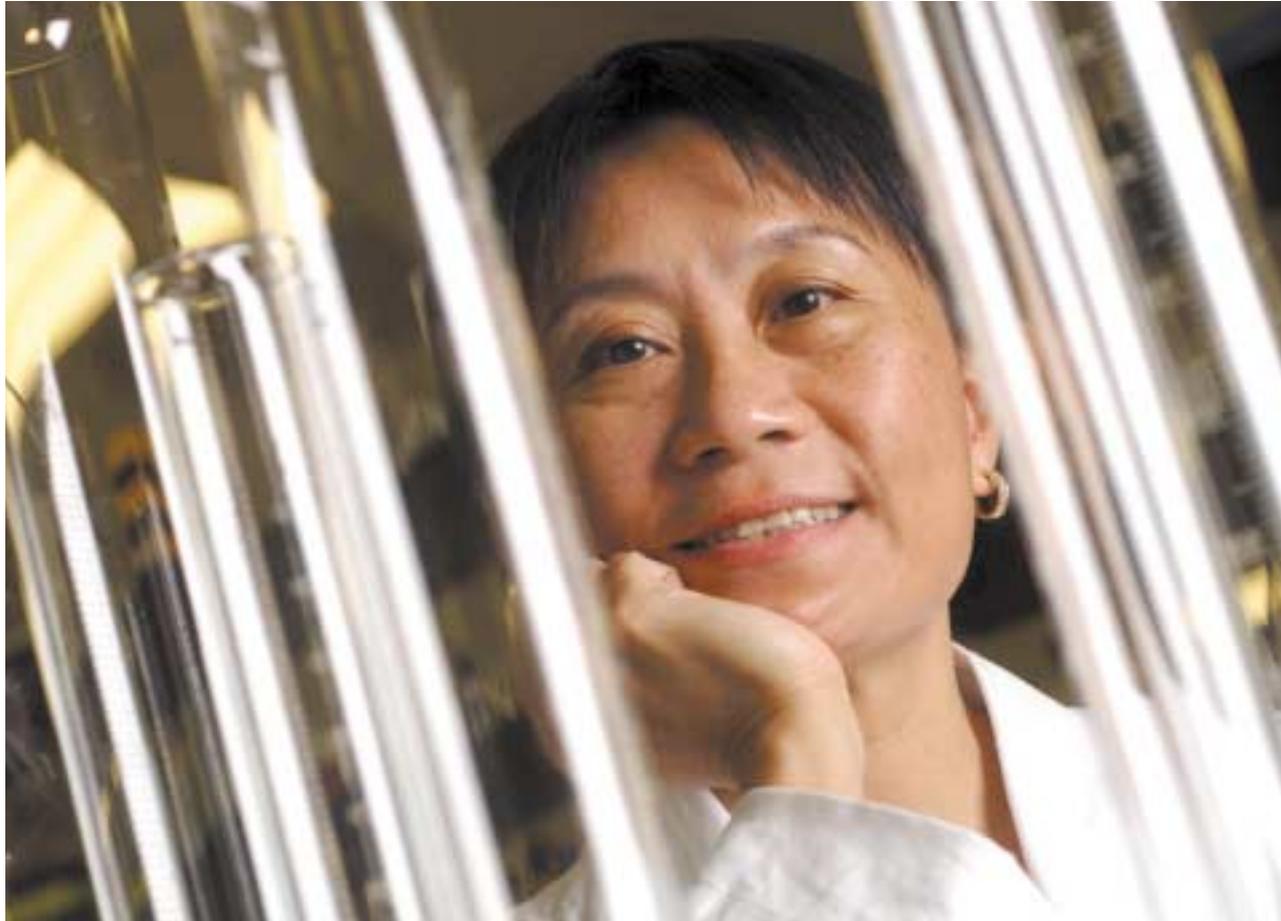
"This is education with the larger game plan of conservation," he said. "Biodiversity is inherently local. If you only educate people about the biodiversity of Africa and the Amazon, they will never protect the biodiversity they have in Hong Kong. Books like these field guides help people to learn about and appreciate what is here."

The fact that the books are bilingual was especially important because it made them accessible to a much larger audience, especially local secondary schools and interested naturalists, he added.

The department is now working on a methodology book offering secondary school teachers a standard set of field methods to be used with the field guides. In addition, a field guide on urban species, called *Cities*, is on the drawing board.

The first four books were published with funds from The University of Hong Kong Foundation and a University Grants Committee's Interface Project Grant.

New Kit Targets Those at Risk



Karen Lam

A kit to identify people at risk of metabolic disorders such as diabetes and atherosclerotic diseases is being developed in a project led by Professor Karen Lam of the Department of Medicine, who has also set her sights on generating a new drug treatment for patients.

The kit will seek to measure levels of adiponectin in the blood. Low levels of adiponectin are linked to metabolic disorders and coronary heart disease. Obese people tend to have lower adiponectin, but this is not always the case. Hence the need to identify those who are at risk.

Professor Lam said they aimed to mass-produce the kit and the income would be used to help fund the second part of the project – generating a drug that increases levels of adiponectin in patients. Research on animals has found that this reduces the

threats of diabetes and atherosclerosis.

