



**Kowloon True Light School**  
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**70<sup>th</sup>**

*Women as role models:  
Stories of successful female leaders in Hong Kong*

**KTL**

A Kowloon True Light School Production



"Meet to Write" Project  
coordinated by the English Department



## ❧ Congratulations on the publication of ❧ “Meet to Write”

**Ms Lee Yi Ying**  
*Principal, Kowloon True Light School*



“Meet to Write” is a programme of the English Department of Kowloon True Light School. Funded by Quality Education Fund (QEF), the project was aimed at providing students an opportunity to meet successful female role models, interview them, and write articles of oral history stylistically. Before meeting the role model interviewees, the students attended workshops delivered by renowned journalist Dr Oliver Chou, conducted extensive research on the interviewees, designed questions meticulously in order to collect first-hand information.

After months of preparation and interviews, students committed themselves to writing the articles. The efforts they made were tremendous. A lot of refining work took place for they had the ambition and determination to compose articles of the best quality. Of course, the challenging part came when they had to write them journalistically. Their effort paid off.

What motivated them to work with such? For one thing, the role models they met had been truly inspiring. The stories they told, the anecdotes they recounted were all compelling and insightful. Every one of the interviewees gave them some precious life lessons that these students simply found it their obligation to put them in print so that their schoolmates and any other readers can also be enlightened the same way they were. For another, KTL girls strive for excellence. This is how KTL nurtures students. Whenever there is a task, once they are committed, they will spare no effort to achieve as much as they can. These girls' hard work epitomizes the virtue of assiduity of all KTL students.

Of course, the thing that brings all these together is our True Light heritage. Of the 10 interviewees, 7 are KTL alumnae, whose colossal achievements and contributions to Hong Kong, to China, and even to the whole world make us feel proud and respectful. This publication is a record of all these successful female role models, and this also marks the beginning of this year's celebration of KTL's 70th anniversary. There are more to come to celebrate such a momentous event and I am certain, “Meet to Write” is a wonderful start.

Special thanks to all the interviewees, Dr Chou, teachers of the “Meet to Write” project and all student journalists. But for any of you, this could not have happened. On behalf of Kowloon True Light School, I sincerely present to you the very first 70th Anniversary publication: Meet to Write.

## ❧ Meet to write on and ❧ by female role models

**Dr Chou Oliver**  
*Programme Director, HKUSPACE*



In an era where communication is defined by electronic devices rather than human interaction, an oral history interview sounds like an anachronism. It seems even more old-fashioned to turn an hour of conversation into a 1500-word essay. Why did we spend so much time on this exercise when we could have just filmed the conversation and put it online?

Written language is a major component of human civilisation, East and West. From Shakespeare's plays to Tang poems, literary masterpieces are symbols of national greatness. To carry on that great legacy, we must “meet to write”.



That was the thought I had in mind when Mrs Hon, principal of KTLS, invited me to lead a writing workshop for Form 3-Form 4 students, based on oral history interviews with celebrated alumnae and role models. But I took up the task with a modest objective: to share the joy and the discipline of writing.

Meetings on Friday afternoons were as challenging to the young writers as to their older counterpart, who usually dashed from his Causeway Bay newsroom to Kowloon Tong, skipping lunch on the way. There were only eight sessions to cover everything from basic interviewing techniques to data processing and essay structure. It was at the end of the week and many came in from other activities to attend two hours of intensive training. But all I remember were those eyes, eager to learn. And that I think is the best way to explain how this publication came to be in your hands in just 10 months.

What you read in these pages is more than the stories of 10 female role models. It is the toil and labour of five exemplary teams braving a daunting task that they would not have imagined doing before. From preparing interview questions, to doing the actual interviews, transcribing the conversations, and writing the many drafts, the 10 profiles are testimony to the success of the interviewers as much as the interviewees. I was lucky enough to be at three interview sessions (Helena Wong, Nancy Loo, Christine Ip) to witness the young professionals in action at their best. They, along with the other teams, have every reason to be proud of themselves, having exceeded all expectations.

May this volume bear witness to discipline, attitude and teamwork — essential ingredients for success and female role models, past, present and future.

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\*KTL Alumna

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## ❧ Out of the comfort zone and ❧ towards success

**Interviewee:** Dr Chan Mei Ling Anges

**Interviewers:** Chloe Chan, Esther Wong, Tisha Lee, Sarah Lui, Zoe Tse

Dr Chan Mei Ling is a pop singer, a professor, an essayist, a novelist and a mother of three sons, all Stanford students. At this point of her life, she simply has it all. However, when she was small, she always thought of the negative side of herself, comparing herself unfavorably with her sisters. In order to make a difference, she chose to exit her comfort zone and summoned up the courage to join volunteer activities. Eventually, Dr Chan found out that she was lucky and special and started to become more brave and selfless in order to achieve success.



The volunteer experience changed Dr Chan. In her words: “I used to be a very shy girl and I did not have much self-confidence.” However, when she went on her first mission, she was moved because she saw children without legs, arms and some of them could not even move. Despite such physical challenges, the children were happy and tried to live their life with vigor. Dr. Chan said that she was very ashamed of herself since she always felt sorry for herself just because she thought she was not as pretty as her eldest sister, and not as smart as her second sister. After the volunteering activities, she understood that she was a lucky person and there was so much that she had not noticed. Without physical disability and with family support, she was shocked to see children suffer hunger and lay their hands on rubbish for food, but this was the reality.

Volunteer work, Chan said, woke her up to the many things she could do for others. She recalled that her first volunteer work in Ethiopia, a remote and undeveloped area, was the result of a donation drive she helped organise as part of the Japanese TV program “The 24 Hours Television”. “I had to go there myself, otherwise it would only be like a show and I would have no evidence for my appeal,” she recalled.



Many people told her that the trip would be dangerous, that there might be a civil war and different kinds of illnesses, and that she might die. But she was so sure and said to them: “I will take the responsibility. If I die, it will be my own fault, and no one will be sued.”

Ugly reality was much closer to home when Chan was diagnosed with breast cancer. Contrary to the general reaction of fear and worry, her immediate expression was “No, I can’t die! I just can’t die right now!” Sickness and danger were nothing new to her as she had seen it in Africa. As a matter of fact, she always imagined perhaps she might die there. So for her, dying was not such a big deal. Her biggest concern was her three sons, the youngest one being only 11 years old when cancer hit her. She realised no one could help except God, to whom she prayed and asked for five years so that her youngest son would finish junior high school. God has so far given her 10 years. She is grateful and feels lucky.

Prayers aside, Chan went through hormone treatment for five years. The treatment came with many side effects, such as painful joints and rashes that kept her awake. But the most difficult thing was the swollen face. “You don’t know when it will show. When it does, you feel like the water is gathering in your face like worms crawling on it. When you look in the mirror, there’s no eye, no nose, it’s like a big chunk of meat. It’s very difficult for me and I got very depressed,” she recalled.



It was a tough period but she knew she had to get through it. In fact, she bought five bracelets to encourage herself to keep going. She could take one off after a year's treatment. So at the end of the fifth year, she and her family went to a beach, and she said "Okay! Now I've finished my treatment and let me take it off and we throw it away!"



Not being a "tiger mom", Chan tried to train her sons early on so that they know how to make good choices. "Life is a series of choices and those who make wise choices have a life that is meaningful and happy. Those who make foolish choices, their lives will be difficult and maybe sometimes meaningless and have many sufferings too." Making choices aside, she also taught her young sons to take the responsibility that came with their choices. "When making a choice, you have to prepare a lot of materials and work on it such as research, examination of the reality, asking who you are and the impact on the future." As a result, they could see what was best for them. When they were in junior high school, she could leave them on their own as they were capable of making their own choices. But then she felt very anxious as they were far from her and also there were all kinds of influences from friends. "One of the main goals of life is to let go and you have to believe in your child." She had to try her best to strike a balance between freedom for and protection of her boys.

Without a daughter, however, Chan felt incomplete. She always wondered what it would be like if she had a daughter. For her, taking care of girls was easier and they grew up returning their love to their mothers. "Life is not perfect and that's why we learn," she said. But she remained positive by hoping for a daughter-in-law so that they could go shopping together and share clothes. Nevertheless she is quite happy with her sons as they are very nice, kind and they love her a lot. She was thankful.

