

# GET YOURSELF PREPARED AND BE A MAN OF VALUE



**DR PETER TIN YAU POON**  
1963 BSc Graduate

One of my fond memories in HKU Science was studying with my fellow Science classmates at the library. During the breaks, we enjoyed taking a walk around the scenic Lily Pond. The environment was beautiful, serene, and refreshing. My Science classmates became my lifelong friends. Another fond memory was that we had no exams in the second year. As a free thinker, I used the flexible time to ponder on what I had learned, e.g., I wondered whether there were alternatives to the Copenhagen interpretation of Quantum Mechanics.

### Major Achievements

- NASA/ JPL/ Caltech Technical Manager, Telecommunications and Mission Systems Manager, Project Manager
- Received about 15 NASA awards and awards from the European Space Agency, German Space Operations Center, U.S. House of Representatives, California State Senate, etc.
- Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Telecommunications and Mission Systems Manager for the Cassini-Huygens mission to Saturn and Titan, 2001 Mars Odyssey mission, Voyager Interstellar Mission, Mars Global Surveyor mission, and other missions
- Member of U. S. Technical Advisory Group
- Executive Member of Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Committee
- Editorial Board member, Software Quality Professional

“Live your life to the fullest with kindness and compassion. Seek the truth with passion and diligence, and the truth will set you free.”

Years later, I learned that indeed there were alternatives including the Many-worlds interpretation and the Quantum Decoherence theories. I was in this free-thinking mode until I realised the need to have self-discipline to prepare for the third year final exams. Free thinking and self-discipline turned out to be very important in my future careers.

When I was a student, I was most impressed by Dr. K. T. Leung who taught us Abstract Algebra in a lively and lucid way. He was also very personable. The knowledge of Physics and Mathematics I gained at HKU enabled me to be flexible and adaptable. These qualities turned out to be essential when I worked at National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)/ Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL)/ California Institute of Technology (Caltech).



could not be published, in contrast to publishable work such as Martian rocks research.



I have been serving as a mentor for HKU exchange students in Southern California for many years. It is truly a rewarding experience. After years of life experience, my advice to young scientists: team effort is essential; and we should use our science knowledge to help the disadvantaged. I am pleased to know that HKU students are involved in volunteering activities to help those in need. I contribute in a small way by volunteering as a tutor to disadvantaged high school students. I hope there will be a significant team effort to address homelessness in our societies.

As Dr Einstein said, “Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.”



Recalling my time in NASA/ JPL/ Caltech, I was a Manager for over 12 exciting missions, and I worked for 35 years until retirement, before which my official title was Project Manager. My work involved sensitive information and