Researchers in her department will collaborate with colleagues in Taiwan to screen thousands of drugs and chemicals to see if they have any application as a treatment. They will also work with researchers in Shanghai and Hong Kong to investigate traditional Chinese medicines for a treatment.

The project has received \$2.28 million from the Innovation and Technology Fund. The kit is expected to be ready within six months, while the development of a treatment is expected to take about two-and-a-half years.

Project: Adiponectin as a Novel Diagnostic Marker and Therapeutic Target for the Treatment of Diabetes, Steatohepatitis and Other Metabolic Disorders

‘Talking’ Computers Ease the Flow of Information

A tool to enable computers in major organizations and companies to ‘talk’ to each other more efficiently is being developed by researchers in the Centre for E-Commerce Infrastructure Development.

Currently, files need to be formatted individually when they are sent from one system to another and the information must be filtered and re-entered by the recipient for material that they need.

While this is not much of a problem for exchanges between individuals, it is a hugely time-wasting task for large organizations such as governments and businesses in which many different departments or operators are sharing information. The goal is to enable information to be entered automatically into each operator’s system through an ‘information interoperability platform’.

Dr David Cheung of the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems is leading the project, which received \$13.99 million from the Innovation and Technology Fund in April and another \$5.3 million from private sponsors. The project involves 10 additional collaborators from the private sector.

“There is nothing like this in existence at the moment because interoperability is pretty difficult. We want to be able to link up every party in a chain so it is easier for information to flow through multiple receivers in a chain,” he said. “The key is to adopt open standards on information exchange. This technology will be very valuable in logistic and e-government applications.”

The project is expected to be completed in 2006.

Project: A Business Process and Information Interoperability Platform Based on Open Standards



David Cheung

Sick Fish Blamed on Pollution

The fishermen who dangle lines from the piers around Victoria Harbour should think twice before they bring their catch home for supper. For not only is the environment the fish swim in of questionable quality, the fish themselves may also be unwell.

Fish can swim away from pollution, but long-term exposure means contaminants can build up in their flesh. And while the water is cleaner now that better sewage treatment is being introduced in Hong Kong, the sediment is still highly polluted.

To better understand the impact of pollution on marine organisms, the government's Environmental Protection Department (EPD) commissioned a consultancy study led by Dr Kenneth Leung

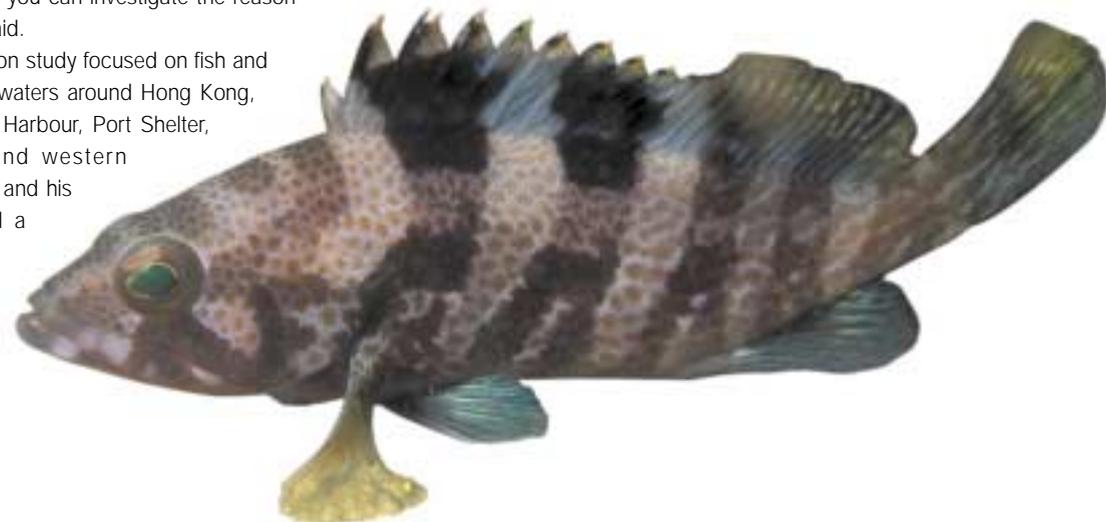


of the Swire Institute of Marine Science within the Department of Ecology and Biodiversity.

The study investigated the use of biological indicators in Hong Kong to assess the health of fish and marine organisms in local polluted waters. The current marine water quality monitoring programme mainly focuses on physico-chemical parameters of water and sediments, which do not reliably reflect the stress on marine organisms.

"Just like a medical doctor who checks their patient's health once in a while, we are trying to use diagnostic tools to say whether an animal is healthy or not in a given body of water. If not, then you can investigate the reason why," Dr Leung said.

The \$1.3 million study focused on fish and mussels in open waters around Hong Kong, including Victoria Harbour, Port Shelter, Tolo Harbour and western waters. Dr Leung and his team measured a special enzyme



in fish – EROD – which indicates if a fish has been exposed to harmful organic compounds such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). They also looked at the lysosome function in mussel cells, to see if they had been weakened or stressed by pollution.

The findings showed that fish with elevated levels of EROD and mussels with weakened lysosome either had higher levels of PAHs or PCBs in their flesh, or were caught in areas where the sediment had high levels of these compounds.

Pony fish were an especially good indicator and those caught in Victoria Harbour and Deep Bay had the highest EROD levels. Both bodies of water have been heavily polluted in the past with industrial and organic pollution.

