

Toronto Reunion Diary

Siu Yat Wo

The heat of the summer is over. The season of fall in Winnipeg has quietly made her appearance as the edges of the tree leaves are gradually changing into fading yellow.

Ever since I got the reunion photos, I don't know how many times I have looked at them. I am not disappointed by the Toronto reunion.

Years of expectations of the silver coronation finally came to a reality. Let me revisit the reunion weekend in Toronto:

Friday, August 20, 1999

6:15 PM -- The emotion at the first meeting on Friday night (Aug. 20) was a combination of trembling, anticipating, exciting, delighting, exploring, fulfilling, surprising and satisfying. I could not withhold the inner excitement as I walked into the Richmond Chinese Baptist Church. Principal Lam Ying Ho attends this church.

I could recognize and correctly name most of the classmates as we joyfully shook hands with one another. For some of them it was the first time we met. But I have their faces memorized. Thanks to the folks who published the Class of 1974 Year Book.

If I were a computer, tonight's meeting must have generated a high-speed file-search with an output of a series of successful matching of faces and voices. The output was followed by a new version of emotional touch that only the class of 1974 can truly appreciate. The multi-media quick-search led to more familiar faces and more fond memories actively interacting with one another. The spirit of Pui Ching quickly filled everywhere in the gymnasium.

Of course, we were well fed. The superbly selected dinner menu came with a variety of good choices. I did not forget to thank Yung Kit Wan and the dinner organizers for the delicious food they ordered for us. My sons later told me the supper was far better than the Jackie Chan movie they watched in the other room.

After supper we sat in a circle and briefed everyone what happened in the last 25 years. It is time to exchange updates and count the blessings. Many classmates introduced themselves with their school nicknames, adding more Pui Ching affinity to the meeting. Each person's sharing was close and intimate regardless whether we were ever in the same class before. Ng Siu Kwun, who resides in Vancouver, was surprised when I called him by his nickname. He thought people must have forgotten it as he did not mention it in his self-intro. The singing of the 1974 Class anthem brought us closer in no time.

It was a short meeting tonight.

Saturday (August 21), 1999

10:30 AM -- Met Tim Chou and Chou Chun Yu at the hotel elevator. We mingled with more classmates in Room 1070 till 11 AM when it was time to go to the buffet. Chou Chun Yu drove me and 4 other classmates to Buffet King. Another big meal and a great time for me.

The photo session during the buffet lunch brought everyone emotions to another high level again. We just enjoyed being together. Period. Taking pictures with different groups of classmates helped us re-live our memories back in the old school days. I was glad to take pictures with all the old buddies I met in Primary 1 Shing including David Chan, Chan Ji Shun, Jim Hsin, Kong Yeuk May, and Yung Yun Chee. There were only 5 of us from my Middle 6 Kwong coming to this reunion. The other 4 were Lilian Ho, Chow Siu Lun, Ng Tak Yin, and Kwong Kin Cheun.



We departed at 2:50 to return to the hotel for the rehearsal.

Saturday (August 21), 1999 Coronation Night

4 PM -- The classmates should all receive a Best-Cooperation Award as the rehearsal ran very orderly under the leadership of the Toronto Organizing Committee. We practiced the lineup and rehearsed a kiddy song by Wong Yat Cheung about the pain of writing term exams in PC. We were glad to see Chow Mo Suk as she and her family finally made it from Pennsylvania. Her trip was delayed as she had to return home to get the passports. Chou Chun Yu said the reunion was great but it would be even better if more classmates could join us. We all agreed.



7 PM -- We were coronated with the Class of 1939 and 1949 for their Diamond and Golden coronation. Principal Lam Ying Ho was the only one present from his 1939 Class. The program ran without glitches. Of course, the most precious moment was our coronation. Everyone of us stepped into the central platform with joy and excitement as our names were called one by one by Tang Kam Fat and Chan Chu Po, the co-mc's. I was very moved when Lam Ying Ho put the red and blue hood on my head. I shook his hand with deep emotions

and gratitude. He is 79 and still looks as energetic and healthy as the principal I remembered back in 1974.



The number of cameras in front of us surpassed all the cameras put together at my wedding and graduation. The coronation was followed with a cake cutting ceremony and a presentation of souvenirs to the teachers.

Daniel Chow Sing Kit led us singing the School Flag Anthem during the Karaoke. Jim and Maggie had the nicest voice. Lilian Ho announced today was her sister Irene's 23rd wedding anniversary. The couple happily moved to the ballroom centre for the first dance.

None of us wanted to leave the ballroom even after singing Auld Lang Syne? We enjoyed and treasured every minute of it.

Sunday, August 22, 1999 The Tour of Niagara Falls

9:05 AM -- Before boarding the Niagara Falls cruise bus, I bid farewell to Chou Chun Yu, Jim Hsin, Maggie, and David Chan on the sidewalk as they were heading back to the States today.

I found out later that some classmates had already left. I regret that I did not have the opportunity to say goodbye to all of them.

Lee Chun Wing was the tour leader. The cruise bus was packed. Even Lee had no seat for himself. He ended up sitting on the floor step beside the bus driver. Light breakfast was served as the bus headed for Toronto downtown for a quick tour first.

Stonechurch Vineyards, one of the wineries at Niagara-on-the-Lake, was our next stop. Ng King Tong became my best buddy as we sat together and conversed during the 2-hour ride. He bought everyone in my group a small glass of Canadian Ice Wine at the wine demo. After touring the vineyard, we were served with cheese and fresh fruits at the winery gazebo.

The final stop was one of the 7 Wonders of the World, Niagara Falls. The Maid of Mist tour boat took us very close to the Horse Shoe Fall. The sight and sound of the water power is

beyond human comprehension. We just had a small glimpse of God's wonderful creation.



Lee Chun Wing gave us more entertainment on the bus by handing down prizes with a short quiz on the Falls. It is certainly a tour worth going again even though this is my third visit to the Falls.

Farewell Dinner

7 PM -- The bus dropped us off at Golden Regency Restaurant for the farewell dinner. This was the final meeting of the reunion weekend. We treasured being together with the classmates one more time. Of course, more photos were taken to capture this special occasion. Everyone was invited to the reunions at San Francisco and Hong Kong in November.



We appreciate the tremendous efforts and time put out by each member of the Organizing Committee. I personally told some of the members what a great job they did!

The class of 1974 is a very special one as it is the last graduation class in PC honoured with the silver coronation before the millennium. The spirit of the reunion brought me to an emotional plateau. I hope I can keep it till the next reunion.

25 years have passed in our lives since our high school graduation. What should we be looking forward to in the second half of our life? More money? Better relationships? It must be something more significant and rewarding.

Monday, September 6, 1999 (Labour Day)

Last night I went to a reunion in my dream. This reunion is different from the one in Toronto. The reunion was white and bright as the classmates were wearing their school uniforms. The mood of the dream was obviously intimate and happy. Too bad it was just a dream.