

Interview with Mr David Wong

11 September 2024 at Wong, Hui & Co.

Interviewers: Sean Shun Ming Yau and Edward K. F. Chan

Q: Can you share a bit about your family background?

DW: When I was young, I lived in a detached house in Kowloon Tong - so we were not grassroots, but had a garden with grassroots! I am Teochewnese, and I couldn't speak Cantonese before attending kindergarten. Teochew families used to have many members. Among my nine siblings, I am the second eldest, with an older sister, so I am the eldest son. As the eldest son, I had heavy responsibilities and a certain status within the family.

I attended Kowloon Tong Primary School, which wasn't famous back then, but I heard it's now categorized as a Band 1 school. When the Shek Kip Mei fire occurred, I witnessed the black smoke burning throughout the sky. During form four or five of secondary school, our family business failed, and we had to sell our house in Kowloon Tong and move to Mong Kok. At that point, we transitioned from having a garden with grassroots to becoming grassroots. I lacked direction in my studies during that time and would just go home after school. My father wanted me to study medicine, but I had no interest in it, especially because I had trouble waking up early, and doctors need to be ready to work long hours. During my high school years, I studied physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics. In those days, to go to university, students could only choose between studying arts or science. And at the university level, the options were limited to professions like medicine, engineering, and architecture, without much diversity in subjects like social sciences or law.

When I was preparing to take the matriculation exam for university admission at Wah Yan College in Kowloon, biology was a compulsory subject for the entrance exam. We had only done one experiment by then, which was dissecting a skinny mouse. Unfortunately, on the day of the exam, the mouse I had to dissect was big and fat, and when I tried to cut it, I couldn't get the knife all the way through. When I tried cutting deeper, it started bleeding, so I didn't perform well in the biology experiment.

In the end, my results in the GCE A-Levels saved me, and I was able to enrol in the science programme. Since science was never my passion, and I managed to attain an A in English, and I was the president of the cabinet, I heard that HKU would start a law programme the following year. I started thinking perhaps law would suit me better. My dormitory warden and Professor Evans were both from Wales, and when they heard I was considering changing majors, they arranged for me to interview with Professor

Evans for the law programme. After the interview, I was accepted into the law department. It was a coincidence, as I had never intended to study law before.

Q: How was your experience studying law? Did you have a particular interest in any courses?

DW: I realized how slow my reading speed was when I started studying law. I spent an hour reading a few pages of *Crossley Vaines on Personal Property* about Choses in Action, and even after finishing, I didn't fully understand it. It was difficult at the beginning of my studies, especially since I lacked real-life legal experience and didn't even know what a cheque was, or that a banknote was called a promissory note. It wasn't smooth sailing at first, but as I continued, I found law to be quite interesting. Because law has many rules and principles, it is actually similar to science.

Q: Were there any professors or courses that left a lasting impression on you back then?

DW: At that time, there were many activities in the student dormitories, and legal education was very different from what it is today. For example, in the second year of university, our course schedule was seamless. From Monday to Friday, we had two-hour lectures and tutorials at noon every day. However, we found the lecturer on Mondays relatively boring, so we usually skipped his class. There was a female classmate who had a Bachelor of Arts degree and was good at taking shorthand notes. She generously shared her notes with us. So, even if we didn't attend the lecture, we had her notes, which we felt were sufficient. Therefore, we usually only attended classes from Tuesday to Friday.

Although the study pressure was relatively light back then, it also had its disadvantages, especially in tutorials where we often couldn't keep up with the pace. The reason was simple – after finishing all our coursework, everyone would rush to the library, making it difficult to find a specific book since many students were after the same one. What you often saw on the shelves was just an empty space. Interestingly, when you finally found the book, even without checking the reading list, you could tell which page you needed to read. This was because once you let go of the book, it automatically opened to the page most people had read. Another thing was seeing black marks on the edges of specific pages, which were marks left by other students who had read that page. I didn't contribute much in tutorials, and there were eight to ten classmates in my class who were the same. As a result, Professor Evans started suspecting that our English proficiency might be an issue, so he arranged for a teacher named Dr. Brigola to teach us English. Dr. Brigola seemed to be a senior executive at Shell, and we had to attend classes at his office in Central. He would have conversations with us and give us topics

to express our opinions. He found that our English was not an issue, so he didn't understand why Professor Evans had sent us for extra English lessons.