"We hope the Hong Kong government will follow the European and US governments and incorporate more bio- and eco-monitoring methods, as these are a more direct measurement of the health status of marine organisms," Dr Leung said.

The EPD is now exploring how to implement the recommendations from the study. In the meantime, Dr Leung and his team have demonstrated bio-testing techniques to EPD officers and provided them with protocols for carrying out their own tests.

As for those pier-based fishermen, or anyone who eats fish from polluted waters, Dr Leung has this warning.

"I wouldn't recommend anyone to eat mussels or fish from Victoria Harbour and Deep Bay as these organisms have accumulated high levels of PAHs and PCBs, plus other things like heavy metals and faecal contaminants. If people eat them very occasionally, they may be fine. But if they do it more often, chronic toxicity can occur in their body, causing such problems as liver damage and gastrointestinal problems," he said.



Kenneth Leung with a poster of diseased fish.

Rare Fish Return to Hong Kong Waters

Reef fish species that had seemingly disappeared from Hong Kong waters have started returning to a marine reserve at Cape D'Aguilar, giving researchers a snapshot of what the marine ecosystem was like 50 years ago.

Most of the larger species had been over-fished to meet the insatiable appetite for fleshy fish. But since the 18-hectare reserve opened in 1996 – with a total ban on fishing in its borders – 184 reef fish species have been recorded there by Dr Andrew Cornish of the Department of Ecology and Biodiversity and big fish are common again.

"Hong Kong waters have been over-fished for decades. If you dive outside the marine reserve, you would think snappers, groupers, parrotfish and the like were not important components of the ecosystem here," he said.

"But if you talk to old people, they will tell you the waters used to be teeming with fish, including big fish. There even used to be enough sharks to have dedicated shark fisheries in the 1940s

and 1950s."

Dr Cornish recently videotaped a juvenile, 35-centimetre Giant Grouper in the reserve which, at adulthood, grows to more than two metres long. He has also recorded several species of fish there which have never been seen in Hong Kong waters before, the most recent being a male Globehead parrotfish.

The situation is much different in other local waters. Dr Cornish studied three coral communities outside the reserve and recorded the biomass – the estimated collective weight of all the fish there. The figure was one of the lowest ever recorded in a coral habitat anywhere in the world.

The lack of decent sized reef fish in Hong Kong has sent fish traders to Indonesia, the Philippines, the Maldives and elsewhere in the region, putting pressure on fish stocks there. Hong Kong has the largest market for reef fish, and the Taiwan and Mainland China markets are growing.

Groupers and wrasse are especially vulnerable and a World



Andrew Cornish



Researchers collecting specimen at Cape D'Aguilar.

Conservation Union group has been set up under Dr Yvonne Sadovy also of the same department to assess which species should be put on a 'red list' of those in danger of extinction.

There are more than 1,000 grouper and wrasse species and the humphead (or Napoleon) wrasse has already been classified as a threatened species. The humphead is a popular choice on Hong Kong tables.

Dr Cornish is helping in the red list assessment and said groupers and wrasse were never very abundant and took a

relatively long time to reach sexual maturity, making them vulnerable to over-fishing. Many were caught and eaten before they could reproduce.

"I would like to see more natural reefs in Hong Kong fully protected from fishing. It actually enhances fishing outside the reserve. Not only do you protect biodiversity inside, but these large species have the chance to reproduce and their offspring will repopulate reefs outside," he said.

Fulfilling the Dream

When HKU graduate, Heidi Hung, becomes the only Hong Kong student to take up a Rhodes Scholarship next month she will be one of many students fulfilling the University's dream of producing a new generation of leaders.

Heidi Hung

With every muscle in her body aching Heidi Hung Hoi-yi carried the heavy water-load back through the African bush before collapsing in her hammock and falling asleep under the stars.

The next morning The University of Hong Kong graduate would awaken to be met by a forest of eyes as curious villagers would watch over the foreigners come to build their school.



This autumn, however, Hung will be swapping the mosquito nets, hard labour and ebony of Africa for the ivory towers of Oxford University, where she will become Hong Kong's only Rhodes Scholar this year.

As the latest HKU graduate to win one of the world's most prestigious scholarships she will join an impressive roll call of Prime Ministers, Presidents and world-renowned academics.

In recent years America alone boasts former President, Bill Clinton, and presidential hopeful, General Wesley Clark, among its list of Rhodes Scholars.

The creation of British diamond magnate Cecil Rhodes, the scholarship, now celebrating its centenary, was designed to educate future leaders of the English-speaking world.

All the more embarrassing for Hung then that she did not even know what she had won.

She said: "I did not know about this beforehand. Rhodes was one of the many scholarships I was applying for but, of course, when I learned afterwards I was very surprised.

"Once I knew how prestigious it is I felt pressurized. People said I would have a bright future and I think I am very lucky to win this but I don't want to be labeled because of it. People have expectations of you and I don't feel comfortable with that."

The Rhodes Trust, which administers the scholarships, pays for university fees and living costs, as well as fares in both directions and baggage costs for a two or three year stint at Oxford.

Before securing this, however, candidates have to go through a rigorous process of applications and two rounds of interviews with some of the leading figures in their home countries.