On female role models, Chan said bravery and selflessness were the top qualities. "Be fearless to stand up for people who are weaker than you. Don't just pursue success, but spread happiness to others," she said. As fear and selfishness are always the barriers in life, she encouraged us to step out the comfort zone and summon the courage to achieve success.

Being a career woman, she disagreed with the Chinese traditional beliefs that women should stay home and take care of the children instead of working. "It is possible and fair to let women have their own career and have the same opportunities as men," she said. She also pointed out Hong Kong is a relatively liberal society, where women are free to pursue their own career. However, in other cultures, many women still suffer very much. Therefore, we should make good use of this advantage.





## *The rough and the smooth of policing*

**Interviewee:** Ms Cheng Lai Ki

**Interviewers:** Yoyo Chan, Charmaine Lau, Amy Pun, Amy Ho

Superintendent Cheng Lai Ki, an alumna of True Light Secondary School, was born into a police family. Her father and brother are in the police force. Therefore, she dreamed of being a police officer for a long time. But she went through many difficulties in order to reach her dream. Now, aside from being in the police force, she has a happy family too, and is the mother of a boy.



“Kowloon True Light School was chosen by my father, not me. He thought it was more traditional and pure,” Cheng told the Junior Reporters.

Her father’s expectation turned out to be true as Cheng grew to be a righteous woman. This is also where she found lasting friendships.

“I think friendship is very important to us. When I was young, we encountered many difficulties and problems in our family or in our studies. Often times we didn’t know how to handle it. But we supported each other as we spent a lot of time at school where we felt relaxed and joyful. Even until now, we keep in touch and have reunions and birthday parties,” she said.

She recalled many unforgettable memories at True Light. “There were so many happy moments in our school lives and they were a lot of fun. I think it was all about friendship between each other. There was so much laughter every day and it was memorable,” she said.

“There were a lot of inspiring teachers too,” she added. Teachers at True Light were very strict and set a very high standard. “At that time we thought they were too harsh on us. But now when we look back, we realise we learned a lot from that kind of environment. While they had high expectations on us, we too set a high standard for ourselves, and that is very useful for our career and future. They make us grow in a positive way. I am truly thankful for what they taught us. It is not only about the academic perspective but about the attitude I have learnt from them. Upholding a positive attitude is very important.”

Having acquired a positive attitude at True Light, Cheng focused on pursuing her dream. “Being a police officer was my dream,” she said more than once in the interview. Coming from a police family, she knew all about a police officer’s life: challenging, interesting and exciting. She did not hesitate to become a police officer after graduating from True Light.

“Once I have a dream, I bravely pursue it,” she said. She found her dream, her goal in life, very early on. Her academic results were good and she was offered a degree course in physiotherapy at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. But that did not change her mind about joining the police force.

If joining the police force was a dream come true, becoming a successful superintendent was far more arduous. “When I joined the force, I started at the lowest level, but I didn’t mind because I love my work.” From a police constable, Cheng made her way up gradually to inspector, senior inspector, chief inspector and finally superintendent. As a constable, she had six months of tough training. It was physically demanding, with many fitness exercises, such as foot drills on the parade ground. She also had law examinations, practical exercises and firearms training.



Her time at the police college was tough but memorable. “For me, the most difficult part was the physical training. But it was more about determination.” Despite her average fitness, she tried her best to complete all the exercises, from long runs, to sprints, push-ups and sit-ups, to meet the official standard. In the end she passed the examinations and graduated. “Looking back, it didn’t seem that difficult at all. That’s because I overcame it.” She described in two words her feelings at the graduation ceremony: “very proud”. The graduation parade was very grand. “When you wear the uniform, you realise that after this parade, you will leave the college and become a real police officer.”



But the real world was the real deal. “People will not tolerate anything from you. They blame you when you have done something wrong.” It was challenging for her at first. “I think we have to mentally and physically prepare to face that kind of challenge every day. Nowadays, there are many political events including public disorder and mass gatherings in public. They can be radical and violent. We need to manage and engage them and to ensure that the law and order of the society prevails. At the same time, we have to respect their rights such as freedom of expression. It is always difficult to strike a balance. Therefore, we have to use both hard and soft approaches. Striking a balance can be very challenging but we can learn from experience.”

On the “hard and soft approaches”, Cheng did not shy away from the fact that female officers are good at soft approaches in getting the job done. “Male officers apply hard approaches, but female officers have their inborn talent and they will be more considerate. They can be more sympathetic, for example, when handling child abuse or some domestic violence cases. As female officers, we can always use the soft approach to help the victims. But I am not saying male officers aren’t good! Just that you will find female officers can do it better. That’s

why I think in recent years, the percentage of female officers has increased a lot, to at least 25 percent of the whole force. At the management level, we have even more female officers, over 30 percent. I think we are quite fortunate that the force’s management is willing to accept more female officers at the managerial level. At least they appreciate and recognise female officers. We can be very strong!”

Cheng admitted considering to the heavy workload, well-planned time management was a must. On the day of the interview, the Legislative Council by-election took place and many political groups declared they would make some trouble. Her team had to go through the following in advance: “We have to engage them, but how? Just in case they have done something wrong, should we arrest them? But do we have sufficient manpower? Are we well prepared to deal with them? If we have a lot of arrests, we have to process them one by one and work overnight. The whole thinking process is something we have to do every day.”

But as a superintendent, Cheng’s main duty is crime prevention and maintaining training standards at the police college. “We have to prioritise our work. We have to deploy officers, to minimise resources, because we cannot waste any resources. We are using public funding so we don’t want to waste anything,” she said.

In response to negative comment towards police force on the internet recently, she said: “We are quite open. We all enjoy freedom of speech, and we are willing to listen, and to accept their criticism. We always seek to improve.”





On female role models, Cheng remarked: “I don’t have any female role models because I’m not gender-specific. One’s talent and personality are more significant than gender. I admire Steve Jobs and Jack Ma for their innovation. They made our world better, which is very important. Although they make money on the business side, our life is much better because of their work, and I want to learn from them.”

Innovation, leadership and time management are the qualities she thinks are important for a female role model. But things get complicated when a person, like Cheng, takes on more than one role. “If you are too committed to your work, you would lose your family. But if you are too committed to your family, you would have no time to handle your job. So time management is really important, particularly for women.”

At the end of the interview, Cheng encouraged us by reiterating her dream theory. “Everyone has their dreams. Sometimes you think they are unreachable and therefore do nothing. But you should not give up. If you really want to do something, then go for it. You can always try! In fact, there’s always someone supporting you, such as your teachers. No one can be exempted from failure. And if you keep trying, you will have your success one day,” she said.



## Seeing a way to a better future

**Interviewee:** *Dr Cheung Yim Lui Carol*

**Interviewers:** *Christy Tong, Katharine Wong, Scarlett So, Zita Poon, Zoe Tse*

If “eyes are the window to the soul”, then an ophthalmologist must be our greatest guardian, making sure the window is clean for our soul to connect with the world. However great and wonderful the job is, Dr Carol Cheung Yim-Lui, an ophthalmologist at the Hong Kong Eye Hospital, remains humble. With much successful and remarkable research in the medical field, the most well-known being a new technique to check cognitive disorders through screening retinal images, Cheung, a Kowloon True Light alumna, is a female role model for us.

“I don’t think I am successful as I am still at the early stage of my career. But I am really grateful to all my teachers and friends at True Light as well as my mentors in Singapore and in Hong Kong. They all cultivated me, making me what I am now,” Cheung told the “Meet to Write” team.

Among all the things about her alma mater, Cheung thinks the Christian faith as the most important at Kowloon True Light. As a Christian, she believes in helping people and making a contribution to society. The spiritual environment at True Light inspired her to become a better person in her life. In her words: “During my time at True Light, I had the opportunity to know God and believe in Jesus Christ. My religion is very important in my life as Jesus Christ has guided me to the right path by his words.”





Other things Cheung remembered fondly of her secondary school included good academic records, good manners, good teachers and good resources, “as well as the refined and pure school reputation, and obedient and honest students”.

During her seven years at True Light before graduating in 1997, Cheung was Captain of Green House. When asked if the appointment was based on her academic achievements or good relationships with others, she replied: “I think the teachers thought I had leadership and good communication skills to lead the house.” The experience

turned out to have a lasting impact on the future doctor: “When you have been a house captain, you are required to communicate well and work with other people as a team. We have to work as a team everywhere, so it was really conducive to my career to learn how to be a leader.”

