

Dr Simon IP Sik On

Citation

Dr Simon Ip is every inch a gentleman, in conduct and comportment. As an upstanding, leading-from-the-front member of society, his three loves in life are law, education and equestrianism, in that order.

By training he is a lawyer, and a very successful one at that. At the young age of 38, he was elected President of the Law Society of Hong Kong. Upon completing his legal education in England, he joined the largest legal firm in Hong Kong, Messrs Johnson, Stokes and Master in 1972, where he remained for 32 years, culminating as its Chairman and Senior Partner. His law-related contributions to Hong Kong are varied and widely recognized, having served on the Basic Law Consultative Committee, the Advisory Committee on Legal Education, the Law Reform Commission, the Judicial Service Commission, and on the Standing Committee on Legal Aid. Politically, he represented the Legal Functional Constituency as a Legislative Councillor from 1991 to 1995, and chaired the Bills Committee which passed the legislation for the setting up of Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal.

But next to law, education is dearest to his heart. He hails from a family of distinguished educators, including among them the first principal of Grantham College. His legal background notwithstanding, Dr Ip was of the view that legal education would somehow take care of itself, with its built-in professional oversight and a ready-made structure; it was the quality of general education that most concerned him.

It is a surprise to no one that he has devoted much of his time to educational causes throughout his life. He was a founding Council Member of this University for 10 years. Sitting on its Standing Committee, the Finance Committee and the Conditions of Service Committee, he performed yeoman's service in setting the new University on the right path. Dr Ip remains our Honorary Court Member to this day, continuing to offer us valued advice and guidance.

Dr Ip left his larger footprint on the community by his leadership in three pivotal undertakings. First, he served with distinction as the Founding Council Chairman of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, a post which he held for 10 years, helping it to mature into a degree-granting institution. He firmly believed that ultimately, it is the quality of our teachers that will determine the quality of local education. Secondly, as President of the Hong Kong Equestrian Federation, he enabled the brilliant staging of the equestrian events of the 2008 Olympics that put Hong Kong on the world map of equestrian sport.

His third game-changing act of public service may have positive consequences far beyond Hong Kong's boundaries. Early in 2009, he helped to inaugurate the LLM Program for Mainland serving judges at the City University of Hong Kong that bridges the chasm of judicial understanding between practitioners of two different legal systems. He fed the program his ideas and found the money for its launch. No one can predict what

enormous impact it may have on the development of China's legal system. Dr Ip was indeed the right man, in the right place, at the right time. He might modestly describe his unique contribution as being no more than a series of happy coincidences. But there is nothing coincidental about his devotion to educational causes that may hold profound promise for our future. In helping to give birth to the LLM program for Mainland judicial personnel, two of his abiding loves intersect: law and education coming to meet on a daringly innovative platform. In doing so, he summits a mountain that others might find virtually unclimbable.

Dr Ip is a man of faith who finds spiritual comfort in St Francis of Assisi's Serenity Prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." When Dr Ip opens the door to his office, an oasis of tranquility smack in the middle of Hong Kong's noisy business district, one imagines that what he prays for is already there.

Mr Chancellor, on behalf of the Council of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, I have the high honor of presenting to you Dr Simon Ip Sik On, CBE, JP, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Stewards of the Hong Kong Jockey Club, for the award of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*.