



Kindergarten graduation at the original campus at Sanches de Mirando, c. 1956.

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## Macao Sam Yuk Middle School

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### JOSEPH W. LO

Joseph W. Lo, Ph.D., born in Hong Kong of Adventist parents, has a doctorate in nuclear physics. He has worked as a researcher, NASA scientist, university lecturer, automation engineer, petroleum exploration and computer consultant prior to becoming principal of Macao Sam Yuk School. His passion is in youth ministry, Adventist education, and music. Besides being active in lay ministries in the Greater Houston area, he also formed and led a youth orchestra and a gospel singing group.

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Macao Sam Yuk Middle School ( , from henceforth abbreviated MSY), established in 1953, is a K-12 Seventh-day Adventist mission school in the city of Macao ( <sup>1</sup> ), which consists of a peninsula and two islands, located 40 miles

west of Hong Kong across the mouth of the Pearl River. Macao is currently a Special Administration Region of China.

Macao is the location in China where the first Chinese national was baptized into the Protestant faith.<sup>2</sup> Macao is a mission territory under the Hong Kong Macao Conference (HKMC).<sup>3</sup> At the time Macao was a Portuguese colony, while Hong Kong was a British colony. In the early 1950s, the conference leadership decided to acquire a property in Macao to establish a church immediately and open a mission school later.<sup>4</sup> The history of the school can be divided into three periods.

## Original Campus on Macao Peninsula, 1953–1967

In the early 1950s there was a severe lack of student enrollment space in the city of Macao. Seeing that as an opportunity for evangelism, the Hong Kong Macao Conference asked Zhong Huibo ( ), pastor of the Macao Adventist Church, to organize and start a mission grammar school at the previously purchased church property at 5 Rua de Sanches de Miranda, Macao ( ).<sup>5</sup> After a short preparation, the school began operation in September of 1953, as a branch school of the Sam Yuk Middle School of Clear Water Bay, Hong Kong.<sup>6</sup> The school was originally named Sam Yuk School-Macao Branch ( ), starting with 19 students in kindergarten and Primary 1-2. It immediately became an effective evangelistic tool in attracting newcomers to worship services.

Within two years, the school expanded, but only up to Primary 6, serving as a feeder school to the main Sam Yuk schools in Hong Kong. Kindergarten was also divided into upper and lower K classes. By the middle of the 1955-56 school year, there were nine teachers, while the enrolment fluctuated around 170 students.<sup>7</sup>

A few years later student enrollment began to drop due to competition from newly built secondary schools in Macao. Although MSY fervently promoted that its primary students could go onto its main campus boarding school in Hong Kong for higher grades, many parents preferred to enroll their children elsewhere so they could directly enter the secondary schools in Macao.<sup>8</sup>

In 1961 the school officially registered as Sam Yuk School,<sup>9</sup> operating as a local school in Macao within the Seventh-day Adventist education system, independent of the Hong Kong main campuses. In the 1961-62 school year, the school progressed into a junior secondary school, but internally it still acted as a feeder school to the Hong Kong boarding school for higher grades. Enrollment went up to more than 200. As more senior high schools were built in Macao, many parents still preferred to enroll their children in a full secondary school after Junior 2. Starting in the 1965-66 school year, Junior 3 enrollment dropped and MSY dropped from Junior 3 to Junior 2.<sup>10</sup>

In early 1967 there was political unrest in Macao as a fallout of the Cultural Revolution in China. Home-made bombs nicknamed “pineapple” appeared on streets, exploding and injuring people. Propaganda posters were posted on the outer walls of the school, condemning the school and threatening staff members. There were

serious concerns about the safety of all, especially the principal, who was forced to leave Macao and flee to Hong Kong. The school suspended its operation in mid-1967. It remained closed until 1986. After the unrest, the Macao government took the campus to house the office of the Macao Social Work and Welfare Bureau. The building was designated by the current Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government as a historic landmark of Macao, showing that it was the former site of an Adventist school/church.<sup>11</sup>

