

100th Anniversary 1900-2000

THE PERANAKAN

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION

July - September 2000

Distributed Free

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our peranakan heritage

sayang

Editorial



The First SCBA Committee 1900. Back row (from left): Mr Seah Eng Kiat, Dr Lim Boon Keng, Mr Chia Keng Chin, Mr Tan Boo Liat, Mr Tan Hup Seng, & Mr Wee Thiam Tew. Front row (from left): Mr Ong Kew Hoe, Mr Chan Chuan Fook, Mr Tan Chay Yan, Mr Song Ong Siang, Hon. Mr Tan Jiak Kim (President), Mr Seah Liang Seah, Mr Lee Cheang Yee, & Mr Wee Kim Yam.

The Way We Were

This bumper issue of *The Peranakan* commemorates the centenary of The Peranakan Association which had its beginning one hundred years ago when, as The Straits Chinese British Association (SCBA) it was founded on 17 August 1900.

The first President of the SCBA was Mr Tan Jiak Kim and the Committee Members were Dr Lim Boon Keng and Messrs Seah Eng Kiat, Chia Keng Chin, Tan Boo Liat, Tan Hup Seng, Wee Thiam Tew, Ong Kew Hoe, Chan Chuan Fook, Tan Chay Yan, Song Ong Siang, Seah Liang Seah, Lee Cheang Yee and Wee Kim Yam - all eminent citizens whose names are perpetuated in today's Singapore by street signs - Jiak Kim Street, Boon Keng Road, Chay Yan Street, Liang Seah Street and Kim Yam Road.

Between 1900 and 1948 Mr Tan Jiak Kim was succeeded as President of the SCBA by Dr Lim Boon Keng and Messrs. Koh San Hin, S J Chan, Wee Swee Teow, Lee Choon Guan, Song Ong Siang, S Q Wong, Dr Lim Han Hoe, Yap Pheng Geck, Tan Chin Tuan and T W Ong. It was during the tenure of office of Mr T W Ong that the SCBA changed its name in 1966 to The Peranakan Association.

Mr T W Ong was President from 1948 to 1992 when he was succeeded from 1992 to 1996 by Dr George Tay who was in turn succeeded by the present incumbent Mr Lee Kip Lee.

Objectives of the SCBA

In the beginning, some of the objects which the Association desired to achieve reflected the loyalty of its members to the British Crown. They were:

PRESIDENT
Lee Kip Lee

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Peter Wee

2ND VICE PRESIDENT
Thomas Tan

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Lim Geok Huay

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Peter Lee

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Editorial



Dr Lim Boon Keng

- (a) To promote among members an intelligent interest in the affairs of the British Empire, and to encourage and maintain their loyalty as subjects of the Queen.
- (b) To afford facilities for the discussion of all questions relating to the social, intellectual and moral welfare of the Chinese British subjects in the Colony.
- (c) To encourage higher and technical education for the Chinese in some practical way.

So it was, that, as the Association became involved in public affairs and with some of its members being appointed as nominated members of the Executive and Legislative Councils, these "Baba professionals and merchants became Singapore's legitimized early political elite." (Jürgen Rudolph, *Reconstructing Identities - A Social History of the Babas in Singapore*, Ashgate Publishing, Brookfield, USA, 1998)

Causes Espoused by the Association

The SCBA espoused many noble causes:

- (a) In 1916 the Association called upon the Government to promote higher education by endowing scholarships or preferably by starting a technical school.
- (b) In 1931 it petitioned the Governor to concede to the Straits-born Chinese the privilege of electing their own representatives to the Legislative Council, in addition to the three Chinese members already nominated by the government; to appoint a Chinese member to the Executive Council and also to enlarge the constitution of the Legislative Council so as to provide for an unofficial majority.
- (c) In 1932 it asked for the end of racial discrimination which prevented local citizens from entering the Civil

Service the doors to which were "banged, barred and bolted" against local citizens. (Tan Cheng Lock, 14 April 1924)

- (d) In 1933 it called a public meeting to protest against the increase in school fees in the colony. This was followed by a similar petition to the Governor in which it contended that the education policy tended to turn out large numbers of young men fit to be clerks only.
- (e) In 1936 it proposed the setting up of a university with the King Edward VII College of Medicine and Raffles College as its nuclei.
- (f) In 1948, in protest against the proposed Federation of Malaya Constitution, it called for the secession of Penang and Malacca from the Federation and the restoration of the Straits Settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore.