Cheung spoke at length and in plain language about her medical practice. As a faculty member at CUHK medical school, which she joined after obtaining her PhD, her main research is the “imaging of the eye”, based on the concept that the eyes are the “window” to the human circulation and nervous systems.

“I have conducted different research studies to use eye-imaging technologies to evaluate Alzheimer’s disease and stroke. I hope that the findings of my research will deepen our understanding of major eye diseases and brain diseases, leading to the development of a more targeted and effective screening strategy using state-of-the-art ocular imaging technology for the prevention of blindness and early detection of brain diseases, which has immense potential benefits for both science and society,” she said.



To further her research, Cheung went to Singapore to work at the Singapore Eye Research Institute as a research scientist for six and a half years. “Life is not easy all the time, particularly in academia. But I found that I grew more when I faced challenges. I really learned a lot in my research field from my mentors and my colleagues during my stay.”

It was also in Singapore at a church that Cheung met her husband. They got married in 2013. She returned to Hong Kong three years ago after her husband found a new job in her home city. Back in town, Cheung wanted to help people. “For example, there are still some eye diseases that cannot be cured or better treated. My previous supervisor always had different ideas to help people through conduct different studies. Because the human eye is really a special organ, we can now use imaging technology to image the retinal vessel. We cannot directly see the vessel in other organs’, but we can by using concepts. It is because the organs in our body are connected to one another which is called the circulation system. Using our eyes to study the suspending disease inspired me a lot.”

On the issue of gender equality in Hong Kong nowadays, Cheung said: “I think it is quite fair and equal. People will only assess you on your ability, so it’s not because you are male or female. I don’t find that it is difficult nowadays. But I understand that maybe people trusted men more before. Physically, I found there’s a difference. My male colleagues in this department can work longer, so I think maybe being female there is a limitation physically. But then I found that maybe women have better communication skills than men. That’s what I observe.”

The male-female balance seems to be changing, as Cheung noticed at her own office. “At the Hong Kong Eye Hospital, for example, actually I think there are already more female doctors than male doctors. And in medical school, actually I think there are more female students than male. So things are changing. For girls, I think they are more likely to have higher marks than boys. Maybe girls are more mature when they prepare for public exams,” she added.

Compared to the past, Cheung observed being a female role model is easier at present. “I think it is definitely easier. Because I think in Hong Kong, gender is not an issue. Like our Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, is a female. So I don’t think there is a gender issue here at all.”



Regardless of her achievements, Cheung felt there were still things she needed to reach for. “There are a lot of things I would like to do in the rest of my life. I am not saying I want to achieve one thing in particular but I want to continue to use my knowledge and ability to contribute to the society and help the patients,” she said.

Cheung concluded the interview with a note of recommendation for a medical career for True Light students. “I think that people in the world are ageing. When you get old, you get ill easily. We need more bright people like you guys to join the medical field because I think we can’t ignore diseases ... because they are all closely related to us.”



## ❧ Passion, faith and the strength ❧ to go forward

*Interviewee: Mrs Ip Christine, Managing Director, United Overseas Bank Limited*

*Interviewers: Candy Chong, Tiffany Yim, Anna Pang, Yammi Lam, Jessie Cheung*

Being a remarkable female role model, Mrs Christine Ip shared the stories of her success behind her career with the oral history team late one afternoon. From various management positions in retail and corporate banking to Greater China CEO at United Overseas Bank, Mrs Ip has always thought of ways to help Hong Kong students step out of their comfort zone and explore learning opportunities in the world.



Mrs Ip, a mother of two, had an early link to True Light. “I only spent one year at True Light’s Tai Hang Road campus. It was like a nursery class, and there was only year one kindergarten. From there I moved to St Stephen’s Girls’ College, where I studied from kindergarten all the way up to Form Seven.”

“My parents made the decision on schools. True Light Girls School was very famous at that time. The students at True Light were known to be gentler. My mother worked in the Pokfulam area so St Stephen’s Girls’ College was closer to my mum’s workplace,” she recalled.



Attending an all-girls school, she added, was conducive to her being more independent, as well as making students stronger. “Especially in our generation, Chinese tend to think that girls are inferior to boys in science, maths and sport. But at a girls’ school, we had an equal opportunity to unleash our potential and serve as a leader. When I was a young kid, I represented the school in a lot of competitions and performances. We needed to do everything by ourselves without the help of boys. Studying at a girls’ school really gave me a lot of leadership opportunities, and that helped shape who I am today,” she said.

When Mrs Ip recalled her days at school, it was her principal who inspired her most. “She was a graduate from Cambridge University, and she was very open-minded and she really held the school together. There was one thing I really treasured. Back in the day at St Stephen’s, our school already advocated democracy. In the 1950s, St Stephen’s Girls became the first school to have a parent-teacher association. And we selected our prefects or leaders by voting. The candidates needed to present their own statements to appeal to the whole school and talk about what they advocated, their passion and mission and what they stood for to get people to vote for them. The students who got the most votes would have their names put on a public board and be elected as prefects. These positions were not only given to students who were loved by the teachers or who were academically very strong, but they were given to students who had leadership and were passionate about serving the school. A totally different yet equally memorable thing was our girls’ ‘rebellious’ movement. When I was in the sixth form, we felt the teacher was not good enough, so we articulated the whole situation to Ms Barker, the Principal, and invited her to observe the class, and she did. After that she agreed that our judgment was right. She even asked us to choose an economics teacher to teach us, we all voted for our Form Five teacher. How could you possibly have such an open-minded school principal? It was in the late 70s or early 80s, so it was really rare. What I learned from her was to be confident, stay independent, have an open mind, listen to criticism and always try to improve and excel. I think that is really important.”

After almost four decades, the school motto remained fresh for Mrs Ip as a source of inspiration. “Our school motto, which I’m always truly passionate and tell people about, is ‘in faith go forward’. The word faith in Chinese also means confidence. I



always say that with any success, 70 percent comes from your skills, but the other 30 percent is to do with your self-confidence. Also when I was converted Christianity, I came to know that I was not perfect ... so I learned to let God lead my life. I can see how my school principal as a missionary loved the school, loved Hong Kong, and that really inspired me as a banker and made me who I am today. I really wanted to give back to society and the community.”

Mrs Ip also recalled that when she was a secondary school student, a friend became seriously ill, going blind suddenly for two months. She was worried about her friend but she was very optimistic. Her friend came from a very poor family so if she missed her classes, she would surely have no opportunity to go to university. Explaining why she remained confident, Ip’s friend said that if God had decided to not let her get into the college, or if she eventually lost all of her eyesight, there must be a reason. To that Ip replied, “Then you will no longer play sport, which you are so good at, and lose all your popularity.” But her friend told her that she would accept any adversity, and she would move on. Inspired, Ip asked her friend what drove her and made her so strong. Her friend said it was because of God. Influenced by her friend, Ip went to church, took religion classes and did research. Then she found out that God truly exists.

On her successful career life, Mrs Ip recalled receiving an international banking award, which gained her a lot of fame. That was during the financial crisis in 2008 and, due to the unfavorable market environment, she came under investigation. At that point she felt frustrated and did not understand why she



would have to undergo such an investigation after having worked so hard. After looking into her 15 years in the industry, the investigators concluded that she was very clean. She received a lot of support from her staff, former bosses and clients. This experience told her that she had been too ambitious. She also learned that she should never launch a product before understanding it thoroughly. She advised, “Don’t be too greedy and hungry. Just make sure the company grows steadily. It is necessary to step back from time to time and think about the downside, and we need to be more prudent as we move on.”

Mrs Ip cautioned, “You need to be very careful in your career and don’t do anything improper. As a CEO in Hong Kong, I have to be prepared as people will check all my previous banking record. A minor mistake can hugely affect your life.”

When it comes to being a female role model, Mrs Ip said that “in the past, in a male-dominated society, people would ask you to keep quiet because you were a woman. It happened. But now, I believe it’s easier for female to become a role model ... because the world now is really advocating diversity and equality.”

Mrs Ip listed some of the qualities a role model should have. “First, discipline, you need to be very disciplined. That is very important,” she emphasised. “Second, stay focused. We have to make sure of the quality of the product, and first focus on that instead of doing too many things at once. And third, never give up.” She also admitted that no matter how successful you have been, somehow you would face failure. Even in hopeless situations, we must not give up. “Don’t regret, but reflect,” she said as she looked into the eyes of the Meet to Write members, with a smile.