During my three relatively peaceful years at university, I would spend the month before exams preparing for my studies. My work was straightforward, paying particular attention to the topics that the teachers emphasized, as those often became the focal points of exams and were taught more in-depth. Our learning environment was excellent at the time – during exams, teachers would provide nine questions, and we only needed to answer five. My strategy was to thoroughly study three topics so that I could answer excellently on three, have good answers for one, and basically competent answers for another. I believed that excessive studying wasn't necessary for two reasons. Firstly, it required a lot of time and effort. Secondly, we all knew who would come first – Ronnie Tong. Whenever we went to the library, Ronnie Tong and his girlfriend always occupied a reading spot. They already had box files with photocopies inside, while I had never used a box file in all my years of studying. Sometimes, when he left, I would peek inside his box file, and the content was something I had never seen before. That moment made me realize he was different, and simply out of our league as a student. I just needed to ensure I studied well and answered sufficiently in my own way to be satisfied.

Additionally, our professor presented a viewpoint in the first class – in exams, if he asks a question, we didn't need to know the exact answer. He only needs to understand that we comprehended the question for us to pass. Sometimes, there are no absolute answers, but if you understand the question and have time, you can naturally find the answer. If you don't understand the question, you won't pass.

Our grading system back then was also unique. He said, there was no need for a detailed breakdown of marks out of one hundred. Simply put, he said “as long as you understood what I asked, you could meet the standard”. A correct answer would have an effect of zero (no deduction), a vague understanding would deduct three points, and complete lack of comprehension would deduct five points. He also mentioned that the ideal examination setting was in the library, where you could refer to notes but with a time limit. He guaranteed that you wouldn't have time to look at books, and over-relying on notes would pose difficulties. This approach left a deep impression on me. In my previous learning experiences, exams always expected students to provide answers.

Q: After graduating from the University of Hong Kong and entering the workforce, did you receive any advice or experiences from peers or seniors? Did you face any difficulties after completing the law program at HKU?

DW: When we were studying for our Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree, we were not sure if we could undertake articleship until we completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Laws (PCLL) course, which is when we learned that it was possible. Therefore, during the LLB program, we were not confirmed entry into the legal industry and viewed it more as an academic degree. Finding a job was not particularly difficult for me because we were different from those who had been through internships before. Those individuals had been learning all along, coming out seemingly as blank slates needing guidance. I once did a summer job with a barrister named Chan Tsz Kwan, but I didn't learn law from him. During a year of summer work, we worked together at a place called Railway School (鐵路學校), where he was the vice principal. He said, "You studied law, there's not much work for you." He then candidly mentioned that he only handled legal aid cases and hadn't earned much in the past year, which was quite disheartening. He also mentioned that interns had to pay an additional premium. When I asked him why the need to pay, he said that internships needed to have a cost; without consideration, it wouldn't be a binding contract. After hearing this, I decided not to intern with him because of his lack of legal insight. A contract can be executed by deed or by providing my services as consideration. If you insist on payment to make the agreement valid, then it's no surprise you're only handling legal aid cases! However, he was quite versatile at the time, not only serving as a municipal councillor but also holding positions at the liquor licensing board. At that time, we paid little attention to conflicts of interest, and the environment was completely different from today. Nowadays, environmental regulations are very strict and differ significantly from the past.

Q: How did you go about establishing your legal practice back then?

DW: I was a trainee with a smaller law firm where the partner, who was the principal, never came to work in person. His wife was a solicitor. I remember a classmate who applied for a monthly salary from him. At that time, the law firm offered a monthly salary of only 500 Hong Kong dollars. Later, the classmate found a company offering a higher salary. Before he left, he introduced me to the place and said that I didn't need to negotiate; the monthly salary was already 1,000 Hong Kong dollars. In fact, we were able to contribute on the first day of our internship because we already had basic theory, awareness of legal problems, and legal knowledge, giving us a significant advantage over the five-year students who had just completed their studies. So, after two years of traineeship, including one year as an assistant, I decided to establish my own law firm.

Q: Why did you quickly decide to start your own law firm at that time? What challenges did you face?

