

Honorary Fellow A Citation



Dr Lo Tak Shing, Peter, BSc, MSc, PhD

The Book of Han asserts that “*Those in authority regard the people as Heaven and the people regard food as Heaven*” (王者以民為天，而民以食為天). This dictum has defined Chinese society for centuries and I would argue, still defines Chinese society. It is recognition not only of the central importance of food in the well-being of our society but also the responsibility of those in authority and by extension, those with influence and ability, to contribute to the well-being of the People. These are values Dr Lo and members of his family have stood for and have practiced, and in so doing, they have greatly benefited both the University and the community.

Dr Lo was born in Hong Kong to a family, some of whose members had, by the time of his birth, become acknowledged pioneers in bringing to the community a readily available but inexpensive source of protein derived from the soya bean. This became known as Vitasoy, a drink familiar to everyone in Hong Kong and, increasingly in the past three decades, people around the world. The drink was soymilk, but few realized the important breakthrough in food technology that it was or how significant an impact it made on our community.

Whilst soymilk had been popular for centuries as a Hakka staple, no one had been able to make the drink stay good for more than a day, let alone bottling and distributing it to a large community. This important food technology breakthrough enabled an inexpensive source of protein and essential amino acids to be brought into the diet of the growing and far from affluent post Second World War community of Hong Kong. As we can all recall, there was immense growth in Hong Kong’s population in the 1950’s and 1960’s. In the course of these 20 years Hong Kong was transforming itself into a manufacturing powerhouse. Although no specific studies have been conducted on the impact of Vitasoy to this success, recent studies have shown that there is clear linkage between nutrition and economic development and soymilk does contribute to good health.

By the time Dr Lo finished his secondary education in Hong Kong, our community was in the midst of yet another transformation. The Pearl River Delta was about to take Hong Kong’s place as the manufacturing powerhouse, while Hong Kong was transforming itself into a world-class city offering world-class services.

It was in the midst of these changes that Dr Lo began his undergraduate studies in Electronic Engineering and Physics at Loughborough University of Technology in the UK. Upon graduation, he pursued graduate studies in Medical Physics, obtaining first, a Master’s Degree from the University of Surrey and later a Doctorate from the United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy’s and St Thomas’s Hospitals, London University. In the next few years, he pursued a research career but in the end, family duty calls.

In 1996, he came back to join the family business. By this time, Vitasoy had become an international brand, bringing drinks with high nutritional value to all corners of globe. The family business had also, by then, diversified.



Dr Lo's father, Mr Lo Kai Muk (羅開睦), who had worked for his father, Dr Lo Kwee Seong, at Vitasoy through the 1950's and 1960's, had gone into yet another food venture for the masses, this time in the area of fast food. It is Café de Coral (大家樂). Like Vitasoy, it is now also a household name. Café de Coral started as a solitary restaurant in 1969. By the mid-1990's, the venture had grown to a chain of over 170 outlets in Hong Kong and in mainland China under various brands. It was successful but it was competing in a sea of restaurants with a vast array of food on offer to an increasingly discriminating public.

It is a tribute to the versatility of Dr Lo that he could immediately translate his skills as a research scientist to the skills expected of a member of the management team of a fast food chain operating in an extremely competitive environment. Since the 1990's, the management team of Café de Coral has not only reshaped the landscape of the fast food industry but also redefined the concept of fast food. Fast food had been perceived as unappetizing and unhealthy. But you would now think differently. Walking into a Café de Coral restaurant, as I often do, you will find not only efficient and cheerful service, but appetizing and healthy food, at prices that would not break your bank account. Even the cleaning ladies would now and again have a friendly word with the patrons as they go about their chores. Café de Coral is an organization of people who are true to their motto of "Achieving (for you) a Hundred Points of Excellence" (為您做足一百分).

Café de Coral, like Vitasoy, is now a global company with substantial businesses in Hong Kong, mainland China and North America. But as we can see, the success of Dr Peter Lo's family in business has been built upon a strong conviction of serving others. This strong conviction finds equal expression in philanthropy. The late Dr Lo Kwee Seong founded the K S Lo Foundation in 1991 to promote vocational and technical education, culture and art, and other worthy causes, among which the University was one of the chief beneficiaries.

Under Dr Lo's chairmanship, the Foundation has made donations of antique ceramics to the University Museum, in addition to supporting the establishment of the Lo Kwee Seong Research Laboratory of Infectious Diseases, the K S Lo Foundation Scholarship and continuing work in epilepsy research. In 2010, the Foundation further donated HK\$150 million to support the University's research efforts in the Biomedical Sciences. A third of this generous donation has been earmarked for research in the agricultural sciences, in particular the development of staple food sources including the soya bean. The remainder of the donation will go into funding for the research and development work to be carried out in the Lo Kwee Seong Integrated Biomedical Sciences Building, benefitting our community, our mother country as one of the world's most populous nations and all of mankind. The Foundation will leave a legacy far beyond the monetary value of its generous donation. That is why Dr Lo is keeping a keen and continuing interest in the biomedical research activities of the University. Long may he continue to do this.

Mr Chairman, it is a privilege to present you, Dr Lo Tak Shing, Peter, Scientist, Practitioner of the Art of Management, and Philanthropist, for the award of an Honorary Fellowship of the University.