## Temporary Campus in Fai Chi Ki District of Macao Peninsula, 1986–1997

Around 1985, Macao badly needed student enrollment space to accommodate the heavy influx of new immigrants. The Hong Kong Macao Conference again saw an evangelism opportunity in Macao by using a mission school. In June 1986 Handel Luke was appointed to re-start the operation of MSY in Macao. Since the old campus was gone, it was necessary to select a new location. The Fai Chi Ki District on the north of Macao Peninsula, near the Gong Bei Border Gate of Zhuhai City, was chosen because that area had many immigrants from China and plenty of newly built high-rise buildings to accommodate the rapid population growth. To facilitate a quick start, the ground and upper floors of one of the high-rise residential buildings was acquired. It was remodeled into multiple classrooms, one of which doubled as church for Sabbath meetings. The school address was Edif Vang Son, No 94 RC-GRC, Avenida Da Concordia, Fai Chi Ki ( [12](#) 94 G ).

MSY re-started in the 1986-87 school year, but only as a night school, for the venue was not ideal to operate a grammar school. It offered adult Business English and English Conversation classes. Some students began to attend prayer meetings and Sabbath worship services.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1992-93 school year, despite the limitation of the venue, MSY changed into a grammar day-school to help increase enrollment of school age children for Macao. The government allowed the school to use a nearby sports field inside a greyhound racetrack for physical education class, lunch, and recess. It started with only one “15-student English section” Primary 6 class. By the next school year, enrollment had increased to 50+ students in two classes: Primary 6 and Middle 1.<sup>14</sup>

When the school reopened in 1986, it took on several temporary names to improve its attractiveness for student recruitment before finally officially registering as “Macao Sam Yuk College” (Colegio Sam Yuk De Macau, ) to operate as a grammar school. This name is similar to its former main campus in Clear Water Bay, which, by then had changed its Chinese name to “Hong Kong Sam Yuk College” ( , Colegio Sam Yuk De Hong Kong in Portuguese). MSY also declared that it would use the same set of textbooks and the same Middle 1-5 secondary system as the school in Hong Kong. This enabled a smooth registration with the Macao government.<sup>15</sup>

The Macao government again offered free land to build schools. MSY applied, showing proof that the Hong Kong Macao Conference, Chinese Union Mission and Northern Asia-Pacific Division all agreed to use a portion of the

money from the Chan Shun Foundation to develop the school. The conference also agreed to contribute from its reserved fund. The government granted the land. The General Conference designated the Thirteenth Sabbath School World Mission Offering of first quarter 1996 toward the building project.<sup>16</sup>

A 3.19-acre (138902 sf) plot of land was granted on the Taipa Island ( ( 1) The Chinese name for the island means “puddles of water,” as part of it was wet and swampy. The plot was large and nicely located near the historic old Taipa Town, but it was in a wetland near the south of the island. After a lengthy ground preparation, in July 1994 MSY was able to conduct a ground-breaking ceremony,<sup>18</sup> attended by students, school staff, and conference, union, and division representatives. Many Macao newspapers reported on the event.

While the new campus in Taipa was being constructed, MSY continued operating in Fai Chi Ki. For the 1994-95 school year, with the expectation of the soon coming new campus and the fact that Macao government started to subsidize tuitions for students in grades 1-9, many new immigrants came to MSY. 250+ students registered. MSY rented the adjacent space as classrooms to accommodate the increased enrollment. During the 1995-96 school year, nearly 600 students wanted to enroll. To accommodate the numbers MSY divided itself into morning session and afternoon session. The classrooms were packed. Students and teachers endured the inconvenience of a crowded school, with the expectation that there would soon be a spacious new campus. The Macao government expressed its appreciation to MSY for helping solve its serious enrollment problem.<sup>19</sup>

By the end of 1996, the “outer shell” of the new school building was constructed, a four-story structure of 32 classrooms, 16 special rooms, a gym/assembly auditorium, and 10 staff living units. Over USD\$6.3 million was spent. Macao government built the road outside of the school and named it “College Road” (Rua Do Colegio), after the school name Macao Sam Yuk College.<sup>20</sup>

## New Campus in the Taipa Island of Macao, 1997–Present

By February 1997, the license to operate the new campus was granted. On April 11, 1997 the school held its official opening ceremony. The governor of Macao, local dignitaries, and conference, union level, and division leaders attended the ceremony. It was a joyous day, with fire crackers and lion dances, to celebrate that MSY finally had this new campus, much bigger and with more potential than the original!<sup>21</sup>