DW: It was a personal question of whether to showcase oneself and how to do it. After two years of traineeship, my master asked me to stay but never discussed specific

terms with me. He mentioned that after one year at his law firm, I would receive a 30% commission, which would decrease to 20% in the second year, but with a raise in base-pay. I thought his calculation was designed to give me the short end of the stick. In my first year of work, with no business to speak of, the 30% commission would be meaningless. In the second year, when I might start getting some business, reducing my commission by 10% wasn't a raise. I was taught by my Teochew elders that, in working, the extent of material benefits wasn't important; the crucial thing was being able to learn. As long as you worked hard, there wouldn't be any problems because no one could take away your experience.

Therefore, I worked diligently for almost half a year until something unhappy happened. After a lawsuit, I needed to handle costs and taxation. I won an interlocutory application in a case and received costs, so I prepared a bill of taxation. I took a trainee lawyer to court for taxation and asked if he was confident in court advocacy. When my boss found out, he accused me of damaging the firm's reputation and being irresponsible. I was very unhappy and directly responded in English, "I don't understand what you mean." That was the turning point when I decided to leave the law firm and start my own.

I had two branches in my law firm, one in Mong Kok and the other in Yuen Long. I brought in the junior who handled the taxation affairs. He later introduced me to a prominent landlord in Yuen Long. This led us to rent an office on Castle Peak Road. Our signboard with bold red letters started attracting clients to "Wong Kai Chiu & Co.". These two branches were run by three lawyers together. At that time, the Law Society hadn't changed the rules, unlike today where you need two years of qualification before opening a law firm. Opening the Yuen Long branch was based on the principle of a captive market. At that time, transportation from Yuen Long to Kowloon and Hong Kong wasn't very convenient, so having a law firm in Yuen Long provided a unique advantage. To be honest, if we operated under today's conditions, we might be criticized for being unprofessional. As we weren't fully trained, the property conveyancing we learned during the PCLL course only skimmed through a few mortgage documents and land registration, lacking substance compared to today's curriculum. I had an old classmate working in the Land Registry, so I could seek advice from him when facing issues and gradually learn and improve through mutual exchange.

Q: Has there been any significant changes in the practice areas of this law firm over the years?

DW: Our firm has evolved over time, and there has been continuous development. Initially, the firm handled various miscellaneous cases such as petty crimes, police visits, magistracy trials, and District Court criminal trials. Later, after working in the New Territories for about a year, I gained a deeper understanding of the land laws in the

New Territories, leading to the discovery of land development opportunities and the beginning of our land-related business. When dealing with land law, one important point to note is not to assist certain clients in improperly exploiting the Small House Policy to acquire land.

After working in the New Territories for about a year, I began to familiarize myself with the local land and related issues. As time passed, things became more complex, and opportunities in land development and planning began to emerge. During this period, I learned a lot and grew my expertise. For example, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, we conducted many "letter B transactions." If you are unfamiliar, "letter B" refers to promissory notes issued by the government when acquiring land. The government promised to return an equivalent area of land at a suitable location in the future. If the original land was agricultural, they would return agricultural land; if it was residential land, you could exchange five square feet of agricultural land for two square feet of residential land. A one-to-one exchange of agricultural land did not require money. However, when converting agricultural land to residential land, the premium had to be calculated based on the premium (difference in value) between five square feet of agricultural land and one square foot of residential land during land acquisition.

This system allowed the government to establish many new towns in the New Territories without spending any money. However, it eventually created a new market for land exchange entitlements. Nobody would consider exchanging one square foot of agricultural land for another; everyone wanted residential land. This was easily understood, as the 1980s were the peak period for real estate. High property prices indicated high land prices, whereas in the 1960s, both land and real estate prices were very low. If you were to use land exchange certificates from the 1960s to offset the price difference between the 1960s and the 1980s, these certificates essentially acted as discount cards. However, this was a very immature market as it was driven by supply and demand. Market developers did not know how to calculate prices, and most suppliers did not either. They simply mentioned a price per square foot and waited to see if it was accepted, even though the value might always be much higher than the price they requested. At that time, I had the opportunity to participate in these less understood transactions, providing practical experience at the forefront of the New Territories.

Q: In the 1990s, did you engage in more diverse business activities?

