

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

THIRTY-FIRST CONGREGATION

Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Science, honoris causa

A Citation

Professor Sir Andrew Patrick McEwen Forrest,  
MD, ChM, FRCS, FRS, Hon FACS, Hon DSc, Hon FRACS

Almost exactly one century ago a young surgeon trained at Aberdeen by the name of Cantlie set sail for this part of the world, and right upon arrival joined two other doctors to start a new College of Medicine, which as one knows then grew into what is now our sister University. Six decades later his footsteps were followed by yet another young surgeon, this time trained at St. Andrews, who unfortunately stopped short of Hong Kong at Singapore, and after a brief stint as Surgeon-Lieutenant in the Royal Navy went back to the United Kingdom. Looking back at this then little noticed episode one surely would be excused for speculating what might have happened to the course of development of this University had the young Dr. Patrick Forrest then come all the way. In any case, we are undoubtedly grateful that Dr. Forrest, or rather Professor Forrest, did finally come, albeit a few decades late, and once here did so generously give of his invaluable time and advice in helping to found our new Medical Faculty, which will proudly present its first class of graduates for the conferment of their degrees in two months' time this year.

Born in 1923 at Dundee, the young Patrick Forrest read medicine at St. Andrews during the War and graduated just when peace came. Joining the Navy nevertheless, he came over to see the Far East, took a great liking to it, but decided to return home for advanced training first. As so often turns out in life, this led to highly successful professional careers one after another, and allowed no more thoughts of other plans. He was elected FRCSE in 1950 and FRCS in 1952, appointed Lecturer at the University of Glasgow in 1955, subsequently promoted to Senior Lecturer and then, having been elected FRCSG, moved in 1962 to Cardiff to take up a Chair at the Welsh National School of Medicine. Then came the supreme call which brought him back to Scotland, and in 1970 he was inaugurated as the Regius Professor of Clinical Surgery at the University of Edinburgh, a position he has since held.

An amiable yet at the same time forceful and, even by the standard of master surgeons, incredibly hard working person, Professor Forrest has over the years kept up a pace and schedule which probably would exhaust several lesser mortals put together. Specialising in the surgery of breast cancer, he has led a long-term project for improving total management of the patient and coordinated national surveys for identifying the pattern of the disease. His work was reported in many journal articles, and recently he jointly authored a general text 'The Principles and Practice of Surgery', which was published in 1984.

Just as publications are the measure of the man as an academic, so are students the measure of the man as a teacher, and judging from the long list of leaders in the field trained in his wards, including Professor David Carter at Glasgow, Professor Robert Shields at Liverpool and Professor Leslie Blumgart at Zürich, Professor Forrest surely has excelled in that part of his work as well.

At the same time, a host of professional and public responsibilities arose to claim his attention and expertise. These include honorary consultancies at several hospitals, visits to overseas institutions through many prestigious visiting professorships and eponymous lectureships, membership on the Medical Sub-Committee of the UK University Grants Committee during 1967-76, and appointment since 1981 as part-time Chief Scientist of the Scottish Home and Health Department, a pivotal position which makes him responsible for fostering and coordinating scientific and medical research throughout Scotland. It was in 1976 that Professor Forrest finally did come to Hong Kong as a founding member of the Medical Academic Advisory Committee, known as MAAC, which was formed for advising on the establishment of a Medical Faculty in this University. Bringing characteristic vigour and devotion to the work of the Committee, he has been tireless in helping the new Faculty in selecting senior staff and planning for the surgical ward and related facilities in the new Prince of Wales Hospital at Shatin. And the University is indeed grateful to him, as well as other members of the MAAC, for ensuring the smooth progress made by the Faculty year after year since it first admitted students in 1981.

Professor Sir Patrick Forrest was awarded at St Andrews the University Gold Medal for his Mastership of Surgery thesis in 1954 and the Rutherford Gold Medal for his Doctorate of Medicine thesis in 1958. It is but natural that a host of other distinctions and honours should be conferred on such an academic leader. He was elected FRSE in 1976, Hon FACS in 1978, Hon FASA in 1981, and Hon FRACS in 1986; elected President of the Surgical Research Society during 1974-76; awarded the Degree of Doctor of Science honoris causa by the University of Wales in 1981; and knighted in 1986.

In recognition of his distinctive contribution to the medical profession, and of his service to this University, Mr. Chancellor, I request your Excellency to confer on Professor Sir Andrew Patrick McEwen Forrest the Degree of Doctor of Science, honoris causa.

October 30, 1986