MSY changed to its current name, Macao Sam Yuk Middle School. Officially, the name is: Escola Secundaria Sam Yuk De Macau, aka , as Portuguese and Chinese are the only two official languages in Macao. The address of the school is Rua Do Colegio, S/N, Taipa, Macau, China ( ( ) ). In English, the address is College Road, Taipa, Macao SAR, China.<sup>22</sup> MSY also re-registered as a vocational secondary school that could offer kindergarten and primary education, becoming one of the first two vocational secondary schools in Macao. The government was pleased about this, as it would give students of Macao another educational pathway.<sup>23</sup>

Making Christian ministry a priority, MSY immediately started projects in the 1997-98 school year:

1. The Youth Center was constructed, partially funded by the General Conference 13<sup>th</sup> Sabbath offering. It was the home” for spiritual activities and Christian fellowship. On the outer wall is a mosaic wall mural of Jesus with children and the text Matthew 19:14, “Let the children come to me”. Passersby can see that MSY is more than a school; it is also a gospel lighthouse.
2. A Pathfinder club, the first in Macao, was formed, meeting in the Youth Center. It was an effective evangelistic tool as members got to socialize with others of similar interests. Pathfinder members were selected to represent Macao in a major leadership youth camp of five Chinese cities during that school year. <sup>24</sup> September 29-31, 2001, the club proudly hosted the Hong Kong Macao Conference Pathfinder Camporee on Coloane Island, Macao.<sup>25</sup>

By the middle of the 1997-1998 school year, MSY proposed a comprehensive 10-year development plan to the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ, Direcção dos Serviços de Educação e Juventude). The plan covered:

- a. How MSY would migrate from its existing HK grammar education system to a school with an English secondary section and vocational education system offering five useful vocational fields for Macao: commerce/IT, visual art, exercise/health, music, and tourism. And add a Kindergarten section to become a complete K-12 school. MSY formulated this plan based on governmental statistical & projection data.
- b. Staff development needed for staff to teach in an Adventist vocational education environment, and
- c. What special labs/equipment were needed for these fields. DSEJ recognized that what MSY planned was in sync with the development of Macao into a tourist and business convention center in Asia. Therefore, DSEJ endorsed the development plan. <sup>26</sup>

Beginning in the 1998-1999 school year, for seven years MSY executed the development as planned and developed into a vocational school with three vocational fields, while also adding a strong English section. DSEJ was supportive and subsidized over 4,500,000MOP<sup>27</sup> (USD\$563,000) to help MSY with staff development and infrastructure. MSY trained its staff, who were mostly non-Adventists and unfamiliar with teaching in vocational schools, to understand the Adventist education and vocational school cultures. For three years, staff members took classes on Adventist holistic education concepts at three Adventist Institutions, and learned multiple intelligence concepts. They also did educational observations at established vocational schools in China and Adventist high schools in Hong Kong. Simultaneously, MSY added the needed technology. Within six years, MSY constructed and equipped seven field-specific vocational labs that simulate respective industries. MSY began migrating the Chinese secondary section from the Hong Kong Middle 1-5 system into the Junior 1-3 & Senior 1-3 system, and building a grammar education English secondary section (which would also migrate to vocational education seven years later), concentrating on preparing future tourism workers capable of serving English-

speaking tourists. In the 1999-2000 term, MSY started the commerce/IT-related Business Vocational Field and the visual art-related Fashion Design Vocational Field, and three years later added the exercise/health related Physical/Health Education Vocational Field. The class of 2005 was the first year with vocational graduates of all three fields.<sup>28</sup>

There were also many events during the above seven years that brought good recognition for the school. Here are some examples:

MSY conducted a 5-day Stop Smoking Seminar with help from Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital, Hong Kong, showing the Adventist health message to the people of Macao.<sup>29</sup>

MSY students performed a Portuguese folk dance during the December 20, 1999, "Macao Returned To China" Festivity, to a live audience of over 16,000 and millions of TV viewers worldwide.<sup>30</sup>

MSY formed various activity groups: e.g., the MSY Handball Team and Judo Team were yearly winners of interscholastic competitions. The MSY Bell Choir was featured by Macao TV and invited to perform for dignitaries from China and Portugal. The MSY Orchestra frequently performed regionally. On Sabbath afternoons, it even performed praise songs in town squares, inspiring tourists and local to sing along.<sup>31</sup>