DW: In the 1990s, planning issues have gotten more complex, such as the need to obtain short-term waivers to use land for storage purposes. You may recall the *Melhado* case, where the decision was entirely based on the description of land use rather than restrictive or prescriptive limitations. So, when land was described as agricultural, it

did not mean there was a covenant restricting the land to agricultural use. At that time, many lots of land were used as open storage yards, which the government deemed to be in violation of the agricultural land restrictions, giving them the right to acquire it due to contravening use terms. However, the government could waive this right, known as a waiver fee, meaning they waived the right to re-enter the land for breach of lease. However, the *Melhado* case later indicated that there were no such use restrictions. Unless you wanted to build on the land, you needed to continue applying for waivers. If not needed, then no application was necessary. Additionally, starting from 1987, Exempted Houses in the New Territories no longer required registering a floor plan, but a Certificate of Exemption was needed. As more people moved into the New Territories at that time, there were more so-called "Small House" transactions. These transactions were interesting because the restrictions on "Small Houses" varied based on different periods.

Another interesting point was that transactions were not as openly conducted as in recent years. In most cases, people would obtain a building license or a concessionary grant and then proceed with the transaction without selling the application right. For example, you could build a standalone house, and after completion, you needed to obtain a Certificate of Compliance. Once you had the certificate, you could immediately transfer ownership and purchase insurance. The insurance term was typically 75 years. However, the shortcut back then was mostly selling land before construction. This method was quite interesting, involving an irrevocable Power of Attorney. In the late 1970s, some experienced industry professionals started using this method, and I followed suit. After I obtained the Power of Attorney, I went to register it. Once registered, nothing else could be registered. The principle was simple. If I authorized you to do something, I could revoke that authorization. If you agreed not to revoke it, you couldn't act on your own because doing so would be revoking my authorization, and if you promised not to revoke it, that would be incorrect.

So, this was an indirect way of operating. Transactions at that time were conducted in this manner, using irrevocable Power of Attorney and the like. By the early 1990s, some people started to consider hoarding Small House rights for resale. At that point, I realized that this was risky and could involve conspiracy to defraud. Given my knowledge of criminal law from earlier practice, I knew that conspiracy to defraud and obtaining property by deception were criminal offenses. If you conspired with a Small House owner, falsely claimed that the Small House owner was the beneficial owner of the land, and then applied for a concessionary grant, that would clearly be conspiring to defraud the government. This made some people begin to consider these matters and halt operations before approval. Therefore, in practice, some areas were risky, and you needed to be cautious to avoid pitfalls.

Q: Looking back at the evolution of your practice area that you just discussed, have there been any changes in the culture, personnel, or scale of your law firm over all these years?

DW: The culture of our law firm is primarily a family-style setup. All the partners in the past, and the vast majority of assistants to this day, are homegrown, including second and third generations. They have all started as interns at our law firm, stayed on as assistants, and eventually became partners. We rarely recruit external talent. As for the scale of the firm, it has remained relatively stable. This is mainly due to the high level of trust among us, which makes management very easy. Sometimes problem-solving only requires a couple of words. Everyone is readily accessible, and you can always knock on the door to have a chat.

However, we have not intentionally sought growth, and there may be a sense of unsustainability, a lack of planning for succession, and being too comfortable with the status quo. There is currently no specific strategy to address this. If you were to seek a quick solution, it would be to explore merger opportunities. But this is only a short-term opportunity, as there would be too many complex conflicts of interest in the long run. Unless a highly suitable opportunity arises, it would be challenging to force it.

I'm happy to say that every time a lawyer leaves our firm, we are on friendly parting terms. Every year on my birthday, a group of former colleagues celebrates with me. Two individuals have excelled in the Civil Litigation Department of the Department of Justice, one even becoming the Head of Civil Litigation, and another has become a judge in the High Court. They used to call me "Master" when they were at our firm, which is quite exceptional.

Q: Can you pinpoint any turning points that have led to the current state of this law firm? For example, the economic transformation in Hong Kong that you mentioned earlier, personal changes you have undergone, or significant turning points in your entire legal career?

DW: I would say the turning points have been gradual, evolving with the circumstances. Like I mentioned earlier, it's been an evolutionary process. There haven't been sudden changes, such as a sudden merger with another firm or bringing in an expert to expand into a new area of practice. We have been developing our practice based on opportunities that arise in the practice environment.

Q: Can you share about the most impressive cases to you?

