

# THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

## THIRTY-THIRD CONGREGATION

Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*

A Citation

**Professor Gerald Hugh Choa, CBE, JP**

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of Great Britain, when still in opposition in the 1970's once had this to say of Chancellors of the Exchequer, "Some Chancellors are monetary, others are fiscal and still others are really only budgetary . . . ." or words to that effect. In singing Professor Gerald Choa's praises as Professor of Administrative Medicine and Founding Dean of the University's Medical Faculty, I was almost tempted to begin with the words "Some Deans of the Medical Faculty are clinical, others are pre-clinical, and still others are really pathological . . . ." But as Professor Choa is also a Pro-Vice-Chancellor and one who has much influence over the career futures of administrative staff of the University, I, wisely I think, thought better of it.

But the three Boards of Studies of the Faculty of Medicine - the clinical, pre-clinical and pathological boards - are really Professor Choa's creation, as is almost everything else in the Medical Faculty, including the course structure, the actual curriculum, and the general design, planning and facilities of the Prince of Wales Hospital, which is generally judged to be one of the best in the region.

Few people in the world have combined so well three distinctive, and equally successful, careers in one person - those of physician-clinician, Director of a major Government department, Dean of a Faculty and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of a university. But Gerald Hugh Choa is never going to be satisfied with a single outstanding achievement. Born under the sign of Aries - Professor Choa had his sixty-sixth birthday five days ago - he will always aim high and surge forever forward until the rest of the field is far behind him. Professor Choa's academic record bears out this admirable trait in his character. M.D. (Cheloo University) in 1945, M.B., B.S. (Hong Kong University) in 1946, D.T.M. & H. (Liverpool University) in 1948, M.R.C.P. (London) in 1952 and then F.R.C.P. in 1968, followed yet again by the F.R.C.P. of Edinburgh in 1972 and, two years later, the F.F.C.M. in 1974.

While he was acquiring this string of qualifications, Professor Choa was also teaching at the University of Hong Kong and was, at the same time, serving as a specialist in the Medical and Health Department of the Hong Kong Government. In this latter position, he rose quickly through the ranks and reached the pinnacle of the medical officer's career when he became the Director of Medical and Health in 1970. For his distinguished service to the community, Professor Choa received the CBE from Her Majesty the Queen in 1972, having been made a Justice of the Peace in 1964. As Director, he rationalized and greatly improved the provision of medical services to the community. In his valedictory to Dr. Gerald Choa in the Legislative Council in 1976, the then Governor Sir Murray MacLehose (now Lord Maclehorse) had this to say and it is worth quoting in some length:

" He has proved himself a Director of the highest distinction. His contribution has covered a wide field. ... the opening of the Princess Margaret Hospital, ... the introduction of a new method of treatment of drug addiction in the form of Methadone detoxication; Government's new and decisive role in family planning; the introduction of geriatric services, the support by Government of the community nursing service....

We will remember him in this Council as a most able and courteous colleague and if I might say so as a master of elliptical speech typical of the finest tradition of the mandarin.

Mr. Chancellor, might I just add that elliptical speech is also typical of the finest tradition of academia. It was no surprise, therefore, that when academia beckoned once again, Dr. Gerald Choa responded. Having scaled one peak, he was now ready to take on another. And so in 1977 he became the first Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the University, and in this role he travelled the world, consulted with his peers, selected the Professors of all major departments and charted the Faculty's development from "conception" to "delivery", to use the only two medical terms with which I have some acquaintance. Last year, of course, after nine years of painstaking, sometimes frustrating, but I am sure to him always worthwhile work, the first medical students graduated from the University and took up their places along side the medical men of our sister university. Professor Choa looked every bit the proud father and not just the obstetrician who took care of the delivery.

Mr. Chancellor, when Professor Choa knew that I was going to write his citation, he said to me that for him two lines would suffice. I am afraid that is one task which

has proved to be quite beyond my ability. But two things about him have made a lasting impression on me; once, when asked whether medical ethics would be offered as a course in the Medical Faculty, he replied "medical students will learn their ethics from the teachers who have them"; secondly - and this is not generally known - the great satisfaction he takes in having served as a public servant and as an educationist, instead of becoming a very rich doctor. The return to academia has allowed him the peace of mind to write about those aspects of the history of Hong Kong which is familiar to him or which has a special fascination for him. He is the author of *The Life and Times of Sir Kai Ho Kai* and is writing a history of the missionary doctors who served in China and Hong Kong in the last century.

Mr. Chancellor, for his many outstanding achievements as physician, public servant, academic and historian, for his role in building up a medical and health service of the highest standard, for the students he taught, for his role in keeping away those who have no medical ethics, I present to you Gerald Hugh Choa, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and first Dean of the University's Medical Faculty, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.

March 26, 1987