

Through a time machine: Looking back at the APO in 1973



APO participant Kau Sik Chui admiring the passing scenery of Japan during APO project "PENT '73."

“I would like to share some photos of my father, who recently passed away in January 2016, as a participant in an APO project.” One day, I received a rather unusual e-mail from a gentleman living in Canada, who had just returned from his father’s funeral in Hong Kong. While sorting through his late father’s belongings, Thomas Chui had come across some photos taken during a trip to Japan to attend an APO project in 1973. According to Thomas, his father, Kau Sik Chui, born in 1947 in the Chinese province of Guangdong, was working for the Garden Hong Kong bakery as an assistant engineer, which led to his selection as an APO project participant in 1973.

PENT '73

The Packaging Engineering Training Course was a six-week program held from 2 October to 10 November 1973 in Japan. “PENT '73,” as it was apparently called by the organizers and participants, was organized by the APO in association with the Asian Packaging Federation and implemented by the Japan Productivity Center and Japan Packaging Institute. It was designed to develop the knowledge and skills of engineers and consultants from packaging industries, promotional institutions, and related enterprises by demonstrating the latest Japanese packaging techniques. The 10 APO participants from the Republic of China, Hong Kong, India, IR Iran (then Iran), Japan, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam visited various local companies and plants in Tokyo, Nagoya, and

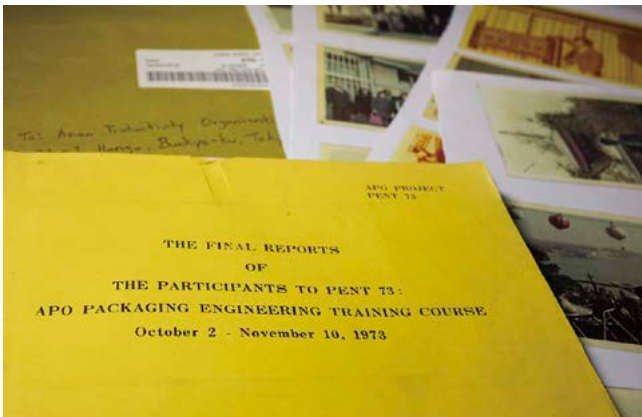
Osaka to observe and gain firsthand experience in unique packaging systems and technologies.

Among the memorabilia left behind by the elder Chui was a compilation of individual project reports written by each participant, generously sent by Thomas to the APO for its archives in addition to the original e-mail message. I wasn’t sure if it was the worn-out edges of the cover, or the pages with faded text that reflected its typewriter era, but my hands felt the “weight of time” as I turned each of its pages. “Here, every day has been valuable for me. We saw different kinds of manufacturing processes and discussed and learned with people of many countries,” the elder Chui recorded in his project report. “When I go back to my country, I shall do my best to improve my country’s packaging.” Thomas explained that, following his work at the bakery, his father had enjoyed a long, eventful life, studying in the UK, moving with his family to Canada to start anew, and eventually building what became a 40-year career in the toy manufacturing industry.

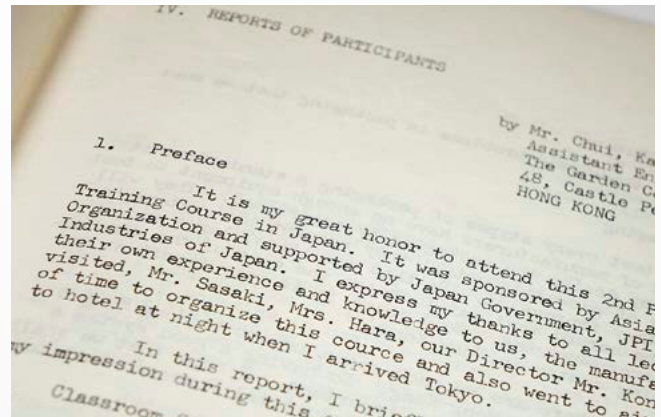
One APO moment, one lifetime

Unfortunately, the elder Chui died of thyroid cancer in January 2016, and so no one would ever know how much of what he had learned from that APO project had influenced his career and the businesses he contributed to. However, as I flipped through the slightly faded photographs, my mind’s eye retained a collage of Chui looking contented, looking thoughtful, looking lively. I felt pretty certain that the experience he

APO Secretariat Information & Public Relations Officer Yumiko Yamashita describes her reaction to receiving a record of an APO project in 1973, sent by the son of a past APO participant.



Among the memorabilia sent by Thomas Chui was a project report written by participants and numerous photos of the APO project.



The project report capturing the "live" voices of its participants.

had gained from the APO project was sufficiently unique that it had affected his life in many ways.

APO projects represent moments as short as the blink of an eye in participants' lives. But in those brief moments, new acquaintances are brought together, sharing days absorbing new learning, new perspectives, new sights, and new sounds in a classroom or on a site visit. Participants then disperse again, back to their own worlds, lives, and responsibilities, but hopefully carrying within themselves an added spark to create change. The stories of how those sparks grow into flames are truly inspiring. Tales of individuals encountered through APO projects and their accomplishments and achievements in the days, months, and years beyond

the classroom moment motivate us to continue our work of contributing to the socioeconomic development of the region and making a difference through productivity. 🌟

The APO regularly documents project participants' efforts to enhance productivity in their organizations and countries using new knowledge and perspectives gained in online articles and videos called APO Success Stories. Please visit the "APO People" section of the website to learn about individual experiences through the eyes of our participants. The author extends special thanks to Thomas Chui for the valuable opportunity to reflect on APO activities through his father's eyes.



Chui (second from right) with his fellow participants and the project coordinators of "PENT '73."