Lastly, she elaborated on the key to success: don’t just work for one person, but for anyone who needs help. Then she spelled out the definition of success, which is a bit different from most: “To me, success is to be a person with significance, and a person who is a blessing to others and to serve, to help others grow.”





## ❀ Making the most of a ❀ sporting chance

**Interviewee:** Ms Leung Tsz Yan

**Interviewers:** Chan Nga In, Lau Cheuk Ying, Pun Yuk Ting, Ho Man Yi



2016 was a special year for the Hong Kong Women's Softball Team. At the Asian Cup that year, the team was the fifth runner-up, its highest ranking in its history, captained by Leung Tsz Yan, an alumna of Kowloon True Light School. A primary school teacher now, she remembers her alma mater well, starting with her own choice to study at True Light, where her sports career was inspired.



“It’s all about sports” was how Leung summarised her entire secondary school life. As she recalled, one of the first things she did after starting at True Light was to look for field activities as extra-curricular activities, and there were many different kinds to choose from. At first, she was invited by Ms Lo, one of the PE teachers, to join the athletics team. There was no softball team at the time and the way she got into it was accidental. “Ms Wong told us they stopped organising the team long time ago,” she recalled. “But suddenly, the softball team was set up again and I didn’t know why. At that time, I didn’t know what it was. But when we as members of the athletics team saw there was an opportunity to play together, we just joined it. Besides, I was not really busy after school so I just signed up.” Before long she joined various sports teams and activities, having a really fulfilling school life.

“Never forget your original goal” is Leung’s motto. Although she has suffered from injuries, she has never given up playing sport and participating in the team. “Actually I’ve got hit by softball many times. One time I broke my nose and it bled for a long time and an ambulance was called in. A thought dawned on me at that moment: am I dead? Then I tried to open my eyes and realised that I was still alive. Luckily there was a doctor in our team to look after me and tell me not to be afraid,” she recalled. That was only one of the many incidents she has encountered. The reason why she did not give up sport was that she loved it. She always remembered her original goal: pursuing her interest in sport.

How did she balance sport and study? Playing softball, she said, brought her power for both work and study. Therefore she continued to play softball, even injuries did not prevent her from taking part in it. Although she had sacrificed many things because of sport, such as time spent with family and friends, she did not regret it. She felt the sacrifices were worthwhile as she was doing something she loved.



Among the many sports she has played, Leung chose softball as her lifetime sport. Softball is a very demanding sport which requires a lot of running and jumping. For her, softball is challenging and fun too. However, as the captain of the Hong Kong Women's Softball Team, she has noticed there are fewer and fewer people joining softball teams in Hong Kong. The reason for that, she said, was its harsh training.



Softball is a sport that requires a lot of physical movement and not many can take such a harsh and demanding training. As a softball player for years, Leung admitted the game itself was tough too. The softball field is outdoors and players have to endure sunlight and high temperatures during the training and the game. Players need time to adapt to these training conditions, especially women as they care about their appearance. Playing outdoors and being exposed under the sun for a long period of time is definitely tough for women. However, that is not the concern for Leung and her teammates. They treat every training seriously and put in effort in each session because they love softball. Softball is a team sport that requires teamwork and team spirit. Leung found much joy in getting together with a group of people who have a consuming passion for softball. "When there are people doing the same thing which you like, you will not feel drained," she said.

Leung believes female softball players are stronger than male players. "Technically, boys are surely better than us, even when they just throw a ball, they are better. But that doesn't mean we lose out in every aspect to boys," Leung said. Her coach is also a member of the men's softball team and members of the team come to join their training sometimes. However, some of the male players were so scared of the women's team's conditioning training that they do not show up again. "Most people think that men are in better physical condition than women", but that is a stereotype. "My experience shows that both male and female can perform equally well. If a girl agrees to do it, she won't be worse than boys," Leung said.

"Sport is more than an exercise. It has changed my life," Leung said. As she looked back at her sporting career, she felt her life became targeted and her time management was better after taking up sport. All in all, her life has become more fulfilling as she developed her sports career. During her university years, she arranged a lot of activities every day in order to live her day in full. "When you keep setting goals for yourself, you will get to know more about yourself," she said.

Apart from sport, Leung also dreamed of being a teacher. She followed her heart and tried her best to make her dream come true. Everything has gone smoothly as she set goals for herself and tried her best to meet the goals. Setting goals, she said, was the main factor that got her to become a successful softball player in Hong Kong. As she repeated her motto - "Never forget your original goal" - she encouraged those who are interested in sport to keep in mind why they started, and that they should be grateful to those who gave them opportunities.

Lastly, Leung reminded all that they should have a thankful heart all the time so that they can keep going and bring out what they have learnt for a better future.





## ❧ Finding the music within ❧

**Interviewee:** Ms Loo Nancy

**Interviewers:** Kamille Chu, Vicky Huen, Valerie Cheung, Carrie Kwok

**Writers:** Christy Tong, Katharine Wong, Scarlett So, Zita Poon, Zoe Tse

A concert pianist, a radio host, a recipient of a Ten Outstanding Young Persons Award and a prison music teacher — they are all of different missions. Ms Nancy Loo does it all.

Her numerous accomplishments did not come naturally, but through hard work. All the top awards she won at a school festival, for example, were the result of overcoming stage fright. “Instead of getting better, it got even worse, especially in the face of a big competition. I got pretty scared. I didn’t overcome it. But the thing is, you have to accept the fact that if you can’t rid it, you have to face it and to learn with it.” she said.

While agreeing that every student had to learn at least one musical instrument, Loo thought that it should not be just about mastering skills but it should also be about the student’s genuine interest. “I think every student must find their own interest to pursue, not only in music. Different things suit different people. When I was young, I really loved ballet. However, my father didn’t allow me to dance because while I was doing so well in the piano, he said I shouldn’t waste my energy on other things. I once tried to learn the guitar. But I failed because I had no time to practise. My teacher was a former APA student. After a few lessons, he said, ‘Miss, I’ve told you nearly eight times but you still got the key wrong.’ However, I still enjoy the guitar, I wanted to share and teach



the boys in prison to play it. There I coach a band, which consists of guitars and keyboard. I was in charge of the keyboard. Aside from the guitar, I also tried to learn the guzheng and criminology.”

Having the right attitude to learning is more important than the learning itself. “My goal is just to do what I can and do the best, and I don’t have any specific goal now, just do whatever I can. I don’t know how many years or days of life I have left, so I try my best every day. Someone once said: ‘Don’t wait for the perfect moment and make each moment perfect.’ I just do whatever I can, no matter it is meaningful or not. Meaning is decided by people,” she said.

Teachers, too, with the right attitude could be equally inspiring. Loo recalled that one of her piano students was a teacher in a band-5 school, one that offered no music classes for its students. So the teacher managed to teach his students individually during lunchtime. Later, the students had a proper music room with more than 20 keyboards. But the teacher still uses the lunch hour to teach students. They told Ms Loo they felt the teacher’s passion. In the end, all parties were much inspired.

As a mother, Loo, who turns 70 this year, considered her children to be the most important people in her life: “I must say that my children are the apple of my eye. They mean everything to me.” Besides that, she added that God had affected her much. “I am available for the people I care for and care about me. Whenever I have doubts, or things to deal with, I always go back to Him.”

However, life is not always a smooth road. It contains lots of ups and downs. But Loo turned them into something positive.

“[Once] I was not happy with the concert hall set-up, which was very serious and people couldn’t talk. So I thought, ‘What if I have a radio programme to talk about music with people?’ It’s also very funny when I went to RTHK, I didn’t know the head of music there but I knew somebody that knew him. So I went there and said, ‘Can I have a programme?’”





As a radio host, she became connected to prison in an unexpected way that at the end got her to be a music coach for inmates.

“That was because one of my colleagues in RTHK was sent to prison. Before that I never knew anybody who was in prison. I am sure for you, too, prison is so far away from you that it’s not part of your life. But since my colleague went to prison, I began to look at the whole thing in a very different perspective. I came to realise that everyone in prison has many roles. Like my radio friend, he was my colleague, and he’s also a husband, a father, a son, a friend, a classmate and maybe a friend in other groups. So everyone has their own story and their own strengths. When he was in trouble for having committed fraud, I was trying to get people to write letters of mitigation. It really wasn’t as easy as I thought. To me, even though he did something wrong, I would like to pray for him. But not so for some of my friends who refused to help, and I felt very bad,” she said.

