

## An "old" Professor who become a "young" Barrister

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--It all began at the City University

After more than two years since I changed my career, my friends still ask me the same question: "Why did you give up a secure and high pay job? Are you crazy?" Yes, I think I must be crazy or mentally unbalanced to make such a decision. I had been working as a University Professor for 18 years, both in Hong Kong and Canada. When I was teaching at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, I took time out to first complete a CPE at University of Hong Kong and then a PCLL at City University. Although it was tough, I enjoyed my law studying years very much. Especially, the year I became a full time student at the City University.

Looking back, I still remember the first day of class. After so many years as a professor who used to stand in front of the classroom, it was a very relaxed and comfortable feeling of sitting in one of the swiveling chair of the theatre classroom. There was no need to wear a tie, just jeans and T-shirts. Perhaps there was generation gap, I talked to my professors more often than my classmates. Yes, the workload was very heavy and there was tremendous pressure. But I enjoyed every minute of the year as a full-time student at City.

Upon graduation from City University, before I decided to practice full time, I had discussed my plan with my family. They all support my decision even though they know the family's financial position will be worsen. I still remember the feeling I had on the first day I resigned from my University teaching position. Suddenly, I was out of a safety net, without any providence fund, medical insurance, company car, holiday passage, housing allowance, education allowance and above all, a secure income. But then, I realized that I have my own freedom.

"Freedom" means lots of free time and very little income. Luckily, my freedom gradually decreases. Remember I have been working in the community for many years. Besides teaching, I was actively involved in politics and community services. I had been a candidate for both the District Board and Legco Elections. I was a Hong Kong District Affair Advisor to the Chinese Government before 1997. I guess my social standing compensates my inexperience in law. I gradually gain the respect and confidence (my wishful thinking) from my clients and instructing solicitors. My diary began to fill up quickly and I am happy for what I am doing.

As I used to give lectures in public, I find it easy to stand up and talk in the courtroom. The only different is that I have to talk to one person (the judge) instead of to a large group of students (unless you treat the other defendants who sit at the back of the courtroom as students). But there is one major difference in the courtroom, judges always challenge you and ask difficult questions. You are no longer the only authoritative person (like in a class). Students in Hong Kong rarely ask questions and a professor is always right.

I have to confess that I enjoy the thrill and excitement of winning a case. I am still trying very hard to condition myself how to take it lightly when I lose one. I like to use "Punti" to cross-examine a witness but I prefer to use English for my submission. I wish one day the court will allow us to switch from one language to another freely.

Being a professional accountant as well, I am familiar with the tax laws. In fact, I was appointed by the Government as a member of the Board of Review of the Inland Revenue. Since last year, I start to handle a number of tax appeal cases. And just may be I had participated in several elections, I was asked to represent groups of villagers who wanted to vote in village representative elections. The biggest thrill was when we won our cases and the judgements received lots of media attention. The cases are being appealed to the Court of Appeal and may well go on to the Court of Final Appeal.

Lately, my friends ask me a different question: "Are you enjoying being a Barrister?" I have to say I enjoy it very much but I would prefer to be a full-time student if I have a choice (provided I don't have to write examinations).