DW: Perhaps I can start by sharing two interesting cases that highlight two completely opposite perspectives. The first is that a lawsuit that you think you will definitely lose can still be fought; the second, a lawsuit that you think you will definitely win you may not want to litigate at all. I have two examples. One example is, I remember one time, the son of my father's old boss came to see me. His case seemed almost hopeless. He had leased a piece of land, opened a restaurant, and operated it for decades. However, he recently received a court order to surrender the land because the landlord had leased it to another tenant. I advised him to apply for a stay of execution. However, the stay period had already passed. On the surface, this case seemed almost hopeless because typically, once the stay of execution judgment is obtained, you have to surrender the land.

I asked him, "After leasing for so many years, why were you so unaware? Who did the landlord lease the land to?" He leased it to another company. I then questioned why that company was able to lease it while he couldn't negotiate with the landlord. He responded, "We did have a representative from our company negotiate with the landlord, but it didn't work out." However, the other company was successful in negotiating the lease, and he mentioned that the representative was actually affiliated with that company. I thought this situation might involve a breach of fiduciary duty issue and could potentially be viewed from a constructive trust perspective. In other words, the tenant should hold the new lease in trust, and if your company, as the beneficial owner, continues to occupy the land, then based on this, the new lease would only be for three years. Despite the initial outlook of likely losing the case, it ultimately did not result in a judgment because after five years of litigation, the landlord decided to lease the land back to him, as the lease term had already expired. This was the first example.

The second case is about a lawsuit that seemed like a sure win but we did not want to sue to win. Once the trump card was played, it would certainly lead to victory, but I chose to hold onto the trump card and let the lawsuit drag on. The main issue was regarding a contract where a director of a company signed it, but there was a dispute in the contract, and the other party demanded compensation for significant losses. I first examined the company's Certificate of Incorporation and found that the contract was signed before the company was registered. In other words, it was a pre-incorporation contract signed before the company was a legal entity and could not file a lawsuit. However, they could sue the director for breach of warranty of authority. If the company had no money, you can ahead and sue, but if the individual had money, you might not necessarily win. So, I chose to let the lawsuit continue until the discovery of documents phase. During this phase, I presented the Certificate of Incorporation as evidence, describing it simply as the company's registration certificate.

This lawsuit ultimately dragged on for six years until just before the trial was set to begin, the cause of action against the director had exceeded the statutory limitation period. So, I told the other party that I agreed to the judgment, compensation, and litigation costs, but the damages assessment needed to be evaluated, and I needed assurance that the individual would not be affected. Therefore, in this case where victory seemed certain, I didn't dare to win immediately but waited for the right moment.

These two cases left a deep impression on me, showing that even in seemingly hopeless situations, there can be a turnaround, and the case can shift back to my client's favour. The lawsuit I was hesitant to win ended up in the opponent's favour, which helped me out of a predicament, and the opponent was unaware of this outcome. This taught me a valuable lesson that no matter how smart or hardworking you are, you must identify the issue and actively seek information. If I hadn't suspected it was a pre-incorporation contract or checked the Certificate of Incorporation, I might not have realized there was a way out of the situation. In other words, upon seeing it was a pre-incorporation contract, you might assume you would definitely win, but you may not dare to proceed. The opponent was a large company, and their counsel later entered the judicial system, becoming judges in the CFA. However, you cannot expect them to notice these issues as it is the lawyer's duty.

Another interesting legal practice point in the New Territories involves riparian rights concerning river rights. This case pertained to an access issue where my client needed to pass through certain areas to reach his land. These areas belonged to the government, which had granted permission to villagers to build structures. However, the villagers prohibited my client's access to their land. My client informed me that there used to be a river in that area. Subsequently, I purchased aerial photographs and Demarcation District Sheets from 1930 to see the shape of the river. It turned out that the river had disappeared after the government diverted it. I then researched riparian rights under common law and discovered that the land along the riverbank had boundaries at the midpoint of the river. Therefore, the land did not belong to the government but to private individuals. As a result, the government did not have the authority to grant Crown Land Permits for land use. I wrote a letter to the government stating that their approval was incorrect, and they subsequently revoked it.

