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Man for all seasons

Dr Tony Leung, HKIS vice-president, has covered a lot of ground in a diverse career, writes **Kit M Yip**

HIGH-FLYERS

Dr Tony Leung, vice-president of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (HKIS), has been at the heart of the construction industry boom over the last four decades. Now chairman of TL Property Consultants International and executive director of Parkland Property Management, and formerly a senior executive of high-end real estate corporations, Dr Leung has played a key role in milestone projects which mark the development of the city and the region.

Dr Leung seemed destined to be a professional in real estate and surveying from a young age. He grew up in a family which, in the 1970s, rented a unit in a Chinese-style apartment building (*tong lau*) to live in while renting out extra rooms to sub-tenants.

Upon graduation in 1976, Leung was at first going to become a banker. With a degree in social science majoring in economics and business administration from Chung Chi College, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, he was one of a handful of graduates chosen to be management trainees at Hong Kong Bank. Within months he was selected, along with two others, to join an Outward Bound course, which would usually be followed by an overseas placement and then promotion to management positions in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, he was struck down by appendicitis days before the Outward Bound started. By the time he recovered,

the general manager who chose him had left the company. Disappointed to have lost his head start in the banking industry, Leung joined the government's Lands Division, in which most of his colleagues were surveyors.

It was the late 1970s, an opportune time when the real estate sector was about to boom. It wasn't long before his outstanding performance with the government came to the attention of management in Hongkong Land, which was just beginning to expand its talent pool to incorporate more locals. Grasping the opportunity, Leung took the examination for the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and then, through a reciprocal agreement, became an HKIS corporate member.

Being diligent and capable, Leung soon became one of the key drivers of Hong Kong's real estate industry. Working for major players, including Hongkong Land, Hong Lok Yuen Estate, Hysan Development, Lai Sun Development, Chesterton Petty, Ryoden Development and K Wah, during the golden decades of the 1970s and 1990s. As part of senior management, he was heavily involved in signature projects including trend-setting private residential complexes such as Chi Fu Fa Yuen in Pok Fu Lam, Chi Lok Fa Yuen in Tuen Mun (one of the earliest PSPS), Tsuen Wan Industrial Centre and Luk Yeung Sun Chuen in Tsuen Wan to name but a few.

As general manager of Hong Lok Yuen Estate for instance, he was instrumental in developing two of Hong Kong's three

most prominent low-rise communities, "Fairview Park in Yuen Long, with 5,000 townhouses, and Tai Po Hong Lok Yuen, with 1,000 detached and semi-detached houses, were models of self-contained township in Hong Kong with clubhouse, schools, restaurants and malls," he says.

As vice-president of Lai Sun during its most prolific years in the late 1980s, Leung was pivotal in the development of commercial complexes such as Cheung Sha Wan Plaza and Causeway Bay Plaza.

After decades in senior management for major real estate companies, he became an entrepreneur in 1994, founding TL Property in Hong Kong. Thereafter, he was the operator of one of Hong Kong's three largest real estate agencies, New L&D Associates. Two decades on, TL Property, including Parkland Property Management, is now a group with around 1,000 employees, handling 6 million square feet of property in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Interestingly, Dr Leung took further studies in surveying when he was already highly successful. "When I attended classes for Polytechnic University's master's degree in international real estate in the 2000s, the lecturer Dr Peter K S Pun, the government's former director of planning, asked jokingly why I was sitting in the students' row," he recalls. While having a busy career, he enjoyed and attended every class, ultimately becoming the only student to graduate with distinction.

He later went on to acquire a PhD in business administration. More than a decade ago, he joined HKIS as a council member

of the Planning and Development Division, and later became the division's chairman before becoming HKIS vice-president today.

"I have no regrets about becoming a surveyor, in fact there is always an urge in me to go on site visits. It does not matter how senior my position is, it is about true loyalty to my clients and my profession," he continues.

He also takes pains to cleave to a devout ethical worldview. "All the time, I uphold professionalism and do my work with integrity."

Sitting in on the meetings of the young surveyors group at the HKIS, he thinks there are good prospects for the new generation in Hong Kong, with the hinterland of mainland China and especially in the neighbouring Pearl River Delta.

Dr Leung's public services range from serving government committees on land, housing and planning, to roles in top institutions including Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Macau University of Science and Technology and the University of South Queensland.

"Profits are not the most important thing. Young people know your bottom lines and avoid going with the flow. Reach out and learn about the world," says the seasoned surveyor and real estate professional, who enjoys meeting young people to exchange views and experience.

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