Her identity as a “Top Ten Young Person” also played a role in connecting her to prison work. “I went to a dinner for the Hong Kong Top Ten Outstanding Young Persons, and I was sitting next to this guy, who turned out to be the leader of the prison fellowship. I asked him, ‘Oh I want to go to help and visit.’ So he arranged it for me,” she added.

Her work at the prison was to share rather than teach music. “Teaching music wasn’t my idea. I did not have this intention at all. Peco Chui, who is a songwriter and a singer, is my student from APA. He was quite famous and he has a very positive image, so the prison invited him to jam with the band. He was very scared and asked me to go with him. So I did, and I kept doing it for the next 15 years,” she said.

On music as a career, Ms Loo said she was not sure if music would bring a bright future such as fame and success. A professional musician, she added, should not make these the top consideration. She admitted it was a little difficult for musicians to get a stable job because there was a lack of musical institutions in Hong Kong. But she was happy that now there are a lot of young and talented musicians bringing music to the community, resulting in greater appreciation for musical art.

As for female role models in Hong Kong, Loo said it was easier to be one than in the past due to a different perspective on women. “People look at females so differently and put more emphasis on equality. In my generation, if a person tells you to do something, you just follow, and there are adverse effects. When I was young, my mother always ordered me to finish the rice in the bowl. The adverse effect is I don’t eat rice now,” she said.

Qualities for a female role model, she said, should include persistence, wisdom and courage. But she thinks she has none of these. But she has some advice for success: “Be of good courage, and of good cheer. Love your life. Give all you have. Do not expect much in return. Be grateful for not only your blessings but also your adversities.”





## Common goals for a common good

*Interviewee : Ms Mak Ngan Ching*

*Interviewers : Candy Chong , Tiffany Yim , Anna Pang , Yammi Lam , Jessie Cheung*

Communication and humility are keys to success in life much more than getting ahead at the starting line, True Light alumna Mak Ngan Ching told the oral history team based on her own experience.

Born and raised in China by her grandmother, Mak moved to Hong Kong with her parents, having missed her kindergarten education. Throughout her school years in Hong Kong, she made friends with teachers and classmates. Studying abroad provided her with fresh opportunities to learn and meet a lot of people. Work at the terminal was a great career for her. After her early retirement, she does lots of voluntary work, in and out of Hong Kong.

Mak had a harsh life in her early life but had always remained positive by keeping in mind children who were less fortunate. "I was lucky that my father and his friends had run a shop together. So we at least had a place and enough rooms to live in, and at one time I even thought I was relatively better off than others," she recalled.

Her better living conditions came after some years of separation from her mum and dad. "My parents left for Hong Kong while I was living with my grandma in mainland China. Such family separation was quite common in those days due to the need to make a living. Hong Kong in those days was not in good shape," she said.





While under the care of her grandmother, Mak missed out kindergarten and started school at Grade One. For that reason, she told the Meet to Write team how much she really treasured the True Light Days even though resources were limited at that time. “The study environment definitely was not that good. But, believe it or not, we enjoyed those years very much because we knew how lucky we were to be able to study and go to school. So, we ... in fact felt that we really were lucky as those days the economy in Hong Kong wasn’t good at all. Many of them did not have a chance to attend school,” she said.

Mak also told the team the days at True Light allowed her to build up close relationships with others. “We really appreciated our friendship, the relationship between us and our teachers were really good. They really cared about us, and a lot of the teachers knew their students by heart. We had a lot of fun together and I would say that school was really one of the best times we had,” she said.

The connection has been maintained until now. “We visit teachers even nowadays. Two of our teachers still attend gatherings our classmates hold each month in San Francisco. We care about each other and I think that is really the difference. Even though we do not meet in person, we still exchange phone calls,” she said.

The lasting friendship, she said, could be a result of a simple life in the past. “Maybe it’s just because in those days material life wasn’t that important to us. It could also be that we did not have much money, so we did not go shopping or to the movies but spent time in school together. And we would do different projects. I think that was really something that brought us together. The teachers, too, were very close to us. So that’s the kind of relationship we’ve maintained,” she said.

It was a totally different world when it came to work. “We needed to sacrifice in order to gain something extra,” Mak explained, referring to her work at a terminal in New Jersey in the United States. For reaching common goals and the good for all parties, Mak once had to make compromises with three labour unions and the government.

“We needed to work together, for the terminal to become better, and to also let them know that you care about them and you don’t abuse their rights,” she added, stressing the importance of communication when working with others.

After Mak came back to Hong Kong, she realized that the experience of her years in the US had changed some of her perspectives. She stated that there were not only a lot of job opportunities in Hong Kong but also a convenient transport network that we should treasure. We are exposed to diverse cultures and therefore have the chance to broaden our vision in Hong Kong. For example, we get to see what is happening in other countries and learn about the different opinions expressed by the people there. That, she said, was very precious because many TV stations in the US broadcast only local news. Hong Kong people have the chance to see different sides of the issues. We should cherish and make good use of it, she said.



Another new experience during her years in the United States was traveling around the country. It was very expensive to go by plane, but there was the economical ground traffic via Greyhound bus. Greyhound buses were very popular in those days probably because of the convenience and low price. Mak encouraged us to join more study tours or to go overseas. She thought it was very important for students nowadays to understand the other side of the world and try a different lifestyle. By joining study tours or going overseas students get to experience a new country with incredible new outlooks, customs, and activities. The benefit includes the opportunity to see new terrain, natural wonders, museums, and landmarks of the host nation. Besides, it grants students the opportunity to completely immerse themselves in a new language, and there is no better way to learn than to dive right in.



Take New Zealand and Iceland as examples. Mak, who has been to both countries, remembered they were beautiful and clean, and highly recommended us to go and enjoy the good scenery there. “These places are very different from Hong Kong; we can relax and flee the noisy city. Iceland is a country I like very much. I don’t mind spending more time there. New Zealand is also another country that I adore. You can tell that both New Zealand and Iceland are very clean and green as well. Although Iceland is ‘white’, they do have a lot of [green trees]. If you have a chance to visit there, you can see that how they really learn to make their country better by protecting the environment and improving their lives. The same can be said of New Zealand,” she said.

On the issue of female role models, Mak believed there were different views on the qualities of a female role model, and the term itself was debatable. “Don’t always dwell on the concept of ‘a female role model’. No, no, it shouldn’t be confined to a specific gender. I think what we really need to be is ‘a good citizen’, a term which is better than a role model. So what we really expect from a good citizen are some qualities such as being considerate, thinking about others, and putting yourself into others’ shoes,” she said.

“The other quality of a good citizen is humility. It is essential because no matter how much we achieve, there are still a lot we don’t know. So, I think it is really important to be humble. If you have that kind of mentality, you can keep on learning beyond formal studies. There are a lot of things to learn, formally and informally. Even for the elderly, who I will become one day, they can visit seniors’ centres to learn challenging things. Exposure to different interests can be a great learning experience for your entire life. From the new knowledge you acquire, you will feel there is new energy in your body. By keeping on improving yourselves, you keep using your brain. The more you use it, the more you activate it. That’s good because you will become a more active person, and you will enjoy more,” she concluded.



## ✿ Educating the next generation ✿

*Interviewee: Ms Ting Yuk Chee Christina*

*Interviewers: Kamille Chu, Vicky Huen, Valerie Cheung, Carrie Kwok*

For more than half a century, Victoria Kindergarten has excelled in providing quality education in Hong Kong. Its growth, from just eight students in 1965 to now a total of eight campuses, is as phenomenal as the city itself. The success is due to its founders, Ms Christina Ting Yuk-chee and her sister Cecilia Lee Ting Yuk-kuen, both alumna of True Light. Madam Ting, who is now supervisor of the Victoria Education Organisation, remembers well her alma mater after decades. Even at very young age, she knew what she wanted and made her own decisions, such as her study at True Light.



“It was my own decision to study at True Light. At that time, I was offered a place in primary six at St Paul Primary School, but I gave it up and chose to start my secondary school life at Hong Kong True Light because I was fond of being a secondary school student,” she told the team.

