

Still, TCT's passion burns brightest when it comes to helping others, such as being Patron of YMCA (Singapore). However, his generosity to individuals and associations has been mostly unheralded, because he prefers the most dignified and meaningful form of charity – that of giving anonymously. He established the Tan Foundation to distribute funds to a wide variety of organisations. The beneficiaries include dozens of children's charities, educational institutions, hospitals, and other altruistic and humanitarian associations.

Like his father and Tan Kah Kee before him, TCT has been a great benefactor to all levels of Singaporean education. Commemorating the teachers and principals who made such a difference to his young life, he provided scholarships to the Anglo-Chinese School in their names, to assist successive generations. The school has also benefited from a variety of sports facilities, auditoriums and indeed, entire buildings, all donated by its most prominent alumnus, Tan Chin Tuan.

Celebrating the golden jubilee of the Anglo-Chinese School, Reverend P.L. Peach recalled the incident when he had to intervene and choose whether or not to allow TCT to retake the Junior Cambridge examination. "Chin Tuan had a hard decision to make in 1922, and so did I," he remembered. "What impresses me now is that the perseverance and ambition of this young man, coupled with a right decision of a Principal, have both ended in a life of great service to his people and the business world."

Tan Chin Tuan champions higher education not only in Singapore but also abroad. In 1984, he donated \$1 million to the Needham Research Institute, one of the world's top three centres for Chinese science and technology. The funds were used for the construction and equipping of the East Asian History of Science Library in Cambridge, England. In a letter to the project's director, Cambridge professor Dr Joseph Needham, TCT wrote, "I am very happy to be able to contribute towards the perpetuation of the study of Chinese culture, on which you have devoted so much of your life's efforts." A plaque in the library building commemorates TCT's generous contribution, pivotal to the project's completion.

In his letter of appreciation to Tan Chin Tuan, Dr Needham replied, "It is particularly auspicious that Singaporean Chinese culture should be thus associated. China has profoundly misjudged by the Western in the past, but this will no longer be the case in time to come."

TCT also supported worthy institutions such as the Salk Institute for Biological Studies of La Jolla, California. The research institute is one of the world's most important academic organisations in the field of biological sciences. Elected to the institute's International Council in 1981, TCT was given the responsibility to act as a regional ambassador for the Salk Institute, to stay informed on current research topics and to attend seminars on those subjects.

Over the years, TCT made generous donations to the Salk Institute and, working with the Singapore Turf Club, helped Singapore scientists with funding for training at the institute.

Caring for the elderly remains one particular area of compassion. The Tan Foundation gives generously to many homes for the aged, including the Little Sisters of the Poor, to provide Christmas dinners and other benefits. Tan Chin Tuan himself has privately visited many residences for the elderly, quietly distributing red packets to the residents.

Although his donations are usually anonymous, on the occasion of his 91st birthday, which coincided with Senior Citizen's Week, he made a rare conspicuous public gift. To celebrate his own nine decades of vitality and to reward "active ageing", Tan Chin Tuan promised a generous offer of \$1,000 to every vigorous, still active Singaporean citizen over the age of ninety. He placed no cap or restrictions on the number of people who could receive the endowment, which was given simply because he felt lucky and blessed, and wished to share his good fortune with others over the age of ninety.

TCT believes people exist to mutually benefit one another. With an irrefutable reputation for benevolence, he has time and again seen good deeds that he initiated, flow back and forth, like the tides that wash over Singapore's coastal shores, enriching everyone in the process.
