

Professor Howell Tong's opening speech at the conference "Frontiers of Time Series Analysis and Related Fields" in honour of Professor Wai Keung Li, held at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology on 26-27 July 2013.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning! Isn't it a lovely morning!

Welcome to this beautiful campus of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

We are gathered here today to honour an outstanding statistician, Professor Wai Keung Li. It is particularly pleasing to see so many familiar faces as well as some new ones. Many of you are from Hong Kong or its neighbours, such as Xiamen, Taizhong, Beijing, Singapore, Sydney, Melbourne and so on. I also notice that some of you, like myself, have come from as far away as the UK and the USA. Your gracious presence demonstrates the high esteem we all hold in Wai Keung.

Like some of us, Wai Keung kicked off as a pure mathematician before he saw the light and moved to statistics. He obtained his doctorate in statistics in 1981 from the University of Western Ontario under the supervision of Professor Ian McLeod. Naturally, time

series analysis was his calling, an area he has never deserted.

He joined the Department of Statistics (as it was then called) at the University of Hong Kong in 1983. Since then, he has remained there for the next 30 years, that is half of his life, rising through the ranks from a lectureship in 1983 to a chair professorship in 2000. I can tell you a true story here. Back in 1982, I was the chair professor of the new department of statistics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Wai Keung came to see me at CUHK in 1982. I told him that a lectureship at CUHK was his. Alas, I was beaten by John Aitchison, my opposite number at HKU, because HKU's appointment letter arrived before CUHK's. History repeated itself. Fourteen years later, Wai Keung was instrumental in getting me to HKU from the UK, where I was then, by beating CUHK by 24 hours! So, it was my bad luck of failing to get Wai Keung to join me at CUHK in 1983 that led to my good luck of joining HKU in 1997 and later LSE. No wonder Confucius's superior, Laozi, predicted that upon bad lucks, good lucks could be built (禍兮福所倚) !

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With over 120 papers to his credit, Wai Keung has left his mark in almost every branch of time series analysis: goodness of fit tests, modelling of long memory time series, multivariate time series, threshold models, semi-parametric models, just to mention a few. As we all know, the McLeod-Li test is now featured in numerous text-books of our discipline. Wai Keung has won many accolades in recognition of his research

achievements. I only need to single out for mention his fellowships of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, and the American Statistical Association.

Over the past 30 years, Wai Keung has given sterling services to his department (-he is serving as head of department for the third time), to the Hong Kong statistical community (-as a recognition he was elected honorary member of the Hong Kong Statistical Society in 2009), and to the International Chinese Statistical Association (-the Outstanding Service Award bestowed by ICSA came as no surprise, also in 2009).

I think I am right in saying that Wai Keung holds the record of having produced the largest number of doctorates in statistics in Hong Kong. Therefore, I want to pay Wai Keung another warm tribute. Wai Keung is a wise, supportive and totally selfless supervisor. No wonder he was given the Outstanding Research Student Supervisor Award by Hong Kong University in 1999.

When I look around, I can see that the Li Army is almost everywhere, occupying key positions in almost every reputable university in Hong Kong and extending beyond. Wai Keung, I don't want to embarrass you but your students simply hold you in deep affection. I want to tell the audience that today's conference could not take place if it were not for that deep affection. In particular, Shiqing Ling, Mike So, Guodong

Li and Heng Wong deserve our most sincere thanks for securing all the fundings and a magnificent venue.

Confucius lived to the age of 72 or thereabouts and he said, 'At 60, I can decode all messages.' Well, Wai Keung, you are 60 now, so let me conclude by presenting this little present to you with this coded message (in both English and Chinese):

plums	peaches	fill	heaven	under
李	桃	滿	天	下

great	strong	tremble	fragrant	river
偉	強	震	香	江

I am sure that Wai Keung can decode it for those who can't.

Happy Birthday to Wai Keung!

Thank you!