

Remembering Liang Kit

Liang Kit and I were in Primary 6C. I remember he liked to fold up his hands and kicked people with his heavy Clarks shoes in goose step. At one point he sat behind me and would kick me if I did something that incurred his displeasure. I was quite helpless and could only retaliate at the end of class. That was the beginning of a long friendship.

Kit was a great reader and we would try to put some of the episodes of some adventure stories into practice. After school and on Saturday afternoons, we used to go up the little hill at the side of the sand football field and pretend to fight off enemies, drawing up elaborate maps on how to defend out hideouts. He read up a lot about Nazi Germany. We went to see the movie: "Rommel, the Desert Fox" and Kit was in his elements, expounding on the intricacies of desert warfare.

Kit lived in an apartment on Nathan Road on top of the old bookstore Swindon. We used to browse through the books there. But the books were too expensive, so we ended up buying some comic books. Kit's father died young and his mother worked to support him and an older brother. Auntie Phoebe was a very capable woman. I remember seeing books in their house that were prize books given to her for her academic excellence. In the summer after Form 2, they invited me to join them in a trip to Macau. It was the first time I left home and had a great adventure.

After Form 2, we went to different classes but we still got together. We liked building models with Meccano. Kit's brother also went to Wah Yan and had a chemistry lab at home. We played around with the chemicals and soon got attracted to explosives. Later, together with Victor Ling, we tried to build rockets. We had to find some correct proportion of ammonium nitrate, aluminum powder and some binding agent and mix them. For the rocket itself, we first tried a small cylinder that was used to hold a cigar. After many failures, we succeeded in get it into the air. Our final project was a long Aluminum tube and we fired it off at Clear Water Bay. Somehow, we stopped before we became full-fledged terrorists.

Around the time we were in Form 4, Kit shot up to tower over me but he was thin as a pencil. He left for the US after Form 5. We had a farewell meal at the old Russian restaurant and I saw him off in his ship when he went on his voyage on a commercial freighter. For his reading material, he carried the tome by Shirer: "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich."

Christopher went to a catholic college in a small town in Kansas, I think. In those days we corresponded by writing letters. He said he would be woken up in early morning by monks singing Gregorian chants. For entertainment he had to ride a bus for an hour to the larger town to catch a movie. But the Wah Yan and his later religious college imbued in him a strong faith which lasted throughout his life.

Somehow we had lost touch with each other as we pursued our careers. Then all of a sudden, I got a phone call from him. There was a mutual friend that knew me and his wife and got us connected. One of the first thing he mentioned over the phone was that I would no longer recognize him because he was now fat. He had indeed gained weight but of course I could recognize him with no difficulty.

Christopher was a great reader and he introduced me to a series of Billy Bunter books by Frank Richards when we were in Form 1. Those were the funniest stories I had ever read up to that time and I got addicted. About twenty years ago I had a sudden urge to re-read the books. But I could not find them anywhere. Finally I found one at the children's section in the Los Angeles Public Library. By this time, those books have become rare and I was not allowed to check them out. I spent an afternoon reading "Billy Bunter's Double." It was not as funny as I remembered it but it satisfied my urge to re-visit this phase of childhood. Shortly after this, there was a Wah Yan conference at Los Angeles and Christopher came from Chicago. I mentioned reading this book to him and he immediately recalled the whole story. He was a true Billy Bunter fan.

Kit had been working as a volunteer English teacher in Macau and lived in a Jesuit house. I thought with his fine command of English, it would be a great opportunity for enrichment for his students. But Kit told me that the general level of English in Macau was not high and his students were at the lowest level. He was just motivated by a desire to help.



2016.04.01, Hong Kong, Chris Liang attending a talk on Gravitational Wave by Paul Lee

Last year when I was in Hong Kong, Dominic Lee kindly hosted a lunch where I talked about the discovery of gravitational wave, Kit came over from Macau even though he was not particularly keen on science. That was the last time I saw him.

Thomas Hood had a poem "I Remember, I Remember" where he remembered that he used to think that tree tops would touch heaven. The last four lines of the poem runs like this:

"It was a childish ignorance,

But now 'tis little joy,

To know I'm farther away from heaven

Than when I was a boy."

I think, somehow, Kit managed to be NOT farther away from heaven even when he was no longer a boy.