

## 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.**

It was time to teach Nickolas, the teenage son of Solicitor Wong, the important things in life in order to prepare him for adulthood. And who was better equipped to be the teacher of Nickolas than his father. Solicitor Wong had long been awaiting this singular opportunity to be Minister Mentor to his obedient son whom, this officer of the High Court of Hongkong envisaged, would follow in his footsteps and become the second generation of the solicitors' firm that would, in due course, bear the name of Wong and Son, Solicitors and Notaries. To this end, Solicitor Wong, as is his wont, wrote down, in order of importance, the 6, most important things that he had to instill in the brain of young Nickolas:

1. How to be rich;
2. How to be richer;
3. How to invest in order to maintain one's place in society as being known as being rich ... and steadily getting richer;
4. The important things in life, other than being rich;
5. How to safeguard oneself in business in order to maintain your status; and,
6. How not to appear to be a member of the nouveau riche.

One Sunday afternoon, after Nickolas had finished his homework in preparation for school, the next day, Solicitor Wong led his son into the family's handkerchief garden at the rear of the townhouse on The Peak and started Lesson Number One. The lesson went along the following lines:

1. The way to become a rich man is to learn the art of not paying. As a solicitor of Hongkong, or, you could become a barrister if that is your desire, you will earn a very good living, but holding onto your money is just as difficult as earning it. You have to learn that you may well accept select invitations to meals from clients, but, since you are the invited one, and not the inviter, you are not expected to pay for the meals and, in fact, you must refrain even from trying to pay for such meals. That is the prerogative of the inviter not the invitee. Also, only accept invitations from clients if you are very certain that the invitation is to discuss legal matters. In that way, you may even book the hours, spent at the meal, and include those hours in your next bill to the client. In this regard, the hours that you book should include travelling to and from the place of the meal, incidental expenses, such as parking fees, etc, and any and all other expenses in respect of accepting the invitation to eat a meal with your client;
2. The way to increase one's wealth, after one has reached a certain wealth plateau, is to learn the art of booking additional fees to clients. If, for instance, you are travelling on holiday with your family and one of your clients suggests that, if you just happen to pass through a certain country, say Madrid, Spain, then it would be an honour to meet you in that Capital City. You may, if it is convenient, accept the offer to visit Madrid. It would be in your best interests to book the time that you spend in Madrid, including all extraneous expenses, to your client. Naturally, the booking hours, in such a case, would include costs of transportation to and from the airport as well as tips to porters, etc, and, if you do not have the correct clothing, you may be forced to purchase one or more items of clothing in order to suit the climate of the day. In short, just because you are rich, it does not mean that you should become generous. That would be a terrible mistake: The richer you become, the more careful you must learn to be with your money. Money does not grow on trees, you know;
3. Your clients, having been chosen carefully for their wealth, will, either by accident or design, make known to you some details of certain business deals. This is your golden opportunity! Without telling your client or even intimating your intentions, you should find somebody whom you can trust, implicitly, such as your future wife, who cannot give evidence against her husband except in matters of a criminal nature, such as domestic violence, and instruct that person to make an investment on your behalf in your client's business deal or deals, using the name of a trusted party, preferably an offshore company, the ownership of which cannot be traced back to you or your wife or family. You must not tell the person, who makes the investment on your behalf, from where the information was obtained, no matter what, because, if you breach this golden rule of secrecy, then that person becomes an accessory during the fact or after the fact. Learn to adopt and explore the noble art of secrecy. It is essential in your profession. Also, allow others to take gambles: You must never indulge in speculations, but invest, only, when you are on the insider track. That is, when you know something that is going to happen, because you are the solicitor of record, then, go for it;
4. Other than lots of money in the bank, the most-important thing to remember is that you are a solicitor, an officer of the High Court of Hongkong. This is not a job, but a profession. In short, you have arrived! As a solicitor, you rank with the highest levels of society in Hongkong. You will be invited to all sorts of events, some with rich businessmen and, perhaps, even with high-ranking, Hongkong Government servants. I have already explained to you about rich businessmen and how you can earn a great deal of money, first by being a solicitor to businessmen and, then, by keeping your ears open and your mouth shut when you hear of a businessman's plans for the future, either directly or indirectly. In this regard, listen to the businessman if he is making a telephone call to another businessman while you are in