Hung was no exception. After a first round of two one-on-one interviews, the politics and law graduate discovered she had been shortlisted with another two candidates.

She recalled: "Then we had dinner with all the seven interviewers at the Hong Kong Club. They were okay and claimed they were not assessing us during the dinner but I was really nervous.

"The next morning there was a group discussion with the candidates and each of us had to face all the interviewers."

The secret of her success, believes Hung, was her month spent in Tanzania and her tireless work on behalf of the underprivileged back home.

She said: "One thing they found different about me was that I had done something after I came back from Tanzania. Maybe that was the difference.

"I started a new project – a book club – when I got back. This was so we could supply the school we helped build with some reading material."

The trip to Tanzania also gives a clue to her future path of study.

Hung said: "I wanted to see how it was – in terms of equality and justice – but I also wanted to see the lives of these people."

Her life at Oxford will begin with a year-long research into refugee law at St Anne's College and then she must decide what to do with her second year.

Worried by Oxford's elitist reputation and facing up to leaving her family behind, Hung is also looking forward to the challenge of a new environment and a truly global perspective.

But there is another problem: her boyfriend.

She said: "I've been together with my boyfriend for three and



Heidi during her work in Africa.

half years and we have barely seen each other. I've spent a year on exchange and so has he. That's two years apart.

"He was really happy for me when we heard about the scholarship but he will just have to wait another two years or come to visit me in the UK!"

Past Rhodes Scholar Praises Its Benefits

As Hong Kong's first official Rhodes Scholar, in 1986, Sandra Fan Pao-sun can remember being stunned by the contrast between the cloistered academic excellence of Oxford University and the turmoil of Thatcher's Britain.

From the breezy ambition and future-fixed colony, the young law graduate found herself in a world barely changed for hundreds of years but looking out the industrial strife and political turmoil of 1980s Britain.

The temptation to see this as a warning shot for ambitious young HKU graduates, however, could not be further from the mark because Fan has seen her career, as well as her perspective, take off in leaps and bounds.

Now a high flying partner in the global law firm White & Case, Fan believes that the opportunity to study abroad is a must for Hong Kong students who want to broaden their horizons and polish their prospects.

She said: "I firmly believe that if the opportunities are there all Hong Kong students should get at least one year study abroad in a western environment – not an Asian one.

"Although Hong Kong has always been a Chinese society the influences of China are growing stronger every day and with it,

unfortunately, western influences on Hong Kong are greatly diminished.

"The opportunity to study at a good western university where you can see how differently the students think, how differently they behave in class and how they believe in themselves must not be missed."

Fan set her sights on a Rhodes Scholarship in order to both study abroad and concentrate on purely academic studies.

She said: "The intellectual capabilities of the Dons, the infrastructure and the students, were just amazing.

"HKU was a good university with a good law faculty but it was just not permeated with the same level of pure intellectual pursuit. Oxford was breathtaking.

"Getting them to share it with you was another issue altogether!"

Those worried that they will sideline a fast track career need not worry, according to Fan.

She said: "I started my articles two years later than my contemporaries but having done a masters made a difference and the fact that it was from Oxford made an even bigger difference.

"Yes, Rhodes made a difference."



Sandra Fan Pao-sun



High Flyer Says 'Don't Just Stick to Books'

Daniel Tsai knew he had arrived in the world of international finance when his bosses told him what to do in the event of a nuclear bomb explosion: get the first plane out.

The high-flying HKU graduate was in Dubai as part of his fast track training scheme with banking giants The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) when the American invasion of Iraq began.

Tsai recalled: "We had to have security meetings and we were told things like 'What to do in the event of a nuclear bomb going off.' We were told to take the first plane out.

"Although we were not that close (to Iraq) if the prevailing wind blew our way we were done for. My parents were not happy and my grandmother said I should quit."

Tsai's CV, however, is proof enough that the accountancy and finance graduate is not a quitter but rather someone determined to battle it out.

The son of a local restaurateur, he began his course at the University in 1999 and the following summer shunned rest and recreation for an internship with accountants Ernst & Young.

Tsai said: "I found out I didn't like it. I thought I would first try accountancy because most of the people on the course tend to go into this field.

"But I found it too routine: just looking at the same old numbers."

Determined to extend himself further in his second year Tsai and a partner entered, and won, a local business case competition after beating off more than 70 rival students.

His reward in his final year was the chance to compete in an international business competition organised by the University of Texas and Tsai once again won.

Tsai said: "I had no idea of winning when I entered the first competition, but by challenging and competing things develop and ideas begin to take shape.

"Other students experience life through living in halls and joining

societies. I did not do that – although I still had time for my friends."

In his second summer Tsai secured an internship with Goldman Sachs and found himself settling clients accounts for shares and counting out customers shares.

Tsai said: "That was much more interesting because we were swapping shares for money so there were a lot of issues and problems to resolve.



Daniel Tsai

"All these internships and competitions were interesting experiences but it is reviewing the final product – your résumé – that is the most satisfying aspect."

The reward was being taken on by HSBC for their worldwide trainee investment banking programme which has given Tsai the opportunity to take in London, as well as Dubai.

His experiences have illustrated that the degree and life at the University were not wasted.

Tsai said: "It is the technical aspect that the degree helped me with. It prepared me so that when I was working in London there was nothing new to me in terms of numbers.

