

Honorary Doctor of Science

Sir Eric Albert ASH

Chancellor:

Sir Eric Albert Ash attended the University College School as a boy. This was the beginning of a life long association with the University of London. He went on to the Imperial College of Science and Technology, where he graduated with first class honours in electrical engineering in 1948. Four short years later, he was awarded a PhD. His first position was as a Research Fellow at Stanford University in California. The happy legacy from those years is meeting Clare, his wife, who was a graduate student at Stanford at that time. We are honoured that Mrs Ash has joined us at this ceremony. It was also at California's famous Squaw Valley that he first took up downhill skiing, a demanding sport which he continues to enjoy with his family today.

He returned to England in 1954. After eight years with Standard Communications Laboratories, he returned to the University of London, as a senior lecturer at University College. His brilliance as researcher and teacher was soon recognised, in the form of a full professorship at the early age of 39. Sir Eric's work in a variety of areas of electronics, including physical electronics, acoustic imaging, signal processing, and integrated optics won him many patents as well as numerous citations in the most prestigious international publications.

For his outstanding achievements, honour upon honour came his way — we can only name a few here. In 1977, he was elected to the Royal Society of London, an august body that traces back to 1660. A year later, he was elected to the Royal Academy of Engineering. In 1980, he won the Faraday Medal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, one of the most coveted prizes of his field. A few years after that, he served as President of that Institution.

From 1985 to 1993, he was Rector of his alma mater, the Imperial College of Science and Technology. His many posts in public service include Chairman of the BBC Science Advisory Committee, and Trustee of the Science Museum. In recognition of these and many other contributions, he was made a Knight Bachelor in 1990.

Since December 1997, Sir Eric became Treasurer and Deputy President of the Royal Society. In this capacity, he is presently chairing an elite group of scientists

and industrialists to study the future role of nuclear energy. Among the concerns of this group is the effect of global warming, an issue that is having an increasing effect on human welfare with each passing year.

For all the demands on his schedule, Sir Eric nonetheless found time to contribute significantly to education in Hong Kong. He was an external examiner to the Chinese University of Hong Kong. And when the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology was established, he served as a member of the advisory committee for the School of Engineering. Since 1997, he has been Senior Consultant to President Chang of City University of Hong Kong. In this capacity, he has been giving invaluable advice on our current efforts in the selection of Areas of Excellence in order to optimise research work here, as well as on matters concerning administrative and academic structures of our university.

In spite of his eminent contributions in so many areas and the numerous honours society has bestowed upon him, Sir Eric remains the modest scholar, who rides around London on a bicycle. For his humility of spirit, for his achievements in science and education, and for his service to better the human condition, Chancellor, on behalf of the University Council, I request you to confer on Sir Eric Albert Ash the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science.