conference with him. But do not comment on his telephone call. The important point that I am making is that you must safeguard your position as a solicitor, first and foremost, because that is the key to continued prosperity in the future. Also, being a solicitor must be viewed as a stepping-stone to even bigger and better things in the future. If, for instance, you are appointed to a position in the Judiciary, there may be opportunities, unbounded. About that, I can say no more at this juncture except to remind you that many a solicitor has risen in rank to the highest positions of power in many a government of the world;

5. In business, that is outside of your profession as a solicitor, always think of a fall-back position just in case there is a problem, somewhere down the line. When you put pen to paper, you must, always, remember that, if there is a problem, you must appear to be guiltless. If you view the letters that I write on behalf of my clients, you will note that I always state something along the lines: *'My client takes the view that ...'* or, *'I act on behalf of my client, Mr So-And-So, and I am informed and I verily believe it to be true...'* or, *'I am instructed by my client to remind you that ...'* It is, always, the client that is making the allegation and I am but the messenger of my client, trying to extract justice on behalf of the client. In the event, let us say, that your client admits to you that he is in financial trouble and he asks you whether or not one or more of your other clients might like to invest in his problematic business, you might like to consider assisting your client, but do so in a manner so that (a) you obtain all of the legal work in this regard as well as a Finder's Fee for your recommendation and (b) in the event that your client cannot extricate himself from beneath his burden of debt, then, you must safeguard your position, financially and legally, without there being any risk to your reputation as an officer of the High Court of Hongkong. The fault must, always, lie with the client: You are, always, blameless. It is an important aspect in this profession of ours; and,
6. Be humble. People with real money always give the appearance of being humble. That is the reason that, when a client invites you to have a meal, he must pay. You are but a scribe, an humble tradesman, if you will, a simple servant of your client. But, in due course, you will have much more money than your client if you listen to me. But, in order to achieve this position of extraordinary wealth, you must adopt the air of humility. Put another way, if you have a \$HK500 note, wrap a \$HK1.00 note around it so it appears that you only have \$HK1.00 in your pocket. Old money is best money. Do not forget that. Old money is never the money of the nouveau riche. Do not be ostentatious, at any time, because, then, the game is up. Hide your assets in the way of the truly wealthy man who feigns innocence and nonchalance, buying inexpensive shoes, openly, for the sake of proving his ability to purchase whatever he desires. At the same time, purchase only the best of everything – watches, motor cars, furniture, suits of the finest material, jewellery, produced by the best tradesmen and sold at the best, brand-named shops, etc – but only allow a certain group of your closest friends to know of your real taste for the best things in life. In short, to the world, outwardly be humble; inwardly, amass your treasures so that you may indulge yourself to your heart's content. Lastly, remember, it is a wise thing not to allow the left hand to know what the right hand is doing.

By the time that Solicitor Wong had completed the lesson to his son for the day, it was close to dinner time so he took Nickolas back into the house and handed him over to his Filipina maid and gave orders to bathe the boy before escorting him to the dining room. Judy, Solicitor Wong's wife, was seated in the living room, awaiting the return of her husband and her son and said, as Solicitor Wong seated himself in his favourite chair: *'Had a good day, my Dear?'* To which the answer was: *'I would call it a creative one. It strikes me that I should write a book about the difficult business of being a solicitor of Hongkong. On instructing Nickolas, it dawned on me that a good solicitor of this territory, if he intends to succeed, has to understand a great deal about business and business ethics as well as his knowledge of the law.'*

Judy just remarked:

*'Don't work or think too hard, my Dear,  
you might break something,  
something internally, something above your ears.'*

*.....yaW gnoW ehT*

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