"But university also offers you the chance to participate in so many things. My advice to first year undergraduates is don't just stick to books: try different things."

HKU Grad Sets Her Sights on CFO Position

Watch out for the name Vivian Lam Yan because this ambitious HKU graduate has set herself a target: to be the chief financial officer of a major multi-national company.

Now with General Electric – one of the world’s largest companies – the former BBA accountancy and finance student appears to walk the walk as well as talk the talk.

From the comparatively modest Sha Tin Government Secondary School, Lam’s pragmatic approach to her career dictated that only HKU would do.

She said: “Hong Kong is a major financial centre and since I wanted to develop a career on the financial side this course offered the two key professional skills I needed.

“I chose HKU because of culture, tradition, learning and the fact that it is famous for other activities that would enable me to develop as an all-round person.”

One of these was the Intensified Learning Opportunity Programme (ILOP) which Lam believes is a key ingredient in her success story.

She said: “It brings together many diverse strands such as leadership skills, exchange programmes, career workshops



Vivian Lam Yan

and mentoring.

“There were a lot of famous alumni and we were given a one-on-one mentor. He shared with me his work experience and answered the questions I needed to build a career.”

When Lam graduated in 1998 she discovered an economy reeling from the full impact of the Asian financial crisis and a disappearing jobs market.

She said: “Luckily I picked the right course. The big accountancy firms were still recruiting so I did not spend too much time struggling for a job.”

Courtesy of her course, Lam had already passed 10 of the required 14 examination papers to become a fully qualified accountant.

“The course really helped me with those four remaining papers and I was quite confident because of this. I just decided to take all the papers in one sitting.”

Lam walked into PriceWaterhouse, probably the best known accountancy firm in the world, and proceeded to spend 18 months building up her experience.

She said: “I then tried to rethink my career; should I aim to become a partner with a professional firm or aim to become a CFO of a commercial firm?”

“I decided I wanted to be more involved in the commercial world. With this kind of decision there is no right and wrong. You simply have to decide what your priorities are.”

With that she decided to apply for a place on the financial management programme with General Electric which she completed a year ago.

Now a commercial finance analyst in GE Power System Asia Pacific, Lam spends her life travelling abroad or taking conference calls with her American colleagues late at night and early in the morning.

Does this leave anytime for a private life?

Lam laughs: “Good question! The first two to three years of a career are spent at work and gaining professional qualifications and now I spend much time travelling.

“I enjoy it but it is tough. I need to strike a balance between my private and working life.

“As a young professional, working for an international firm, it takes an extra effort to maintain a relationship if your partner is not as mobile as you.”

In the meantime Lam will have to console herself with the thought of becoming a CFO.

Alumna Invites Partnership and Criticism

For Dr the Hon. Sarah Liao Sau-tung the opportunity to address the inauguration this year was also the chance to return full circle to the hall where she sat 33 years ago as an undergraduate.

But if the audience expected to be treated to an exercise in pure nostalgia from the Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works they failed to understand this self-confessed ‘fiery’ politician.

Not shy of tackling Hong Kong’s troubles Liao told the hall: “I can see some of you looking at me and thinking ‘Look at what you have done to Hong Kong – your government’.

“I argue that Hong Kong is not going through the best of times and it is also undergoing unprecedented political economic and social changes.”

Inviting both ‘partnership and criticism’ Liao told students that criticism, however, came with strings attached for the educated elite in today’s society.

She said: “You must develop your critical analysis, mind and knowledge so that when you criticise or challenge you are different and are not just following the crowd.

“You must do your homework.”

The theme of political and civic responsibilities also spread into Liao’s memories of her three years as a chemistry and botany student at the University during the ‘roaring 70s’.

These centred on China’s successful application to join the United Nations and the determination of Hong Kong activists to secure a more responsive and accountable colonial government.

She said: “Among the fiery zest of youth we did not forget more practical things. We had to earn money because grants and loans did not come easy. Many took up jobs as a tutor.

“Some had to subsidize their family income and I played the fiddle.”

This did not mean they were lacking in social and cultural activities.

From playing in orchestras, to taking part in barn dances and plotting intrigue in a very sweaty students’ union – there was no air conditioning – Liao recalls a ‘lot of fun’.

The minister said: “I have not forgotten the most important aspect: to learn and grow intellectually. Those who make it to HKU are the most brilliant of the bunch – the crème de la crème.

“But you must remember that there are brilliant people around who will think differently but are just as good.”



Sarah Liao

New Experience Gives A New Perspective

Ole Baranowski has already swapped the casual clothes of a student for the regulation suit demanded by his new life as a company intern. But that has not stopped him learning about life in Hong Kong.

The German student was studying for a degree in business administration and engineering at the University of Applied Science in Bremen when he had to decide on where to go for the compulsory course requirement of a year abroad.

Baranowski admits that his reasons for coming to Hong Kong for six months study and six months work experience, when the world was his oyster, was a pragmatic mix of the down to earth and the high minded.

He said: "We have an exchange programme with The University of Hong Kong, it was cheaper and easier to arrange but those were not the main reasons.

"The most important reason was that I wanted to get out of Germany and Europe. I wanted to go somewhere completely different and outside my experience.

"I thought that the chance to experience Asia and HKU would be quite interesting."

