

Diamond Hill: Memories of growing up in a Hong Kong squatter village

MEMOIR / HONG KONG by Feng Chi-shun

"Diamond Hill was one of the poorest and most backward of villages in Hong Kong at a time when Hong Kong itself was poor and backward. We moved there in 1956 when I was almost 10. I left in 1966 when I was 19. Those were the formative years of my life. It's a time that I remember well and cherish."

An era of Suzie Wong; gambling and gangsters; fires and food stalls; and the Walled City and its 'white powder'. A time when people were poor, but life was rich. This memoir of a native son of a Kowloon-side squatter village – the first book ever on Diamond Hill, in either Chinese or English – presents the early days of a life shaped by a now-extinct community. Feng Chi-shun's sharp recollections of his humble upbringing contain warmth, humour, and an abundance of insights into a low-income Hong Kong neighbourhood that no longer exists – but remains close to the hearts of many who lived there.

Diamond Hill will invite comparisons with Martin Booth's *Gweilo*. If you enjoyed the latter, you will likely find this book similarly absorbing, because the young Feng was, for many a "gweilo", the inaccessible yet intriguing face of an altogether edgier Hong Kong.

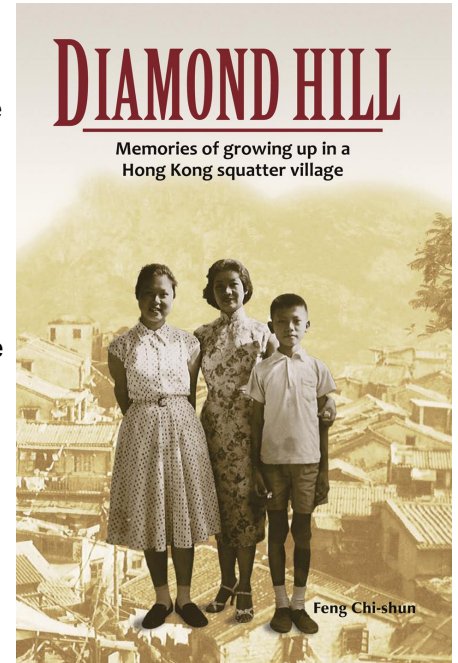
Media Attention

"*Diamond Hill* is an excellent and fast read for those who want an honest depiction of life for a majority of Hong Kong denizens in the 1950s-60s." — *The Correspondent*

"Feng gives a frank and candid recollection of his teenage upbringing in Diamond Hill from 1956 to 1966. He proudly proclaims in the story's prologue that the people, places and events he describes are real, and that he has "no reason to refrain from writing about them". Indeed, the stories he shares with his readers tell all, including sad stories of childhood friends whose futures succumbed to gambling or drug addiction, and the desperate ways in which the poorer townspeople went about making ends meet." — *Time Out*

"Diamond in the rough: Feng Chi-shun has come a long way from his childhood in a squatter village, but he's mining his past in a book about his experiences" — *South China Morning Post*

"Equal parts interesting, entertaining and informative, a compact new book, *Diamond Hill*, opens the floodgates of nostalgia for anyone who lived near the mouth of the Pearl River in the 1950s and '60s. But not all the memories are pleasant. Author Feng Chi-shun spent his childhood coping with poverty. His memoirs show the value of perseverance, street smarts and good luck." — *Cairns Media Magazine*



"The harsh but colorful world in which Feng grew up is no more, and the great value of his book is that his story is also, in large part, the story of Hong Kong. Once upon a time, Hong Kong itself, its British colonial rulers and Chinese elite aside, was one big squatter village that transformed into a manufacturing Mecca and then again into the financial center that it is today. Over the course of these remarkable and frenetic transformations, the city's leaders – the colonial governors of old and the Chinese "chief executives" who have been at the helm since the handover from British rule in 1997 – lost the plot. In their rush to turn Hong Kong into Asia's "world city", officials have torn down history and paved over the collective memory of its citizens. Feng's memoir, without perhaps intending to, confronts this heedless bureaucratic impulse at its core. ... While Feng certainly does not lament the physical loss of the ramshackle villages in which he and other children of his generation came of age, his memoir invokes a toughness and a can-do spirit that he finds lacking in the Hong Kong of today. It is that spirit, not the slums of Diamond Hill, that he would like the city to recapture." — *Asia Times*

"An interesting and authentic story told with feeling and gusto, *Diamond Hill* is a highly readable potted history of a part of Hong Kong and its ordinary people in the middle of the 20th century. There is much food for thought on how the challenges of adversity and worldly temptations in childhood make some men, like Dr Feng – and break others, like some of his friends." — John Chan Cho-chak, Chairman of the Hong Kong Jockey Club

About the Author

Feng Chi-shun is a naturalized US citizen, but considers Hong Kong – where he grew up and attended medical school – his home. His formative years were spent in Diamond Hill. Trained as a Pathologist, he has published nearly 100 scientific articles on his research. He has also been a columnist for the *South China Morning Post*. Feeling deprived as a child, he is making up for lost time by living life to its fullest. He is an aficionado of wine and cigars, and a part-time punter attracted to roulette, poker, mahjong and horse racing.

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