MSY organized students to engage in community service, as the concept of serving others is important in vocational education. e.g., tree planting, recycling, house cleaning for seniors, Fashion Design students painted murals to beautify the city, mission trips, etc.<sup>32</sup>

MSY and the Sports Development Bureau of Macao negotiated a collaboration agreement. MSY supplied the land to build sport fields on a portion of the lawn space of the MSY, while the bureau paid for the construction and subsequent maintenance. MSY could use the facility during school hours and others could use it during non-school hours. MSY became known as a school that opens its campus to the community.<sup>33</sup>

Beginning in the 2003-04 school year, for three years, student enrollment gradually dropped from ~700 to ~500, losing students as new casinos hired them to work. This happened to all high schools, but was especially severe for the two vocational schools, as their students were more job-oriented. The Macao government countered this by subsidizing student tuition for 1-12 grades.

Beginning with the 2005-06 school year, for six years MSY shifted away from its emphasis on vocational education. Fashion Design and Physical Education vocational fields were phased out, leaving only the Commerce vocational field was left. The two remaining fields, music and tourism, did not start as scheduled. Many activities, especially those that complimented vocational education, also stopped. Since the Macao government started to subsidize tuition from K-12 that year, MSY decided to start the development of an English Kindergarten section and concentrated on it, constructing and equipping kindergarten classrooms immediately. MSY self-funded its

construction and equipment cost. In the 2006-07 school year, there were only 15 kindergarten students. However, the 2007-2008 school year was the timeline that MSY was scheduled to add an English Kindergarten Section as planned, and the kindergarten age group population increased as the government had forecasted. For subsequent years, MSY received financial subsidy from DSEJ to construct new kindergarten classrooms and expand the section.

Beginning from the 2011-12 school year, MSY again emphasized vocational education. MSY restarted the visual art field, but revamped it from Fashion Design to Graphic Design, as the clothing industry in Macao had declined. MSY received subsidies from DSEJ to upgrade the Fashion Design labs into Graphic Design labs. MSY also started the previously planned Tourism Vocational Field. MSY received subsidy from DSEJ to construct and equip the Tourism Vocational labs. MSY attempted to start another previously planned Music Vocational Field, but it was not successful, as the window of opportunity had passed. MSY continued to expand its Kindergarten section and received financial subsidy from DSEJ for it. MSY also started a Star Accelerating Reading Program which elevated the language skill of grades 1 to 9.<sup>34</sup>

Many activities had also been restarted.<sup>35</sup> For example:

MSY formed an Adventurer club. It became a fun evangelistic vehicle for lower graders and their parents.

MSY restarted Pathfinders. To rekindle students' interest, MSY conducted Pathfinder honor classes that integrate with academic classes.

MSY again promoted community service. e.g., mission trip for students doing compost bio-fuel projects in China.

MSY restarted the PTA and Alumni Association. With the current leaders of both the associations being former Pathfinder members, these associations are more active and stronger than before.

MSY transformed a portion of its lawn into a vegetable garden, organizing parents/students to run its operation. It became a place that nurtured parents' comradery and involvement.

At the time of writing, MSY provides the current educational need of Macao by having a Chinese Section offering Primary 6 to Senior 3 with two vocational fields, Commerce and Tourism Vocational Fields, and an English Section offering Kindergarten to Form 6 with three vocational fields, Commerce, Graphic Design, and Tourism Vocational Fields. The school has over 1000 students, with the enrollment of Kindergarten and Primary sections being the majority.<sup>36</sup> For the spiritual need in Macao, MSY continues its ministry as a gospel lighthouse leading people of Macao to Christ.

## Principals Chronology

Sam Yuk School-Macao Branch (1953-1967): Zhong Huibo ( 鍾惠波) 1953-1954; Milton Hwang ( 黃申權) 1954-1956; Li Daming ( 李大明) 1956-1958; Guang Juesheng ( 關國生) 1958-1960, as acting for 1958-1959; Wang Yizhong ( 王翼中) 1960-1962; John Chow ( 周文龍) 1962-1967.

School suspended operation (1967-1986)

Macao Sam Yuk College (1986-1997): Handel Luke ( 盧青達) 1986-1997.

