

“When the Old Boys get together, they will always sing (the La Salle College School song)”. Most LaSallian will likely agree that one of our most treasured memories would date back to the fun and care-free primary and secondary school days. Benedict Lam and Paul Ng were no exception and were in constant peruse to gather fellow Overseas Old Boys to relive the good old times and, of course, to proudly sing our school song together.

After graduated from La Salle College in 1973, Paul had immigrated and settled in Vancouver, British Columbia in the following year. Not knowing too many people in the strange city of Vancouver and still deeply missed the good old La Salle days, Paul had always dreamed of starting an Old Boys club at Vancouver. His prayer was finally answered in 1976.

During a pleasure trip to Hong Kong in 1976, Paul ran into Brother Raphael, the Principal of La Salle College at the time, and had casually mentioned his plan to start an Old Boys club at Vancouver to Brother Raphael. Leaving his idea behind after he returning from Hong Kong, Paul was pleasantly surprise when he was approached by Benedict Lam (60’). Great men must think alike for similar to Paul, Benedict was also in a process of setting up a La Salle Old Boys Association at Vancouver, BC. After learning from other Old Boys that Paul was also interested in setting an Old Boys club at Vancouver, Benedict had contacted Paul and officially invited him to join the Vancouver Old Boys Association (OBA) organizing committee.

After graduated in 1960 from La Salle College and spent 8 years in Ottawa, Benedict Lam had settled in Vancouver in 1968. With the increasing number of immigrants from Hong Kong in the 70s, Benedict noticed that many alumni associations of different secondary schools from Hong Kong were started to set up in Vancouver. Realizing that there was sufficient interest from La Salle Tsai and membership support to form our own local Vancouver chapter LSCOBA, Benedict had proceeded with the organization planning with a few other OBs including Dominic Lau, Alex Watt, Francis Sim, George Muller, and Arthur Yap-Chung.

Part of the OBA set up plan was to locate and getting acquainted with other old boys residing in Vancouver. Talking about *“boys of courage and boys of daring”*, instead of organizing a formal La Salle function which was still immature at the time, Paul had decided to ask Benedict and other old boys to send an open invitation to every La Salle Tsai residing at Vancouver to attend his wedding banquet which took place in September 1977. Not knowing how many extra guests would respond to his open invitation, Paul’s belief was that the more OBs show up, the better chance of success would the Vancouver OBA formation was. Among the many guests who participated in the first unofficial Vancouver OBA gathering were Benedict Lam and Dominic Lau who still remained the die-hard members of the Vancouver OBA to this very date.

The second milestone of Vancouver OBA took place in the summer of 1978 when A. O. Sales was leading the Hong Kong team to attend Commonwealth Game at Edmonton, Alberta. Upon their return stop-over from Edmonton, the Vancouver OBA organizing committee had invited De O Sales and his team to attend a welcoming reception banquet,

which turned out to be the first official Vancouver La Salle Old Boys function. Thanks to hard work from the organizing committee and fellow Old Boys, the function was very successful and close to 200 people attended the reception dinner held at Canyon Garden in North Vancouver, BC.

Taking advantage of the momentum of enthusiasm from fellow Old Boys, the La Salle College Old Boys Association (Vancouver Chapter) was officially formed in summer 1978. Formal Chapter constitution document, prepared by Benedict Lam, was officially signed in June 29th, 1978. The OBA inauguration success was celebrated with the first Annual Christmas/New Year OBA Ball which took place in New Years Eve of 1978 at the Bayshore Inn, Downtown Vancouver. In total, over 400 people had attended this very special celebration dinner.

The founding executive committee and members of Vancouver chapter is listed as follow:

President: Benedict Lam
Vice-Presidents: Dominic Lau & Alex Watt
Secretary: George Muller
Treasurer: Francis Sim
Public Relations: Arthur Yap-Chung

Members:
Albert Butt Jackie Ma
Andrew Chee Matthew Ma
David Cheung Paul Ng
Frank Chow Eric Pong
Benedict Fan Owen Villa
Dennis Koo David Wong
Peter Lai John Wong
Edward Lee Jonathan Wong
Kenneth Li Hebert Yap-Chung



"SOCIETIES ACT"

CONSTITUTION

1. The name of the Society is "La Salle College Old Boys' Association" (hereinafter called the "Association").

Figure 1 - Photocopy of the original constitution of LSCOBA Vancouver Chapter.