In Form Three, Ting decided to transfer to True Light in Kowloon to join her younger sister there. “So I studied at both True Light campuses in Hong Kong and Kowloon. As such, I met both Principal Ho and Principal Ma. I think I’m very lucky because both principals were nice to us and they cared about their students. They always asked me why I was so tired. Well it’s because I lived in North Point. I needed to take the bus and the ferry in order to get to Kowloon Tong so I had to get up early in the morning,” she recalled.



But it was the Tai Hang campus of which Ting has many fond memories. “During my time at True Light there was no hall. We had the school assembly while standing and listening to the principal. I’m very lucky that I got to meet Ms Ho Chung Chung. When I was young I liked to play the piano but I didn’t have one at home and my grandmother preferred to be in a quiet environment. So I went to school an hour earlier before classes started in order to practise on the piano there. That’s why I met Principal Ho in the morning very often. Even though she looked very serious all the time, she’s actually quite nice. She always asked me things like ‘Why are you so early?’ ‘Have you had breakfast?’” she said.



“The most memorable moment at True Light in Hong Kong was when we performed the ‘light parade’ in front of Lady Grantham (wife of the then Hong Kong governor). It was an honourable event to show the special tradition of our light parade and also how we practised farming at school. Other enjoyable moments were when we sneaked out of the school at recess to watch the filming of the celebrities at the Haw Par Mansion. I can still remember one of my classmates tore her cheongsam as we hurried back to class through the half-opened school gate,” she said.

School life at True Light, she added, was “well balanced”. “We didn’t just focus on the academic aspect but also the sports aspect. I remember one year I was chosen to play the role of Mary, mother of Jesus, in a school play during Christmas. I was so looking forward to it but one day when I was playing basketball in the playground I accidentally twisted my ankle. I spent a lot of time seeing the doctor and I had to give up my role. But luckily for me, our school started a drama club so I was able to participate in another drama.”

She also recalled how True Light changed her mentality as a new immigrant to Hong Kong. “There’s an old saying that if you want a decent lady as your wife then come to True Light. Being from Shanghai, we used to believe the need to be rough and tough otherwise other students would bully you. But after studying at True Light, I learnt that there was valuable friendship amongst students and treasured the opportunity to study together. We were taught the importance of being humble, sincere and respectful of teachers and the elderly. We learnt about the true meaning of the school’s motto and the gifts from Christ in class as well,” she said.

Unlike her siblings who studied overseas, Ting first worked at a children’s clothing department store and got inspired. “I was delighted to see so many beautiful dresses and clothes for kids, then I thought of being a teacher, which would be fun and suit me well. Kids are really adorable and I love being with them. My father asked me why I didn’t want to study abroad. I told him that I wanted to become a teacher. When I first started teaching, I didn’t receive any formal training. I knew how to play the piano, I just played songs and taught them how to sing. What I had was a caring heart and positive attitude.”

“Though I had no problem passing the written paper of the qualifying teacher assessment test, I failed the oral examination because of my accent in speaking Cantonese. I had no choice but to work harder. I joined the Kiangsu and Chekiang Kindergarten. Later I took formal training at Grantham College of Education and earned the qualification to teach primary students. Although there was a huge difference in salary, \$800 compared to \$210, I preferred to be a kindergarten teacher and worked as one since then,” she said.

The way she founded Victoria Kindergarten was accidental. “One day I was on my way to visit my sister and passed by a place in Causeway Bay that was being renovated into a coffee house. So I asked the workers there about the rent and surprisingly they replied that the place had not been rented out yet. With a large courtyard at the back and a grass front yard, this place was ideal for a kindergarten. Hence, I asked the landlord and became the tenant,” she recalled.



“Setting up a kindergarten in a residential area was not easy. There were a lot of famous and rich residents living in the building. Most residents expressed strong objections and some of them even threatened that they would take both illegal and legal action to take my project down. But I explained to them I had paid the landlord and persuaded them to give me a chance. At that time, I had eight students to start with and I named the school as Victoria Kindergarten in line with the name of the building and the Park,” she added.

Ting devoted her career to education, first as a teacher and then a principal. She enjoyed seeing children grow. She introduced a native English-speaking teacher to the kindergarten in the afternoon class and charged them the same school fee as the morning session. Her school could be the first one to bring in native English-speaking teacher to kindergarten. The school started with just eight students and expanded to 20 with two teachers in the first year. Ting did most of the work, including babysitting, driving the school bus, cleaning, teaching and playing the piano.



“I would like to thank True Light for teaching and inspiring me in English learning. The missionary at True Light taught me a lot about the language. I remember when I was in Form One there was a foreign teacher called Mr Heartly and he always mispronounced my name. My name is pronounced as Ting Yuk Chee but he called me Ding Zhu Yu. Because of that, we set up a class rule that if a teacher pronounced my name wrong, he would buy popsicles for the whole class,” she said.

“We are Chinese, but we cannot just read Chinese only. Both Chinese and English must be studied, maybe this mentality was one of the reasons that I got the three badges from the government.” Ms Ting was awarded with all the three badges (gold, silver and bronze) of the Bauhinia Star plus the Justice of Peace title from the government.

“I am a humble person, but today I choose to let you know about this because I want to encourage you, that the government honours you when you make a contribution. I am very happy that the government has recognised us. I work on not only education, but also welfare. Now, I am retired, and my daughter is in charge of the organisation. But I still visit the elderly home and do voluntary work,” she, Chairman of Eastern District Council through 2011, said.

Being a female role model herself, she said: “I don’t think that I’m successful, but I did what I should do. I think there are a lot of people who are more successful than me. Many people have asked me to write a book, but I won’t. I hope I can be healthier, so that I can see my four generations together and watch them grow up. I wish Hong Kong all the best in the future!”



## Leading the way to justice

**Interviewee: Dr Wong Pik Wan**

**Interviewers: Chloe Chan, Esther Wong, Tisha Lee, Sarah Lui, Zoe Tse**

It was 2015 and the shocking news about lead contamination of tap water went viral overnight. Along with other members of the Democratic Party, Dr Helena Wong Pik Wan, a legislator from the Kowloon East Constituency since 2012 and our school alumna, announced that tests of drinking water at Kai Ching Estate revealed levels of lead exceeding the standard established by the World Health Organisation.



Just a little over two years later, Wong paid a visit to her alma mater and said on the record that True Light contributed a lot to her beliefs and she really misses the school. She was so proud to be a True Light-bearer that she always wanted to tell others that her school was True Light. “True Light is a school that has a favorable reputation and school spirit with a long history,” she said. She urged all True Light students to work hard to protect the “brand name” of True Light.

“Everything about True Light is very precious to me,” said Wong. She said the campus had changed a lot, especially the surroundings and the environment. In her time at the school, there was no Festival Walk, no MTR or train, but only some small stores selling tofu.



Wong entered True Light in 1971 and graduated in 1978. It took her seven years instead of six to complete because she repeated Form One. “It’s quite difficult to finish secondary school in six years, because at that time there were eight classes in Form One, namely Truthfulness (真), Truth (理), Light (光), Faith (信), Hope (望), Love (愛), Benevolence (仁), Righteousness (義). However, there were fewer classes in other forms and there was only one class when you reached Form Six. As a result, those who did not make it to the next level were forced to leave school,” she recalled.

As a result, the atmosphere at school was competitive. However, for her, it was exciting and challenging because none of them knew if they would still be at True Light the next year.

Dr Wong believed that religion and leadership formation were the most important impacts that True Light had on her.

As Dr Wong did not come from a Christian family, the teaching and preaching of True Light were important to her. The religious studies classes, assemblies and Christian fellowship that she experienced at school provided a good chance for her to know God. Although Dr Wong studied at the Holy Trinity Primary School at Kowloon City, her first experience of going to church was the time that True Light guided her to the Hop Yat Church.

She recalled that when she was promoted to Form 2, her Bible teacher was married to a Christian pastor. When he came to pick up his wife after school, Wong and her classmates would have a chat by their car. That eventually got her to start going to the church.

But it was the core values Wong learned at True Light that affected her entire life. One key value that still stands out is to “become salt and light”. “The salt is the seasoning that can enhance the taste of dishes and to prevent food from deteriorating, and the light was that all True Light students should become the light of the world and to eliminate darkness,” she said.



From that, Wong was eager to show the right direction to others, to point out inequality and injustice in society, and to fight for equal rights for people of different backgrounds.