Macao Sam Yuk Middle School (1997-): Handel Luke ( 盧青達) 1997-1998; Joseph Lo ( 羅惠清) 1998-2005, as acting for 1998-1999; Tsang Lin Chit ( 曾靈哲) 2005-2011; Brian Wong ( 黃煥友) 2011-2016; Simon Xu ( 徐有德) 2016-.

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## NOTES

1. Two different forms of English spelling have been used: Macao and Macau. In this article we try to stick to "Macao," but the reader may find that "Macau" may be used in some official names.
2. Alexander Wylie, "The Bible in China: A Record of Various Translations of the Holy Scriptures," in Arnold Foster, *Christian Progress in China: Gleanings from the Writings and Speeches of Many Workers* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1889), 29-46.
3. At the time it was known as Hong Kong Macao Mission before it changed to a self-supporting conference.
4. Chapman Wong, former President of Hong Kong Macao Conference, interview by author, Tel Aviv, Israel, March 3-6, 2019.
5. "School History," 1998-99 Macao Sam Yuk Yearbook and Special Issue (Taipa, Macau: Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, 2000), 14.
6. Alfred Chung, son of Pastor Zhong Huibo, first principal of Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, interview by author, Clear Water Bay, Hong Kong, March 2007.
7. Milton Hwang, former Principal of Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, emails to author, October 25, 2018 to November 24, 2018.
8. Ibid. Similar sentiment was expressed by former principals, Wang Yizhong and Handel Luke in subsequent interviews.
9. The suffix "-Macao Branch" was deleted from the original name.
10. John Chow, emails to author, October 1, 2018 to October 24, 2018.
11. Joseph Lo, personal knowledge, from visiting the venue several times during 1997-2005 when he served as vice principal and then principal of Macao Sam Yuk Middle School. The outside architecture of the building was well preserved and painted with the same color as it was when the Adventist Church owned it.
12. "School History," 1998-99 *Macao Sam Yuk Year Book and Special Issue* (Taipa, Macau: Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, 2000), 14.
13. Ibid.
14. "School History," 1998-99 *Macao Sam Yuk Year Book and Special Issue* (Taipa, Macau: Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, 2000), 15.
15. Handel Luke, interview by author, Macao, China, September 1997 – December 1997.
16. Kwan, K.S. and Lee, Sammy, "February 10 - Mission Macao," *Asia Pacific Division Mission Quarterly*, Jan-Mar 1996.
17. Joseph Lo, personal knowledge, from when he served as vice principal and then principal of Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, 1997-2005.
18. "School History," 1998-99 *Macao Sam Yuk Year Book and Special Issue* (Taipa, Macau: Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, 2000), 15.

19. Handel Luke, interview by author, Macao, China, September 1997 – December 1997.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Its website is [msy.edu.mo](http://msy.edu.mo).
23. Joseph Lo, personal knowledge, from when he worked as vice principal and then principal of Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, 1997-2005.
24. Ibid.
25. "Sam Yuk Pathfinder Camporee at the end of the month ( *Macao Daily News* ( ), July 9, 2001, B-7, Macao Local News Section.
26. Joseph Lo, personal knowledge, from when he worked as vice principal and then principal of Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, 1997-2005.
27. Ibid.; MOP, abbreviation of Macanese Pataca, is the official currency of Macao. The exchange rate with USD is usually around \$1USD = 8MOP.
28. Ibid.
29. "Pictorial – Major Activities," 1998-99 Macao Sam Yuk Year Book and Special Issue (Taipa, Macau: Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, 2000), 52.
30. "Pictorial – Portuguese Folk Dance Performance at Return to China Celebration," 1999-2000 Macao Sam Yuk Year Book (Taipa, Macau: Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, 2000), 67
31. Joseph Lo, personal knowledge, from when he worked as vice-principal and then principal of Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, 1997-2005.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Joseph Lo, personal knowledge from visiting the school five times during the period 2013 to 2015. During these visits the author interacted with administration, staff members, students, and parents in each occasion and was invited to officiate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the school.
35. Xu Youde, emails to author, February 18, 2019 to March 16, 2019.
36. Xu Youde, interview by author, Macao Sam Yuk Middle School, Taipa, Macao, November 11, 2019.

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