

The Wong Way

Mr Wong is a practising solicitor in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Because he is a solicitor, he is very proud of his position in society. He wears only the latest fashionable clothes, which he purchases at a very fashionable departmental store, the same fashionable departmental store from where he purchased all of the furniture for his home. Solicitor Wong lives on The Peak, a very fashionable part of Hongkong. He lives in a house. He is married to a former teacher of the English language. He has a teenaged son who attends an international school. He is the proud owner of a white Rolls-Royce, which he purchased, second-hand, about 8 years ago.

The following are just some of the things that Solicitor Wong does; and, the reasoning (or lack of it) for his actions.

Owning a Rolls-Royce, even a second-hand one, is a truly wondrous thing. But is it enough? This thought ran through the mind of Solicitor Wong, early one Thursday evening as he was driven home to The Peak by his trusty Filipino driver. *'What do you think,'* he asked the Filipino driver, *'if I bought a luxury motor boat?'* *'Very nice!'* came the gleeful reply. *'But I don't have a licence to drive a boat, yet. I have to go back to school for that licence, don't I?'*

That was all that Solicitor Wong needed to hear. For the next 2 months, the office of Solicitor Wong was inundated with brochures, offering motor boats, from 40-foot motor launches at about \$HK5 million, each, to 120-foot, ocean-going yachts at the starting price of \$HK1 billion. It was exciting just looking at the glossy pictures of the luxury boats. Eventually, Solicitor Wong made a decision: He would buy a 60-foot cruiser that could accommodate 30 guests, his Filipino driver, being trained to be the coxswain. But there was a small problem about financing the \$HK10-million vessel. The bank said: *'No!'* The finance company said: *'No'*. And Solicitor Wong did not have \$HK10 million in cash to shell out for a luxury boat. Eventually, he struck on the perfect solution: He would take out a personal loan, using the matrimonial home on The Peak as collateral. The bank agreed. *'Yes! Yes! Yes!'*

After negotiating with a selected yacht broker and knocking down the price of a new, 60-cruiser by \$HK50,000 (which made him very happy), the next consideration was where to dock the boat after it was purchased. On learning that joining The Aberdeen Marina Club on Hongkong Island would cost \$HK2.10 million for an individual membership, while a berth, large enough to accommodate a 60-foot cruiser, would cost upwards of \$HK1.70 million, Solicitor Wong was shocked and considerably

deflated. And, to make matters worse, he discovered that the monthly rental for such a berth would cost him another \$HK9,500. Altogether, Solicitor Wong was staring at a total cost for his latest, proposed 'toy' of at least \$HK14 million, with a recurrent, annual rental cost for the berth at The Aberdeen Marina Club of about \$HK114,000. Maintenance of the luxury vessel, he discovered, would cost about \$HK75,000 per month, at least.

Even for a successful Hongkong solicitor, such an amount of money was huge – especially when he had only paid about \$HK50,000 for his second-hand, Rolls-Royce. On discussing the matter with Judy, his wife, one evening, he came to the conclusion that \$HK14 million was a little too pricey for the boat, even though he could, just about, afford it, he claimed. He commented, knowingly, to Judy at the conclusion of the dinner:

'The wind will hurt your face if it is too strong. And the salty air is not healthy, also, you know. And you know how sensitive is my skin. Perhaps, I shall not buy this boat, after all.'

But Solicitor Wong could not sleep that night, thinking about his dream of being a skipper of a 60-foot luxury cruiser. *'Hard aport!'* *'Steady as she goes!'* *'Increase speed to 10 knots!'* *'Stand by!'* *'Come about!'*

Oh! Life can be so difficult, even for a balding, successful Hongkong solicitor.

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