Like many organizations, the Vancouver chapter also has its active and slow moments. During the 80s, the chapter has lost some members who had returned to Hong Kong and China. After a period of slower participation in the late 80s, the chapter became active again in early 90s with the infusion of new Old Boys mainly from the class of 80s.

Even though Vancouver chapter was officially inaugurated in 1978, formal tie with HKOBA did not happen until early 2000. With the advance in IT technology in early 2000, the launch of the official HKOBA website had played a major role in help linking different overseas chapters together.

The visit of Brother Thomas to Los Angeles in the summer of 2002 had sparked the idea of the first North American Soccer Game which, subsequently, was held at San Francisco in September 2002. Vancouver chapter was one of the three chapters (besides San Francisco and South California) participated in this very meaningful sports event that was later expanded into the present-day Global Reunion.

To-date, Vancouver chapter has over 300 registered members and approximately 40 active members. Since inauguration in 1978, a total of 23 keen OBs have volunteered their time to serve as presidents of Vancouver Chapter. (A tribute video of the past presidents is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5IHix30a9c>). Amongst the many members is Weldon Chen of class of 1937, who still find time to attend and support some of our chapter social functions whenever feasible.



Weldon Chan (37) receiving recognition certificate from President Raymond Wong at the 30th Anniversary Dinner held at the Bayshore Inn, Downtown Vancouver in 2008.

Comparing to the other overseas OBA chapters, Vancouver is considered one of the bigger chapters in terms of membership size. Size, however, comes with both advantages and challenges. As a result of large membership size, it was easy for Vancouver chapter to solicit OBs to serve as executive members. In the 2009 Annual General Meeting, 22 members had stepped up and volunteered their time to serve as executive members. The large membership size has also made it easier to draw large turnout in most major OBA events. However, larger membership size also has its draw backs.

With the large membership size, social gatherings, by natural default, become smaller, more private, and usually organized in layers. Although Old Boys initiated gatherings are very frequent (almost at least monthly), the gatherings usually consist of OBs from similar graduating years and are not officially labelled as OBA functions. Every once in a while, selected OBs outside these layers (graduating years) are invited to attend these “private” functions and thus have the potential to serve as interface between different OB groups. In comparison, similar gatherings in smaller chapters might be private at start but could easily transform into formal OBA functions, for the one to two table party would represent almost ½ of the executive turnout.

Nevertheless, in addition to the many smaller and less official functions, the two main OBA functions include the Annual Christmas/New year Ball which lasted till the late 90s, and the Annual Picnic which still continues today as a major OBA family-based function.



Group photo from the 2007 Annual Picnic held at Raymond Wong's (2007- 2009 President) Organic Farm.

1994 Annual Picnic held at Cultus Lake, Chilliwack BC.

*First row - Francis Yeung(69);
Cheung Ting Po Sir; Peter Cheung
Wah Tai Sir; Humphrey Ho(69)*



The large membership size also makes organization of major OBA functions more challenging. Nevertheless, with the strong support from the large executive group and general members, a lot of successful and memorable events were organized over the

years. Highlights of some of the recent major events/activities of Vancouver chapter include:

1. November 2009 - 30th Anniversary of Vancouver Chapter;
2. February 2009 – Chinese New Year Dinner;
3. October 2007 – Celebrating Dinner for 75th Anniversary of LSC;
4. August 2007 - Annual picnic at former president, Raymond Wong, Hot House Farm;
5. August 2003 – North America Soccer Game hosted by Vancouver Chapter.

Located in one of the warmest weather in Canada, Vancouver chapter is able to regularly attract new members (both young and mature). However, the chapter realizes that it must continue to find innovative ways to draw the members at large to its regular gatherings. As sons of La Salle, members of Vancouver chapter will continue to find ways to get together and proudly sing our school song.

(The author would like to thank Benedict Lam, Paul Ng, Dominic Lau, and Ronald Loui-Ying for providing valuable information on the history of Vancouver chapter and Peter Choy, Daniel Chung, and Joseph Ng for providing the photos of different OBA chapter events.)

Story written by Victor Leung (77')