

**Christopher Wong Wai Yee**  
**(Demised – 8<sup>th</sup> February 2009)**



Christopher Wong Wai Yee, loving father, husband, lawyer and proprietor of his own law firm Messrs Wong, Ina & Associates passed away at the age of 46 in Vientiane, Laos at 1.55 a.m. on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2009 from acute cardiac failure.

Third in a family of six children, Christopher Wong Wai Yee (fondly known as Chris) was born and raised in Malacca. Amongst his siblings, he was the erstwhile self-starter, go getter, high flier and live wire. Perhaps it was his growing up years amidst financial hardship and trying times that became the driving force in his life. It is no surprise that this high achiever had two degrees, the first was the Bachelor of Business Administration from the National University of Singapore in 1985 and then what was to be his profession; the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) with Honours from University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom and the Certificate in Legal Practice obtained in a single sitting. The latter two were obtained whilst holding a fulltime job. A man in a hurry, he wasted no time setting up a partnership after being called to the Malaysian Bar in 1995. The firm soon evolved into Messrs Wong & Associates gradually expanding and eventually becoming Messrs Wong, Ina & Associates in 2008.

Along with the rest of his siblings, Chris saw to it that his parents were comfortable when 'he made it'. His obligations to his parents became even more profound when his older brother passed away suddenly in 2006 due to the very same ailment that took Chris's life, cardiac arrest. His death was indeed a double blow to them as it came 'too soon' 'too sudden' and for a person still "too young".

Chris had many friends, some were clients-turned-friends, others from long ago. One whom I am aware of was a Standard 1 classmate. Judging from the reaction of friends and family who came for his wake, I gathered from his family members that he was a true blue friend who went out of his way for them. Friends, (some from outstation but who made the purposeful trip to pay their final respects to him) whom I saw and attended the wake were from all walks of life, and of various colour and creed. Indians and Malays alike who attended the funeral said that he was their 'brother'. An Indian couple was there for the wake every night right through to the cremation service and ceremony. Another Malay man had been too embarrassed to come for the wake, as he had not stopped crying on hearing of his departure and did not want Chris's family to see him in such a state. Yet, this friend came twice, once during the wake service and another on the morning before the cremation service. He was truly a sight to behold as he tried to avoid breaking down emotionally; he kept on biting his knuckles. Another client cum friend was reported to be still in a state of limbo, feeling down and lost since he learnt of Chris's death. Hopefully, he has accepted that Chris is gone and life has to go on for the living.

What is there to say about Christopher Wong Wai Yee? A lot...

His demise came as a shock to everyone; family, friends, associates, staff, and clients alike. There was no sign at all that he was going to leave us. On Friday morning, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2009, he went to the office and greeted everyone as was his usual practice. He sat in the middle of the lawyers' cubicles and he and his employees started the morning with a debate over the political unrest in Perak with everyone giving their interpretation and views on the matter. That was one of his qualities that the employees will remember fondly. Although he was the boss, he treated them as equals and referred to the firm's lawyers as his associates. He was always willing to sit, listen and discuss with them, on any matter, be it personal, work-related or on general issues.

Where work was concerned, he would make it a point to follow up with every lawyer in the firm and kept himself updated on their work. Chris ensured that the firm had all the latest legal research tools, as he encouraged them to research on legal issues and have the issues and findings debated on from all angles and possible aspects of contention and finding out the best solution. They admired his knowledge on company law and management. There was so much to learn from him especially in terms of his derring-do. He had a unique way of interpreting laws and though on occasion, some were less than viable, his strong belief that his clients' matters were unique and should be differentiated in the interest of justice was the inspiration for them to carry out the assignment with confidence and conviction. As Chris spent more time marketing the firm, he seldom went to court. Yet listening to his arguments, they believed him to be a good litigator. However, he insisted that they should not send him to court unless he joked; they wanted to lose the case.

Chris was considerate and caring. He believed in relationships. That he was caring and sensitive was seen once when he sent his driver to check on an employee who was M.I.A. from office, worried that she had collapsed somewhere on her way to the office or had met with an accident.

At other times, Chris was a contradiction. He used to lecture his associates on the importance of having good health; encouraging us to go to the gym to exercise and to eat correctly. Unfortunately, he did not practice what he preached. Whenever he treated his associates to KFC, the drumstick portion would be reserved for him. At other times he just craved for fried curry chicken. Good news; whether personal, like when his daughter scored straight 'As' in SPM or professional, when we got a big job or big returns would see him treating his associates to a happy lunch. Such a contradiction was Chris, for as a firm, the associates were involved in big projects, and he would be doing all he could to make things happen. Yet at the same time, he was already feeling the strain and stress of work and was hinting to family that he wanted to retire early.

Perhaps the holiday he spent with his wife and family in Hong Kong would be a poignant memory for them as it was a fulfillment of a promise made to his daughter, Michelle. Father and daughter were close as there was always affectionate banter and repartee between the two.

He related an occasion where he told his daughter that she could take over his legal firm if she pursued law and become a lawyer. He laughed when she told him that if she took over the firm, she would terminate her father first so that the employees would regard her as the sole boss. That way, she could terminate any non-productive employee without them

questioning her authority. That conversation would surely be remembered by his family. Michelle is now pursuing 'A' levels for entry into Dentistry in Sunway College. Chris was also proud of his 15 year old son Anthony. There is one incident when Anthony was asked "what would you like to become when you grow up like daddy?" and without delay he answered "a lawyer". He was happy and proud of him, especially since he is a special child and was especially pleased that he had made good progress in his area of studies.

What can I say about Chris personally?

He was a boss and a friend. He is a people's person – always put others before him. He hardly smiled – very cool just like his daughter, but he was definitely a caring and kind person "...a good man". He was a humble and down to earth employer who kept telling his associates "don't call me boss, call me Chris". His conversations were normally peppered by the phrases "at the end of the day" and "can lah, can lah, no issue". Now occasionally the same phrases are repeated by his associates whenever they want to remind themselves of him.

Another poignant coincidence was that he was cremated on Valentine's Day, a day dedicated to love. Indeed the man was special and whatever his weakness, loved he was. He will be missed.

May he rest in peace and may we always remember him with great fondness.

Goodbye and he will always be missed by his wife, children, family and friends ...we love you and you are always in our memory.

**Yong Mei Ling**