

Tributes to Miss Kay Tam, Miss Ruth Wong, Dr. Arthur Hinton, and Mr. Terry Chamberlain: How they influenced my career in Space Exploration

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I was one of NASA/ Caltech/ JPL's managers of the Cassini-Huygens Mission to Saturn and Titan, Voyager Interstellar Mission for interstellar exploration, Gravity Probe-B Mission to test Einstein's universe, various missions to Mars, and other missions.

My father Poon Chak Kwong, Sam 潘澤光 ignited my passion for space when I was a child. He was a fighter pilot with the Flying Tigers 飛虎隊 all of whom fought bravely against the Japanese invaders and destroyed them during combats.

When interviewed by the news media about NASA missions and joint missions with the European Space Agency, I often mentioned the excellent education I received at QES. Since it is impossible to recognize all the excellent teachers, I would like to pay special tribute to four educators: Miss Kay Tam, Miss Ruth Wong, Dr. Arthur Hinton, and Mr. Terry Chamberlain.

Miss Kay Tam taught us Mathematics when we were in Form 4. Even though she was quiet in demeanor, she had a great impact on me personally through her care, excellent teaching and high expectations for our performance. She was strict in class, and drilled us on mathematical formulae which I still remember today. One time after school, I met her at the bus stop closest to QES. She asked me whether I was going home. "No, Miss Kay Tam, I am going to tutor two students before going home." She said a few words with concern and understanding, and I felt her care which I remember throughout my life. The last time I chatted with Miss Kay Tam on the phone was when she was in her nineties, a few months before she passed away in Toronto.

Miss Ruth Wong was one of my most admired teachers at QES. The interesting fact is that she never taught me in the classroom, but she taught me by her example, her character and her compassion. I knew her from QES activities and later I became close to her and her family. I was inspired by her diligence, intelligence, and dedication to academic excellence. She often gave extra lessons to students after normal school hours. After a distinguished career as an excellent teacher at QES and in Canada, she continued to volunteer to serve the disadvantaged including volunteering in Meals on Wheels to serve seniors. I visited Miss Ruth Wong (Mrs. Ruth Wong Ko) whenever I went to Toronto. She was in her eighties the last time I talked to her on the phone.

Dr. Arthur Hinton was truly a role model for educators. He often greeted students in the hallways and talked to them. Dr. Hinton was our Principal at that time and we often had interactions with each other since I was a Head Prefect (the other Head Prefect being the Head Girl). I found Dr. Hinton had a genuine concern for all students. He encouraged extracurricular activities and community service. As a result, attending QES was such an enjoyable and meaningful experience in addition to the academic pursuits. I remember several of us wanted to establish a summer QES bookstore so that students could buy and sell used books, which would be a financial help to many families. Dr. Hinton liked the idea very much. We needed to send a notice to all students at QES. Since postage would be very expensive, I went to see Dr. Hinton and he immediately authorized the use of a stamp, "On Her Majesty's Service" with which we stamped hundreds of copies of the notice, which we mailed for free. The QES summer bookstore, completely run by students, was an overwhelming success. We were especially delighted to hear praises from many parents. Dr. Hinton inspired us with his excellent teaching, trust, integrity, his love for students, and his volunteering spirit.

Mr. Terry Chamberlain was our excellent teacher in Advanced Mathematics at QES. He was very innovative in his teaching of Mathematics and instilled a love of learning in us. Possessing a gentle demeanor and being welcoming to all students, he was well respected by all of us. I remember several of us in my class would like to learn Calculus a year early. To our greatest surprise, Mr. Chamberlain agreed to teach us Calculus on Saturday mornings for about two months and would not accept any compensation. I was inspired by his dedication to our intellectual growth and his extraordinary commitment to education.

Kudos to all the excellent educators at QES, as exemplified by Miss Kay Tam, Miss Ruth Wong, Dr. Arthur Hinton, and Mr. Terry Chamberlain!