

## John F. Chiu MD CCFP

King Byzas asked the Oracle at Delphi where to build his city, Byzantium. The Oracle said, "opposite the blind." Byzas so sailed and built; 2500 years later, Yeats wrote in his great poem, "Sailing to Byzantium":

... The young  
In one another's arms, birds in the trees  
—Those dying generations—at their song,  
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,  
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.

In the 1960s, Louis and Margaret, Dr Chiu's parents, were physicians in Hong Kong. Louis worked for the port authority. Louis had an office on a 30-foot boat that traveled out to sea, inspecting ships, ensuring sailors were in good health. John remembers accompanying his father on these trips, spending the day fishing while his father worked.

Hong Kong had only one university in the 1960s for a large population. Louis and Margaret believed the best chance of a good education for their children was overseas. The Chiu came to live in Edmonton when John was 12 years old. It was 1967, Canada's centennial.

John remembers that he arrived on Victoria Day. No one on the street, no open shops, the opposite of the commercial crush of Hong Kong. Louis completed an internship year before he practised family medicine in Alberta. Then he entered into a practice with 3 other doctors and worked as a family physician for another 20 years.

Margaret didn't practise medicine, taking care of her children instead, though she did work closely with her husband, acting as his physician's assistant. At the dinner table husband and wife shared stories about what they experienced that day.

John entered the University of Alberta and became a family doctor. Like Louis, he discovered the freedom of the generalist: within a few years of practice he developed areas of interest that persist to the present day, resulting in publications in medical journals and teaching of medical residents of various stripes.

But freedom is in transit. In 2006, because of John's medical work and also work in the local Chinese community, John was named the Special Advisor on China for U of A's Faculty of Medicine. Coincident with this appointment was an initiative to improve the training and medical records of Hangzhou Zhejiang School of Medicine. This initiative grew to include the College of Family Physicians of Canada and other partners with the objective of improving family medicine training in China. In response, back in transit came the largest cash donation in the University of Alberta's history, \$25 million to establish the Li Ka Shing Institute of Virology.

Louis suffers from dementia now, and when John visits him, Louis can get confused and think his son has just arrived from a medical trip to China when John has actually been back for months.

Yeats' poem ends: "What is past, passing, or to come." A child fishing on a boat in a Hong Kong harbour; a physician near the end of his career, wearing a hundred hats, an exporter of family medicine, a medical diplomat; Yeats was terrible as a medium. What is to come?

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**Cover photo:** Curtis Comeau, Edmonton, Alta  
**Story:** Shane Neilson MD CCFP, Erin, Ont

Additional photos and the French translation of the story appear on page 702.  
D'autres photos et la traduction en français du récit se trouvent à la page 702.