One of the things that struck Baranowski most sharply was the contrast in approach of teaching staff to their students.

He said: "Compared to the universities in Germany the professors really care about you and help you. When I first arrived, the head of department spoke to us for thirty minutes to welcome us. That would be quite impossible in Germany.

"If you want to speak to a professor in Germany it is difficult. There are a lot of students and staff don't have the time. You have to make an appointment."

What Baranowski did find difficult to adjust to was our campus culture and, in particular, the halls of residence that went with the exchange package.

He said: "It was a very strange experience. For the first two weeks I was a little bit scared because it seemed like a semi-military environment.

"These groups of students would run through the building the whole night, singing songs and so on. I really did not understand what was happening."

Any idea that this soured the experience, however, is laughed away.

Besides adapting to University life and Hong Kong, the German exchange student has also taken time out to visit Beijing, Macau and Shanghai.

Baranowski said: "I really enjoyed the whole experience. It was very cosmopolitan with lots of different cultures and I was always busy meeting new and interesting people.

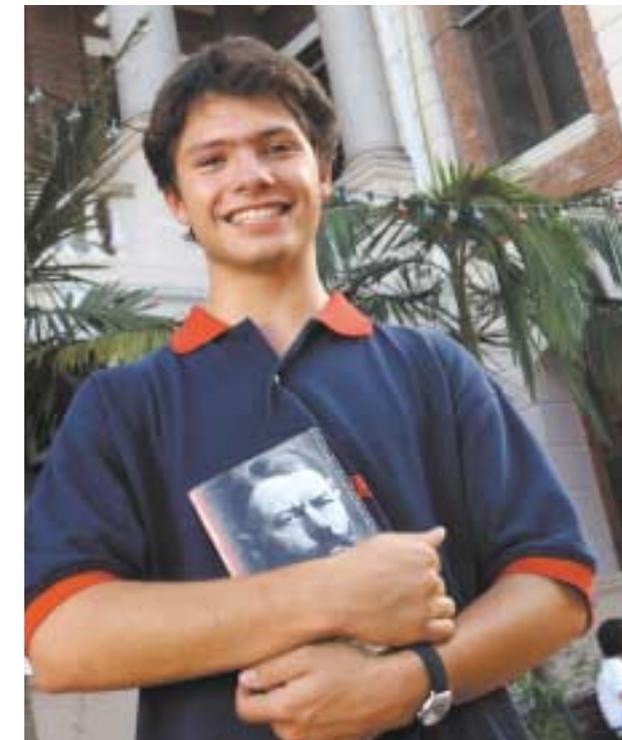
"I am now spending the second part of the year as an intern with a German trading company over here.

"What I am certain of is that this has given me a taste for Hong Kong and I would like to come back once I have completed my studies back in Germany."



The Best of Both Worlds

When Joachim Mion told his teachers that he was off to study in Hong Kong he was met with a withering combination of condescension and concern that his educational development would be scarred for life.



Joachim Mion

The French student smiles at the memory only a matter of weeks after beginning his Bachelor of Arts degree studies because he believes he is getting the best of both worlds: broadening his mind as well as his knowledge.

Mion said: "French people are quite proud of their (educational) system so when I told my teachers about Hong Kong they said 'Why, when you have a beautiful chance to continue your French studies?'

"The teachers are very narrow minded about going abroad and believe strongly in the merits of French education. I don't believe they are so daring about education and want to keep it the same way."

This insularity was reflected in the fact that both Mion and his parents had great difficulty in tracking down any information about The University of Hong Kong.

The 17-year-old laughed: "Nobody would come from France to study in Hong Kong. They would rather live in Hong Kong and travel to France to study!"

The opportunity, however, to work in an English speaking environment and adapt to a radically different syllabus was one Joachim is determined to take advantage of.

He said: "The themes and the way the courses are taught are very different here and very interesting. They are highly specialized; for instance you could not have a course about Buddhist studies in France.

"We also do not have campus universities where people live and the social mix of societies and clubs so this is quite special."

The French teenager believes that these clubs and societies have helped him to mix socially and overcome the inevitable barriers that arise in the first few weeks of a new university life.

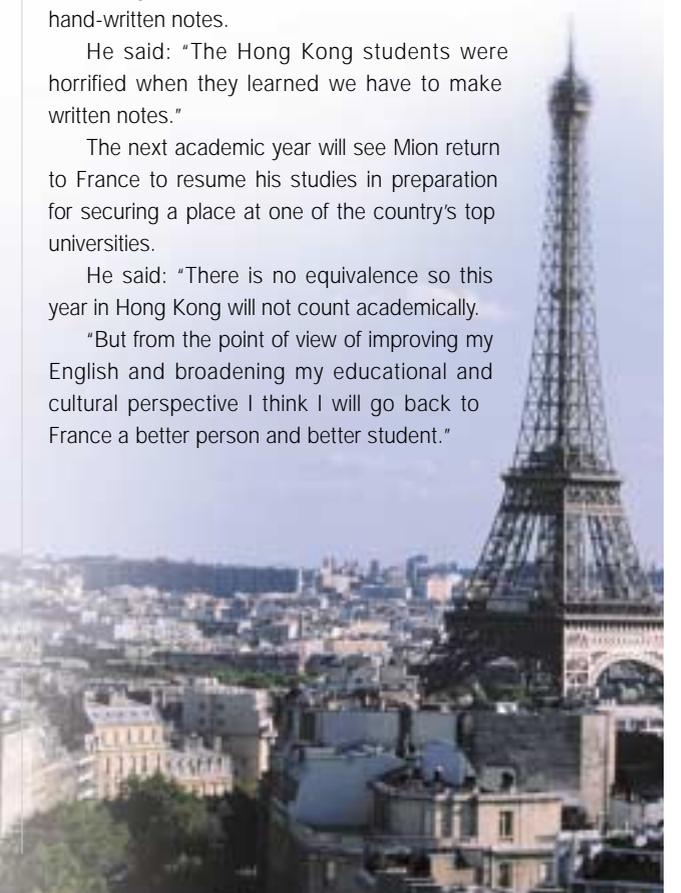
One of the biggest shocks for Mion, however, has been adapting to the use of computers as a study aide during lectures, something that France shuns in favour of the traditional hand-written notes.