The other thing she learned at True Light was leadership. Dr Wong said True Light really provided lots of opportunities to train students as leaders. Dr Wong was the captain of Sun Fai House and a leader of the Christian fellowship. All the tasks that Dr Wong completed as a captain of a house or a leader of the Christian fellowship trained and prepared her to become a leader in different situations in the future.

Wong's concern about water goes a long way back. She was only five when water shortages occurred in Hong Kong in 1964. Though she has very vague memories of the situation at that time, she always knew that water is precious and important. After she graduated from CUHK, she got involved in the Democratic Party and saw the infrastructure that channels water to Hong Kong from the Dong River. Thus, Dr Wong was able to have a close witness of what was happening there.

"Water is important. However, not only is the provision of sufficient water important, the water quality is of equal significance," she said. When Wong was elected to the Legislative Council in 2012, she was assigned by the Democratic Party to be the spokesperson on food safety. At that time she was not an expert in either food or water safety. Her only science training was at True Light as all her training afterwards had been in the social sciences. With minimal scientific knowledge and methodology, she took water samples from different estates and sent them to the laboratory for tests, paying for them out of her own pocket. The tests revealed that there was excess lead in the tap water at Kai Ching Estate. At the beginning the government denied this, but she didn't give up and insisted that her findings were right. Eventually, she proved she was right.



Her affection for her home city is nothing new. In 1997, some were concerned about the handover, thinking that Hong Kong would become just like any other city in China, and not a few decided to leave. But Wong decided to stay to make sure that the future Hong Kong would still be a good place for us to live in and to enjoy. "I can't find a reason to leave because I love Hong Kong and Hong Kong is my hometown," she said.

The city began a period of political transition in 1984 when the Sino-British joint-Declaration was signed for Hong Kong to return to Chinese sovereignty by 1997. Having been a teacher for two years, she decided to change her job and to work in the Hong Kong Christian Council. "I hope I can bring about some changes in Hong Kong by fighting for a democratic political system, a more reasonable and democratic Basic Law, and also social reform projects. As Hong Kong needed a lot of people to stay and to contribute, I thought I could contribute. The Hong Kong identity made me stay in Hong Kong through the 1997 handover," she said.

When it came to what constituted a female role model, she believed that "everyone has their own strength for us to learn from". Therefore, she didn't have a particular role model but there were many she could learn from, such as her Bible teacher, Ip Miu Ling, and Burmese politician Aung San Suu Kyi. She learned how to be a woman of integrity and how a leader should perform. Besides, everyone should learn from different characters in order to be a better person.

On being a female role model herself, she said it depended on what people were looking for. "She suggested we focus on who we want to be and what we want to contribute to society because "there is no particular model for everyone to copy".





## *Furnishing life with a broadened mind*

**Interviewee: Ms Wong Ying Ying Zoe**

**Interviewers: Kamille Chu, Vicky Huen, Valerie Cheung, Carrie Kwok**

Zoe Wong Ying Ying is one of the furniture industry's top entrepreneurs – an unlikely sector for a woman, especially in the Greater China region's traditionally male-dominated culture.

Wong, Executive Director of Man Wah Holdings Limited – a business that her father founded in 1992 – is in charge of research, development, production, sales and related services of sofas, mattresses and furniture accessories. The group, launched in China in 2000, had – as of 31 March 2010 – 509 franchised outlets marketing the products produced by the brands “CHEERS” and “Enlanda” in more than 33 of the nation's cities.



Wong said she was grateful for the time she spent as a pupil at True Light, which helped to broaden her horizons in life. “One of my most unforgettable memories at True Light is of my overseas trip to the United States,” she said. “I still have pictures of us with the host family, when we were swimming in the pool.

“That was the first time ever we saw someone who had a pool at their house. Our host family was African American, which was definitely a culture shock for me, but I'm glad I was able to take that first step and get to know them.

It was an experience, she said, that changed her life. “Of the many unforgettable moments while at True Light, that's the most memorable – and also the turning point. I enjoyed the experience so much that I actually wanted to learn more about US culture and to make more friends from overseas.”

One of her new friends on the trip turned out to be her life-long partner and husband, an American Singaporean. “You just need to seize every opportunity you have that could forever change your life – you never know,” Wong told the team.

Whether it involved spending time in the US, Taiwan, or China, this kind of exposure would always be refreshing and beneficial, she said. “You can learn something new, and that's how you slowly gain wisdom – by exposure to things that you have never seen before and have never explored before. The more you know, the more you learn to appreciate and acknowledge why the world is structured this way and that will really help you at work.”

There is something else that Wong gained from her alma mater, apart from the experiences of her overseas trip. “What True Light taught me is how to nurture the ability to achieve success in life. It's definitely a process that trained me in the abilities I need right now, which apply to my work and performing my different roles in life – as a wife, daughter, mother and friend to everyone.”

Wong was able to find positives, even in her least memorable moments at the school. “Having frustrations at school is normal, but just remember that everything you learn there is actually helpful,” she said. “Otherwise our school wouldn't have lasted this long.

“School has such a strong community and I think the support it offers is especially precious right now. Later on, when you are working, you will no longer find a similar strong support system. So, make sure you appreciate your classmates. They are very important to you – not only now, but also in the future, as well,” Wong said.

As for her career in the furniture industry, she admitted that it was never her plan to go into her family's business. “When I was a child, I liked interior design – making the fabrics, designing arches – thinking about the way a house should look. I always wanted to be an interior designer, or anything glamorous. I never wanted to stay in Shenzhen looking at furniture. After I left school, I thought hard about what I should do in life.”





Wong found she had two choices: either to start her own career or join the family business. “After I graduated I didn’t join the family business, she said. “Instead, I joined a research company because I had studied marketing and sociology, so I really wanted to do something research-related. After a year, I reviewed what I had learned over the

past year. Aside from knowing how the research world worked and the working environment, I found myself stuck at that place. I couldn’t see my future in that industry because there wasn’t the support system that I needed.”

At this point her parents came to her rescue. “I talked to my father, who has always been my mentor,” she said. “He never forces me to do anything and he’s always very patient. He explained to me my situation and analysed what my potential future could be, so that I could choose my path and to be the person I wanted to become. Then I joined the family’s Hong Kong office, and started our Hong Kong retail market one year later. So here we have both wholesale and retail stores. I found it really great fun and have never been so alive.”

As for her mother, Wong said: “My mum’s EQ [emotional intelligence] is very high and she would tell me how to deal with different situations and social settings. She would also teach me how to be a loving, friendly and caring person.

“I think my mum does a very good job advising me how to be a good daughter, a good mother and a good friend, while my dad teaches me how to be a good employer and employee and how to be a good person and give back to society. So, it’s not only one mentor – both of them have given me different insights in life.”

“But then, of course, my faith in Jesus and in God really helps me, as well. I think it was God’s plan that I met my husband. My husband’s dad is a pastor, so he is also another person that I go to and talk to with my questions. He will give me the view from the Bible, which teaches us how we should handle a situation ourselves. I’m very grateful for all the people I have to call on for advice – my parents, husband and father-in-law – all of them have really helped me to be a more considerate person.”

On female role models in Hong Kong society – both past and present – Wong believes the situation has improved, but there is still room for improvement. She said, “right now, there are more recognised successful female role models in our everyday life – I think people are starting to pay attention to women. So, it is good for those of us in this current generation to be women – to know who we are and what we can become in life.”

“It gives us hope and opportunities to pursue things in a positive way. In the past, you didn’t always know that such things could be achieved. And now you know that you can achieve it, as we see by having a woman, [Carrie Lam] as Hong Kong’s Chief Executive. To be honest, I had never thought of that happening, and didn’t even think that it was possible because men have always been the leaders and role models in the world. But now we see women can be powerful, too – both at home and at work.”

“I think that’s really opened the door and, therefore, I think it is easier to be a female role model right now than in the past. So, it’s really great news for women – to know that, later on, the role model could be you. It could be one of you, or it could be all of you,” she said, as she finished on a positive note.





## Starting from scratch

### *Ms Ho In Fei*

*“Meet to Write” Coordinator, Kowloon True Light School*

Colin Powell, the former United States Secretary of States, once said, “There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.” Mr. Powell speaks not only the general truth about life, but also the gist of conducting a quality interview.