This case is indeed fascinating as one may never have considered that the midpoint of a river could serve as a boundary for their land. It taught me about the intriguing and stimulating aspects of practical legal work. Interestingly, regardless of location, civilizations around the world often have similar solutions to legal issues. I have a cousin who is an engineer with experience in mainland China. He shared that in China, river midpoints are also used as boundary lines. When studying land law, we come across many principles of equity, such as "once a mortgage, always a mortgage."

Similarly, in Chinese law, there is a similar principle known as "land washed away cannot be sought" which implies that if your land has been washed away by a river, you should not seek it back as it is no longer yours. However, I must clarify that this applies to non-tidal rivers. The situation is different for tidal rivers influenced by tides. Not only rivers but even sediments in lakes can shift due to wind, causing the position of a piece of land in the center or shallow waters of a lake to change. These aspects of land law are truly captivating. If you are not at the forefront of legal practice and fail to pay attention, you may never discover these intricacies. Human behaviour follows a similar pattern but ultimately leads to the same results. In practice, you will find that humans share many common thoughts and resolve disputes in similar ways.

Q: We know that you have done a lot in the public welfare sector, such as at the YMCA. Can you share your views on professional service?

DW: For these volunteer services, such as at the Law Society, I was invited to the Property Committee because of my legal experience in the New Territories, where the committee lacked familiarity at the time. Additionally, I served on the Board of Review at the Inland Revenue Department for three years. Primarily, I worked at the YMCA, which was entirely voluntary work. I helped manage their affairs and served as their honorary legal advisor. Over the years, I have helped them resolve many issues.

Q: Do you think these services have helped your professional career in any way?

DW: The Board of Review provided me with an opportunity to view things from a neutral and objective standpoint. However, due to the limited number of cases, the experience gained was also limited. Serving on the Property Committee allowed me to interact with experts, which added to my experience. Working at the YMCA was mainly one-way, but it provided insights into how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operate, their activities, as well as the difficulties and challenges they often face. These experiences also enriched my life experience.

Q: Over the years, how have you managed to strike a balance? Could your part-time work and volunteer service take up a lot of your time?

DW: It depends on the situation. For example, at the YMCA, I served as chairman for five years, which involved monthly chair meetings and the Annual General Meeting (AGM). There were also committees, such as the corporate governance constitution review, which required time and effort to oversee. For sudden issues that arise, there is no way to control them; you can only assist when needed.

Q: In your opinion, what significant changes have occurred in Hong Kong's legal industry from the 1970s to the present? Are there any pivotal moments for the entire profession?

DW: Undoubtedly, the pivotal point for the entire industry was 1997. Before 1997, English was the primary language, but it shifted to Chinese afterward. Before 1997, even in lower courts like the Magistrates' Courts, few people used Chinese. After 1997, it was almost entirely in Chinese, which greatly reduced the scope of practice for foreign individuals in law firms. The change in language had a lesser impact on transactional lawyers, as many international law firms still use English in their documents. However, for lawyers who studied in the UK, obtained their qualifications there, and later worked in Hong Kong, they might encounter difficulties if their work requires Chinese.

Q: Apart from language, what major changes have occurred in recent years? What challenges or opportunities do you perceive?

DW: Given my age, I may not be the best respondent to this question. I am at a stage where I need to reduce my workload and am not actively seeking opportunities. However, overall, since the opening of Hong Kong's legal market to foreign lawyers, much legal business has shifted towards international law firms. Even in litigation, many foreign law firms hire lawyers qualified in the US to handle Hong Kong cases. Competition has become fiercer, and the market share for the industry has shrunk, especially in the current situation of an aging population, declining population, and economic downturn. As a transactional lawyer, it's challenging to reverse this trend, and there's a sense of passivity.

Small law firms find it difficult to compete with large firms because international companies can work 24/7, receiving client instructions today and having a template ready by tomorrow, essentially completing the task. Small law firms like ours struggle to compete with this. In a limited working environment of a small law firm, if you can propose innovative ideas, solve problems, and think outside the box, then there will always be opportunities. Your clients will build a working relationship with you. They know you have these capabilities, so they will choose to follow you. However, this kind of relationship takes time to develop because sometimes if you choose the wrong approach, you will encounter obstacles.

Q: Can you give some advice to current law students?

DW: Never give up, never surrender. The solution may be right in front of you, as long as you can go far enough and see far enough. In the situations I mentioned earlier, one

might have given up at the beginning. It's essential to have an indomitable spirit and perseverance.