

A Memorial Tribute from Stephen Clark and Christopher Howe and the shareholders and staff of the Anglo Chinese group in Hong Kong.

Lord Sandberg of Passfield has died aged 90 after a riveting life lived around the world. A life full of achievement, of friends, of fun and with a loving family around him.

He rose to the top of his profession at The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, becoming deputy Chairman in 1973, and at 50 Chairman and Chief Manager in 1977, retiring as Chairman and Chief Executive in 1986. Banking is an industry with the capacity to lose eye watering amounts of money if poorly led but Michael modernised and expanded The Bank internationally without any bank-wrecking initiatives so common in this business and left The Bank stronger and well placed for the future.

Michael had an illustrious and entertaining career with a touch of the cavalryman's dash about him after service in the Indian Army's 6th Lancers and the British Army's 1st King's Dragoon Guards, an OBE, a CBE, a Knighthood, a Life Peerage, and backing many leading Chinese businessmen who afterwards went on to succeed at everything they touched along with many others large and small who flew higher than they otherwise might have done, including us.

He sensibly deployed the inherent strength of The Bank to consolidate control of Hang Seng Bank and make an (ultimately unsuccessful but successfully spoiling) contested takeover bid for the United Kingdom's Royal Bank of Scotland, facing down the then Governor of the Bank of England in the process and diversifying into the USA (acquiring control of New York based Marine Midland Bank), expanding around the world and laying the ground for the acquisition of the Midland Bank in the UK, once Britain's largest bank and full control of Marine Midland both in 1987 by his successor.

Interestingly, he said of the redeveloped Hong Kong Bank HQ in Hong Kong commissioned during his Chairmanship, that it was "a building of which Hong Kong could be proud" because he knew that The Bank or "Wayfoong" was the financial pillar of Hong Kong and should look like it. Michael had the pulse of Hong Kong. He wanted the building to demonstrate The Bank's commitment to the Joint Declaration between the United Kingdom and The People's Republic of China regarding the handover of Hong Kong, to demonstrate The Bank was doing its bit to make the handover work and to demonstrate his and The Bank's belief in the future of Hong Kong. We shared that inspirational vision and set up Anglo Chinese to be a part of it.

Two other pithy sayings of his about Hong Kong remain with us that we would highlight here. The first was "never sell a good property asset just time it as to when you add to it" and the second was, "nobody has ever made money betting against Hong Kong." How true these observations have been in our lifetimes. There are many other sayings that remain with us that we shall not expand on here, but they are wise and many are very funny.

We were extremely fortunate to be befriended by him and, after he had retired from The Bank, he became a shareholder, of Anglo Chinese in 1989 and Chairman of our Risk Capital arm, Anglo Chinese Selections, which he chaired from 1990 until 2000.

We had the pleasure of Michael and his kind and super-capable PA, Patricia Whetnall in our London office for many years and the best part of a trip to London was lunch with Michael at one of his clubs be it, White's, The Cavalry & Guards or the House of Lords, of which he rather humorously wrote in his autobiography "Hurrahs and Hammerblows" that the place "has been described as the best club in London". At that time, it was probably true.

He helped many other people in business, large and small and in other things too and like all of us he was on occasion let down by a few of those who he had tried to promote, but as he used to say, "better that than wandering through life always looking for who will do you in". Michael had an infectious optimism and once he was convinced that you were worth supporting, he would pull all the stops out for you with advice, aided with what was then one of the best address books in the world.

In reality, he was always kind and humble and approachable and able to put anyone at ease with his human touch and natural empathy. Accordingly, Michael was a perfect bridge between East and West as the financial fortunes of the latter waned in comparison with the massive new fortunes that were being formed in the Far East and in Hong Kong. Michael had the foresight to champion those burgeoning interests when others chose not to do so and capture this growing business and he counted most of the leading up-and-coming businessmen of his generation in Hong Kong and across the Far East as his personal friends.

We shall always remember Michael meandering through a new year's eve, black tie ball in a webbed, blue, velvet smoking jacket at "Cloudlands", the old staff "mess" on the Peak for the bachelours and junior international staff of The Bank as if he were still one of them. That left us with a lifelong admiration of him just for that special personal touch, never mind the rest of it.

Michael had a very well rounded life. As a former cavalry officer he had a love of horses and horseracing and what was then, the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club of which he was Chairman from 1981-1986 in a period when the club did great things. One forgets that "the Jockey Club" in Hong Kong is first and foremost the leading charity of the territory and no wonder, Michael enjoyed being its Chairman so much because it was an ideal outlet for him and his deep interest in and love for Hong Kong. He led or chaired many other charities in Hong Kong too numerous to list here and was Treasurer of Hong Kong University.

He had wide ranging interests spanning current affairs, cricket, rugby, horology, and a spectacular and exotic watch collection about, which he published a book, "The Sandberg Collection". He enjoyed gardening and making his own brandy at Haute Germaine, his home in the South of France surrounded by multiple terraces, olive trees and distant views of the sea and, of course, his pet dogs and his country estate in England with its magnificent gardens and, the river Wey running through them and fast trains for the House of Lords.

Throughout his life, Michael had a big impact on a very considerable number of people whether it was at The Bank (his second love, after his wife Carmel and his family), the Jockey Club or the House of Lords where he thought he could help Hong Kong or Michael's love of cricket, where with his usual energy and that special address book, he probably saved the Oval cricket ground from bankruptcy as Chairman of the "Save the Oval" campaign and President of the Surrey Cricket Club.

The so very English sport of cricket, which has the resonance of a gentlemen's game, is played by absolutely anyone and everyone wherever the English have been other than North America. Michael believed in teamwork and that pretty much sums up Michael's view of people as we saw it, which was that it did not matter to him who you were, what mattered was what you could do and how you did it and you being given a chance to do it as part of a team.

It has been said that a gentleman is a person with "self-deprecation, generosity, tolerance, thoughtfulness and a sense of humour" and that was Michael to a tee and throughout the 35 years in which we knew him that is how we and we suspect many, many other people will remember him. Whether as a husband, father, grandfather, friend or businessman, we think people will remember him as a gentleman, irrespective of his many qualities and achievements.

In later life, Michael became so visually impaired that he could no longer navigate the House of Lords or anywhere else. He carried this awful but quite common affliction with his customary fortitude from 2000 until his death.

In his autobiography published in 2012, Michael wrote, "I carried with me a great pride and love of HSBC which remains with me to the present day." and that was all about teamwork too and the men and women with which he was proud to serve.

He was a loyal friend and a memorable man and a mentor to us and so we extend this tribute. We also extend our deepest condolences to his family and are, as ever, Stephen Clark, Christopher Howe and the Anglo Chinese Group in Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China.