Learning how to prepare for their interviews and do their research with diligence is exactly what the Junior Reporters (JRs) learnt in their first workshop. With the guidance of our respected coach, Dr. Oliver Chou, the JRs were introduced to some interviewing techniques and how to get started. Their first piece of assignment was to prepare a chronology of the interviewees, which is a detailed profile indicating the special events that took place in their lives. Only with sufficient understanding towards the backgrounds of the interviewees could the JRs design some good, specific questions for the ten female role models.

The process of compiling the chronology was a rather complex one as the JRs had to try very hard to collect information from multiple sources and organized the data they had collected. Having gathered enough information, they had to formulate some relevant, engaging and original questions for the interviewees. That was especially challenging with the female role models who have had countless interviews before.

However, that was not the toughest part to the JRs; their fear lies in the actual interviews when they had to interact face-to-face with the female leaders. In addition to the prepared questions, JRs were required to ask some follow-up questions based on the responses. Hence, they had to listen to the role models attentively and generate the questions on the spot. Some of the JRs were worried that they did not have the skills and ability of doing so. To ease their worries, teachers and Dr. Chou had a few rounds of mock interviews with them.

As the project coordinator, I am thankful to be part of the Project and witness the growth of students. From being shy to becoming confident English speakers, from being disorganized to becoming effective collaborative team players, our students have stretched their potentials and excelled. This programme has yielded very positive results in enabling JRs to go out of their comfort zones and refine their language and generic skills through authentic learning tasks.

## Dedication from all parties

### *Mr Leung Chi Kit*

*English Teacher, Kowloon True Light School*

Each year, our school gives all students various opportunities to recognize the invaluable contributions that they make to our school, our city and our nation, echoing our school mission to inspire our female generations to unrelentingly pursue knowledge and unreservedly develop their talents and leadership. The Meet to Write Project gives them an invaluable chance to show their grit, dedication, ingenuity and strength, blossoming into people of goodness, righteousness, and excellence with an unswerving quest for truth. Among all the wonderful attributes, dedication is the key to making the others grow and excel.

Prior to the start of the project, though most of the student journalists did not have experience in interviewing important people in our society or writing up an account of what had been asked and said, they dedicated themselves to the challenging work by putting in tremendous effort and time to form questions and jot down important notes, collecting and connecting every piece of precious information in order to make this book happen, taking the unprecedented step of documenting True Light’s oral history.

At the same time, we have seen the contributions made to our local and global societies by all the distinguished and prominent alumnae over the years, becoming role models for millions of youngsters. They have been committed and devoted to their work, keeping up momentum by staying focused no matter how huge the obstacles they encountered have been. This physical and mental toughness has shaped who they are and we are so proud of them. We hope our girls have been inspired and will continue to make a tremendous amount of effort to dedicate themselves to our city and the whole world.



## ❧ *Learning to be future female* ❧ *role models*

**Ms Mak Wing Shan**

*English Teacher, Kowloon True Light School*

The 'Meet to Write' project is an invaluable experiential learning opportunity for students to tackle issues and problems in interviews and publishing their articles by drawing on knowledge that they have learnt in the workshops with Dr. Oliver Chou. Despite their extensive research and thorough preparation before every interview, it is understandable that students might get nervous facing their interviewees who are highly successful in different fields. But our interviewees are all very friendly and hospitable, which has helped ease their stress and made the interviews enjoyable ones. Through these authentic experiences, students are believed to have boosted their confidence in conducting interviews or speaking in formal occasions.

Apart from the skills in conducting interviews, students have also learnt a lot from the personal experiences the interviewees shared during the interviews. It has been amazing to listen to our female role models recounting their unforgettable stories in their secondary school life with great nostalgia and recalling the incidents and people that have motivated them to set their goals and shaped their future. It is believed that our students have been inspired by the challenges the interviewees have encountered and the ways they overcame them before achieving success at work. Through the real life experience, students could realize the power of a positive attitude to life, the value of perseverance and the importance of a thankful heart.

In some of the interviews, students have even been given a chance to explore the workplaces of our interviewees to have a better understanding about the operations of different businesses and institutes. These eye-opening experiences have not only broadened the horizons of our students, but also given them more insights about the different possibilities in the workplace, helping to shape their career goals. Students have got a fruitful learning experience by taking an active role in the project. It is hoped that they can put what they have learnt from our female role models into practice and become female role models themselves in future.

## ❧ *All genuine learning comes* ❧ *through experience*

**Ms Ma Wai Ting**

*English Teacher, Kowloon True Light School*

We are impressed by the fact that all Junior Reporters (JRs), though from different forms, eventually overcome all the obstacles and launch this book today. Everyone involved should be proud of themselves as they have done a splendid job of getting over every hurdle and preparing their best for each interview and essay. It is not an easy feat to achieve and yet they have accomplished it.

During the initial preparation stage of the project, the 'walls' that we needed to tackle grew not only in size but also in number as many students found interviewing successful female role models and writing journalistic articles a challenging task. To them, it was a tough journey. However, the project gradually came into good shape as with the encouragement and guidance from our respected coach, Dr. Oliver Chou, everybody was willing to contribute their part.

It is indeed pleasing to see that all those involved have gained not only more exposure to English, but also personal growth. Our JRs have learnt to believe in themselves and step out of their comfort zone to unleash their untapped potentials. No matter how tough the circumstances become, no matter how overwhelming the odds are, if we do not give up hope and stay true to ourselves, there is always a way through every challenge.



## Together everyone achieves more

**Chu Wai Ka Kamille**

*Junior Reporter, 4A, Kowloon True Light School*

Through this project I have come to understand more about oral history and its importance. Oral history is the recording of information through live interviews. It supplements printed records with the voices of interviewees on their own past and times. The exercise enriches a society's collective memory by preserving individual members' accounts as eyewitnesses. It also preserves the memory of institutional history not covered in printed records.

Personally I have benefitted by learning how to work in a team and how to cooperate with other members to bring out the best result. I had more courage to communicate and conduct an interview with someone I had never met before. Although we encountered a lot of difficulties in the process of planning and conducting the interviews, we put our heads together and tried our best to solve all the problems.

I feel grateful for being able to learn from these female role models and their success stories. From them, I realised the essentials that led to their successes. Each interviewee has her own motto that nurtures her best qualities in life. I found it very useful to learn from their valuable experience, which will be guides and references for my road in life.

All of the interviews my team undertook were unique and unforgettable. The interview with Ms Ting Yuk Chee was informative and encouraging as she demonstrated the importance of persevering. Ms Zoe Wong inspired me with the Biblical truth of "one reaps what one sows". The interview with Ms Nancy Loo made me understand the importance of gratitude in our daily lives. These interviews gave us a precious opportunity to learn from the real experience of these successful female role models first-hand, experience that cannot be found in textbooks.

## From others' journeys to ours

**Mr Cheung Pak Ki**

*Chairperson, English Department, Kowloon True Light School*

It's been more than a year in the making, involving the planning, application for QEF, recruiting the instructor and student journalists, workshops, contacting interviewees, coaching students to write the articles, editing, the launching event, and here we are - this book, which is a collection of memories, experiences and hard work of both our interviewees and the student journalists.



I am very proud of what the girls have achieved. To teachers, nothing is more gratifying than witnessing how students grow in the process of learning, especially how they do so because of some well executed learning activities. Not only did they learn much about journalistic writing, they also grew intellectually and spiritually.

I was blessed to have a chance to attend the interview with renowned educationist Madam Ting Yuk Chee, GBS, SBS, BBS, JP and it was such a humbling and inspiring experience. Ms Ting generously told us lots of fascinating stories from which the journalists and I knew how she went all out to establish her education institute and how she did not even hesitate to give back to the community. From her decades' worth of experience, we did not just know about the journey of hers to success, but also what Hong Kong was like back in the day: how the government worked, how people struggled to make a living, how native Chinese lived a life in the colonial era: we could have obtained similar information from any other sources, but hearing it the first hand from her, who was actually living her life back then, is something nothing can top.

Of course, other interviewees also offered many life lessons for the student journalists. Superintendent Cheng's story of how she worked all the way to where she is now was truly impressive. Her remarkable success and her unceasing diligence amazed us. It was not just the students journalists, I also felt like I learnt a much needed lesson from a role model. Every now and then we need success stories like these to refresh ourselves, set higher goals and keep going.

Hopefully this book can enlighten all readers, be it students or adults. I also need to send my thanks collectively to all the 10 interviewees. Without their help, this project could not have been a success.