

## **In Memory of Sunney Chan**

Sunney Chan's impact on countless people is immeasurable. Though he is no longer with us, the echoes of his wisdom, generosity, and pioneering spirit will resonate for generations.

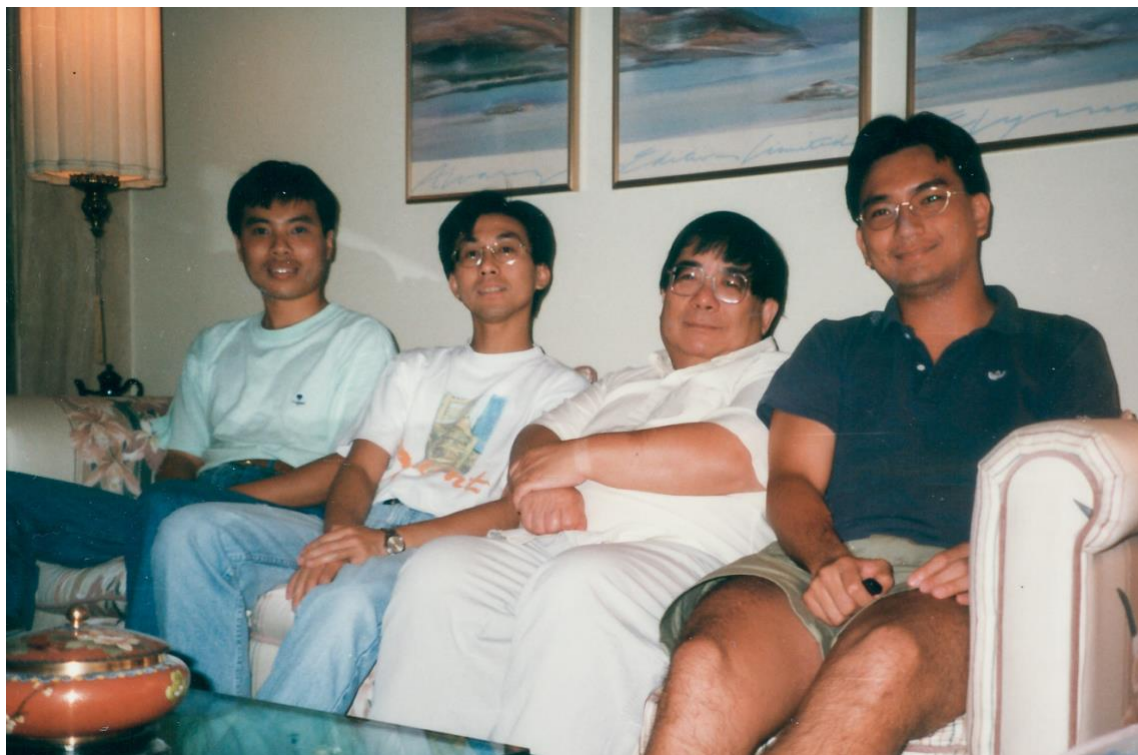
My first encounter with Sunney was in the early 90s, while I was a master's student at CUHK. I was doing laundry in the graduate dorm at 7 am on a Saturday morning, and so was he. We started talking about life, and that mundane moment turned into a life-changing one for me. Later, he had dinner with my family and convinced my parents to let me pursue further education in the U.S.

During his time at CUHK, Sunney mentored many students who are now professors, carrying on the torch he lit. He was a curious, lifelong learner who always impressed me with his ability to embrace new things. I remember when the internet was in its infancy, he was one of the first to go to the computer lab to send emails. He also learned Cantonese and then Mandarin; his Chinese handwriting was even better than most of ours!

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## **A Mentor in Pasadena**

Later, in Pasadena, Sunney became a guiding force in my life. He was there for so many of my "firsts": filing my first tax return, my first trip to a symphony, my first time driving (a risky move on his part!), and my first Thanksgiving dinner. While I wasn't quite cut out for the flying electrons and protons of the Chan group, moving on to make C-C bonds instead, I was privileged to observe how he trained his students. His hypotheses were almost always spot-on, and he had a brilliant way of letting his students and postdocs figure out the rest. His focus on identifying key problems and developing problem-solving skills is what truly sets his students apart.



*From left to right: Hung Kay Lee, Vincent Tai, Sunney Chan, Sherlock Lam. Picture taken around 1996.*

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## **Passing the Baton and Building Bridges**

At his 60th birthday, Sunney passed the baton to his son, Michael. He then dedicated himself to Taiwan, initially splitting his time and eventually relocating there permanently as he phased out his group at Caltech. I was fortunate to visit him on multiple occasions and witness the remarkable fruits of his work in Taiwan.

To the students and postdocs reading this, I encourage you, as Sunney would have, to find an area you're passionate about, even if it's outside your current work and comfort zone. Go and learn something new. For some of us, our boundaries can be our biggest enemy.

To the educators, I challenge you with this question: On top of your research programs, are you touching other people's lives? Sunney certainly did.



*Taken at the Taiwan Bioinorganic Chemistry Symposium 2003, Hsinchu, Taiwan*

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## **A Hall of Famer in Science**

As a basketball fan, I think of Sunney as a true Hall of Famer, much like Yao Ming. While physically different, Sunney was a true ambassador for the Chinese community in chemistry and science. Throughout his career, he helped create a vibrant scientific atmosphere and raised the standards among research institutions in the U.S. and Asia. For that, we are forever grateful. He was truly a Hall of Famer.

Sunney, you built multiple "enjoy life" benches in Taiwan and Hong Kong, echoing the "enjoy life" bench at Caltech. You embodied that philosophy, enriching the lives of everyone around you. Thank you for everything. Your legacy will live on.



During his 80th birthday celebration in Hong Kong, Sunney recounted his early days at Caltech.



"Enjoy Life" Bench at Caltech