

A King in Every Job

An Interview with David Tang, O.B.E., Chairman and Managing Director, D.W.C. Tang Development Limited, Hong Kong

EDITORS' NOTE *Born in Hong Kong, David Tang was educated in Hong Kong, Cambridge, London, and Beijing. In addition to his responsibilities at D.W.C. Tang Development, he is the founder and chairman of the China Clubs in Hong Kong, Peking, and Singapore; the Shanghai Tang Department Stores; and the Pacific Cigar Co. He sits on numerous boards of directors, including that of Asprey & Garrard. He was made an Officer of the British Empire in 1997 and Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France) in 1995.*

London and the China Clubs in Hong Kong, Beijing, and Singapore?

Shanghai Tang sells Chinese products and China Tang sells Chinese food. Both of these places have an authentic Chinese atmosphere, reminiscent of Shanghai in the '30s, when that city, known as the Monte Carlo of the East, was an exciting mix of art deco and chinoiserie. The China Clubs also serve Chinese food, but the fact that they are individual clubs appeals more, in their settings of Hong Kong, Beijing, and Singapore.

photographs of her club. It's a pitiful pastiche of the China Clubs I have built. I certainly would not have consented to any association, even if I had been asked. The fact that I wasn't makes me angry. They should not have used the name China Club.

What's next for David Tang? You're a real estate mogul, a club entrepreneur, a restaurant investor, and a corporate director. You must be aging quickly.

I was 50 last year and I believe I still have a good 10 or 20 years of work left in me. I have two more international projects that I hope to build over the next two years. I want to leave behind businesses that will go on flourishing when I am six feet under!

Your wife and children must have a wonderful time traveling the world and visiting glorious places while you negotiate to buy them. Where do they like to go best?

They like what I love. They understand my passions and my eyes and my sense of style. They lend me tremendous support. They spur me on. I adore them all.

Of all your interests, what gives you the most joy?

The cigar calms me most, the roulette excites me like nothing else, reading gives me enormous pleasure, and playing the piano relaxes me no end.

You have the distribution rights for Havana cigars in Asia. How did you talk President Fidel Castro into the deal?

I told the Cubans 10 years ago that cigars could no longer be sold merely in the tobacconist's shop, but they had to be sold as a lifestyle. I was the first person to create a cigar divan, at the Mandarin Oriental in Hong Kong. People can smoke cigars in it, store their cigars in it, sit in it, drink in it, eat in it, and chat with other smokers in it.

Of all the famous and fascinating people you've met, who has impressed you most and why?

I miss Jimmy Goldsmith [British industrialist Sir James Goldsmith, who died in 1997]. He had a laser-sharp mind, a matchless sense of contrary logic, and remarkable style and wit. Diana, Princess



The Hon. David Tang hosting lunch for Diana, Princess of Wales in the garden of his Hong Kong home.

China Tang at The Dorchester hotel in London has become the new "in" place for celebrities and VIPs. Can others get in?

China Tang at The Dorchester, unlike my China Clubs in Hong Kong, Beijing, and Singapore, is not a club. So everyone is warmly welcomed.

What is the difference between Shanghai Tang and China Tang in

What about the China Club at the Adlon Hotel in Berlin? Is it allowed to use the same name as your clubs?

The China Club at the Adlon Hotel in Berlin has absolutely nothing to do with my China Clubs. The woman proprietor of the Berlin club annoyed me immensely where she touted membership of her club by suggesting we were associated. No such association ever existed. I have seen

of Wales, was simply glamour personified, and Mia Farrow has to be one of the most fascinating women in the world, having married Frank Sinatra and Andre Previn, and lived with Woody Allen, not to mention having adopted a string of orphans.

In this present age of turmoil, is there a chance for young people to excel, as you have? What advice would you give them?

Of course young people can excel. The best advice I can give anyone young is that they must always remain focused and they must just get on with whatever they want to do and do it well. It is important to excel in whatever you do, however lowly the job. There is a Chinese saying: There is a king in every job. The secret is that being the king in one job makes it easier for you to become a king in another job. And never kid yourself that just because you are determined, good with people, good at analysis, diligent, sensible, responsible, and hard-working, you are qualified to be employed. These are merely the minimum requirements. You should always look for a niche



Tang with Sir James Goldsmith; China Tang at The Dorchester (below)

– somewhere others have not been or something others have not done. And most important of all, stop talking and make a start.

What is the most wonderful experience you have ever had?

Sleeping with my wife at home with all four of our dogs. ●