He said: "The Hong Kong students were horrified when they learned we have to make written notes."

The next academic year will see Mion return to France to resume his studies in preparation for securing a place at one of the country's top universities.

He said: "There is no equivalence so this year in Hong Kong will not count academically.

"But from the point of view of improving my English and broadening my educational and cultural perspective I think I will go back to France a better person and better student."



A Taste for the East

Globalization is more than a concept for Thomas Colonna because this Italian has managed to fit in a year at The University of Hong Kong before embarking on a Master's degree in Germany, this autumn.

This experience of life in the former colony has given him a greater taste for both China and the Fragrant Harbour and provided he is not blown off course he intends to drop anchor back at HKU.

He said: "I decided to come to Hong Kong to study English because I wanted a different perspective on my subject.

I believed that a former British colony, caught in the middle between China and the West, could make me experience the true meaning of concepts like post-colonial and East meets West."

Arriving in autumn 2002, Colonna took up a batch of courses in the Department of English with the aim of broadening his experience as a linguist with both English and Chinese on his agenda.

By his own admission the hardest part of adapting to life in crowded Hong Kong was getting used to sharing a room in his residential hall after the comparative privacy taken for granted in Europe.

Colonna said: "I was not used to it but I believe that staying in a hall has given me a new experience and the chance to share the lives of young students in Hong Kong. With this I have got a better understanding of Hong Kong society in general so on the whole I am positive about the experience."

At the same time Colonna began learning both Cantonese and Mandarin in a bid to better understand greater China culture.

He said: "I believe that China will be an essential global power and I wanted to learn Chinese and experience the Mainland.

I thought having Hong Kong as a point of arrival and departure would help cushion the possible cultural shock."

Now in Freiburg, Germany, the Italian scholar is studying for a Master of Arts degree that combines English, French and Spanish studies which he will complete in 18 months' time. He does, however, intend to brush up on his Chinese.

Colonna said: "I am very interested in the International Relations Master degree because it focuses on relations between China and the West. I thus plan to come back to Hong Kong after completing my Masters."

The Italian freely admitted he has fallen in love with the Pearl of the Orient.

He added: "There's a special atmosphere in Hong Kong that is hard to find anywhere else in the world. I think the main reason for it is that it is a truly international city, combining Chinese values with a Western style of life, without ever losing its link to Asia.

"HKU is a good representation and realization of this spirit."



Rare Stamps Find Their Way Home

It's taken more than 90 years to deliver but a humble six cent stamp has finally found its way back to The University of Hong Kong after an incredible round the world journey.

This forms part of a rare 1912 collection that was recently purchased by the University.

The stamps were bought and franked at the University's special post office set up by the Hong Kong Post Office during the fund-raising bazaar held from March 11-16, 1912 to mark the opening of the University.

Peter Cunich, who advised on the purchase, said: "The University post office was only open for five days or so.

"Some of the denominations are quite large so they are very valuable and rare. They are the only examples that we know of. These stamps are an interesting part of the University's history and represents quite a find."

Eagle-eyed Professor Mike Wilkinson noticed that the stamps were coming up for sale from Stanley Gibbons – the world's top stamp auction house.

David Carthy, a retired member of staff who has expertise in late Victorian and early Edwardian stamps was consulted and the Registry helped to secure the collection as part of the legacy of the University.

Bought as an historical memento, the collection also represents a healthy investment. But it is the history of the stamps that draws the attention first and foremost.

Many of them came attached to envelopes addressed to a man called Graca, who is believed to have been a Macanese stamp dealer.

His nephew was one of the first five graduates from the University in 1914.

They eventually turned up in the possession of George C. Dyer, a Vice-Admiral known for his controversial books on World War II and the attack on Pearl Harbour, in particular.

The US officer was also well known for his formidable collection of stamps.

In 1980 they were bought by Richard Chan Cheuk Kin a Chiu Chow-born shipping magnate who made his fortune in Hong Kong's post war boom years.

Experts believe that 81-year-old Chan has one of the most complete collections of Hong Kong stamps in the world and one that stretches back to 1840.

Chan said: "I decided that it was time to sell part of my collection because I am getting on a bit and I thought the money would come in handy. I was a bit sorry to lose them but they have now gone the full circle."

The Registrar, Henry Wai said: "I became interested in stamps when I saw The University of Hong Kong golden jubilee stamp of 1962.

"When my attention was drawn to the availability of these stamps from 1912 I realized these came from the post office set up for the opening bazaar.

"I was really excited and very keen to acquire them and return them to where they came from. Now I look forward to seeing them on public display at the University library."

Although no date has been set it is hoped they will go on display later this year.



Stamps from the collection.



From left: Tony Ferguson, David Carthy, Peter Cunich and Mike Wilkinson look at the rare stamps issued and re-purchased by the University.



Racing Passion Inspires New Book

When Hong Kong police officer, Albert Poon, tucked a Browning pistol into his cockpit for the Macau Grand Prix it was not designed to start the race but stop Chairman Mao's Red Guards.

This is just one of the historical nuggets uncovered by Philip Newsome, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Dentistry, who has just written a lavish book to celebrate this year's 50th anniversary of the race.

The book will represent ample reward for the racing fanatic who has been assiduously researching the origins of the race – famed as the nursery for tomorrow's Formula One stars – since 1987.



Philip Newsome

Newsome recalled: "I first came to Hong Kong on holiday in 1985. I am a big motor racing fan and first came here specifically to get to the Macau Grand Prix.

"I had found out about it because two years before, when I was still in the UK, I'd heard that it had been won by Ayrton Senna – who is regarded by many as the best racing driver ever.

"I was intrigued by this far away place and wanted to visit it."

Within a year Newsome had taken up a position at the Prince Philip Dental Hospital and has never looked back since.

His enthusiasm for chronicling the Grand Prix rests, in part, in his own frustrated racing career.

"When I was in England I tried racing but wasn't very good. Nevertheless I wanted to be involved and did some articles and wrote bits about various aspects of motor racing," said the dentist, "The seed then developed in 1987 to write a book about the Grand Prix."

Five years later he published a book to mark its 40th anniversary.

The roots of the race rest in the early 1950s when three Portuguese expatriates wrote to the Hong Kong Motor Sports Club, seeking advice on how to set up a leisurely motorized 'treasure hunt'.

When a Hong Kong teacher and club member went out to help them, however, he saw the potential for something altogether more ambitious: not least because the road layout aped the famed Monaco circuit.

Newsome said: "In the 50s and 60s it was very much a gentleman's race drawn from Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore.

"It was only in the late 60s and 70s that it started to attract overseas big names and racing teams but the real breakthrough was when Senna won."

One of only two races that carries the title Grand Prix despite the fact that it is not Formula One, Macau has now become a breeding ground for tomorrow's stars.

Brothers Ralf and Michael Schumacher are just two of the current Formula One stars to have graced and raced the circuit. But Newsome has regrets that the origins of the race have been overtaken by modern times.

"The first 10–15 years were the most interesting time: normal people doing abnormal things," he said, "As the 60s wore on more crack outfits began to arrive and they would win it by laps. It took the fun out of it."

From the same decade Newsome did uncover the Poon anecdote. Poon himself told how the Red Guards had threatened the Chinese drivers in a bid to put a stop to the race. The tactic failed.

Even the inevitable fatal accidents have failed to take the shine off one of the great motor racing attractions.

For Newsome, however, it has also given him the chance to write his tribute to this unique event.

He said: "When I came here I thought it would be nice to have a book as a souvenir. Now I've had the chance to write it."

Macau Grand Prix – 50 Years of Motor Racing. Watermark Publications. \$350.

To be released in October.

A Life of Dedication

Dr Eleanor Thom, who was one of the University's first four women graduates, has died at the age of 99.

Born in New York in 1904, Eleanor Thom came from a wealthy Chinese family but after her arrival in Hong Kong to complete her schooling she went on to dedicate the rest of her life to education in the territory.

Her devotion to her faith – Catholicism – and the power of education might have led some to think that Dr Thom's life had been a conventional one. This, however, would be a mistake.

Trapped by the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong in 1941, Dr Thom realized that her days as a US passport holder were numbered in the occupied territory.

With the company of fellow HKU graduate Leung Man Wah, Thom fled across Japanese lines in early 1942 and eventually reached free China where the pair made their way to the then capital Chongqing, in Sichuan province.

Her skills were to prove invaluable to the US Consulate where she landed a job until it was safe to move back to the country of her birth.

After completing her doctorate in education at Columbia University Dr Thom returned to Hong Kong. But her plans were once again thrown into turmoil by events beyond her control.

Dr Peter Cunich, who has researched Thom's life, said: "She had intended to establish a new girls school in Guangzhou but after the Communist victory in 1949 she was unable to do that. So she stayed in Hong Kong for the rest of her life."

Her Hong Kong story began when she arrived at what is now called the Sacred Heart Canossian College, winning a Lugard Scholarship in 1921 for her final two years of secondary education.



Eleanor Thom

Dr Thom Wai Chun – whose family was originally from southern China – showed sufficient academic promise to be offered a place at The University of Hong Kong in 1923 to study education in the Faculty of Arts.

Cunich said: "She achieved extremely high examination results – one of the best in her class – and after graduating in 1926 went back to the US to do a Masters degree at Columbia University.

"Under the Hong Kong government scholarship scheme she was obliged to teach in Hong Kong and spent the 1930s at a government school."

She spent the 1960s as a lecturer at the Grantham Training College in Kowloon and after retirement dedicated most of her time to church work.