Golden Anniversary Messages from Former Presidents

In 1950 the SCBA celebrated its Golden Anniversary when Mr T W Ong was its President and when Mr Lee Kuan Yew was a Committee member. The souvenir programme marking the event contained reminiscences from former Presidents and office bearers:

Dr Lim Boon Keng:

"My message to the Chinese younger generation is that they should endeavour to rally round the SCBA in their numbers and with concerted effort, so that they will be equipped to play the important roles expected of them when their testing time comes. It is on the youth of today that so much will depend — Malaya's racial harmony, economic development and prosperity and eventual self-government. The home must be properly established, good morals must be observed, and filial piety practised. There must be sincerity of thought, honesty of action and goodness of heart."



Mr Koh San Hin

Mr Wee Swee Teow

"Critics of the Association have from time to time accused it of leading too lethargic an existence and of doing very little public work for its members. From my own knowledge, I can state that much of such criticism was not justified, particularly during prewar years when the activities of the Association were being carried out, not in a spectacular manner but unostentatiously and conscientiously without any thought for any publicity but always with the underlying desire to protect and promote the welfare of the Chinese British subjects of His Majesty the King."

Dato S Q Wong

"During my long term of office as President and as a member of the Committee three notable events happened. The first was the reorganisation of the Chinese Company of the Singapore Volunteer Corps when Chinese officers (instead of European officers) were

for the first time appointed as platoon commanders. In those days most members of the Chinese Volunteer Company were members of the SCBA. The second notable event was when the SCBA was given the privilege of nominating a candidate for appointment by the Governor as a Municipal Commissioner. The third notable event was the formation of the Straits Chinese Advisory Committee by the Governor. The functions of this Committee were to discuss all policies, legislation and other matters affecting the Straits-born Chinese."

Sir Han Hoe Lim

"During the period of our existence I think we have achieved much in the political and educational uplift of the community. We have established schools, especially for female education. We have prepared ourselves to serve and take part in the various Councils of Government and public bodies. It can be said that we have paved the way toward self-government of the country — to play our part when circumstances and necessity arise and to join with others in the betterment of Singapore for all."

Mr T W Ong

"The SCBA, despite its name, has from the very beginning and throughout its existence fought the battles of all local people

irrespective of race, colour and creed. We realise that the SCBA must be not only for those Straits Chinese who read the English language newspapers, but also for those who read the Chinese newspapers."

Ladies Join SCBA

The first Chinese ladies to join the SCBA as members (circa 1950) were three women Justices of The Peace — Mesdames Tan Teng Kim, G P Lim and Soh Choo Loh and two working women Ms Leong Keng Chee and Ms P C Cheong.

In 1974 Mrs Anamah Tan was elected as Hon Secretary of The Peranakan Association - probably the first woman ever elected as Hon Secretary of the SCBA or The Peranakan Association.

The Way We Are Today

But times have changed. Today, there are five ladies out of a General Committee of twelve members and women outnumber men in the list of new members we publish with every issue of *The Peranakan*.

Not only that. Even before the emergence of Singapore as an independent state on 9 August 1965 the SCBA realised that

its pro-British stance was no longer "fashionable" and that its very name — The Straits Chinese British Association — was a misnomer. As a result, on 11 December 1964, the SCBA changed its name to The Singapore Chinese Peranakan Association before finally becoming The Peranakan Association on 23 February 1966, and gradually detaching itself from the political arena.

In fact, when we amended our Constitution in 1996 one of the Prohibitions added on to it by the authorities was that

"the Association shall not indulge in any political activity or allow its funds and/or premises to be used for political purposes"

We are, therefore, now a much-alive heritage society with a membership which has increased from 342 in 1993 to 1524 in 2000 and are confidently gearing up to the challenges facing us in the New Millennium.

Our crop of new members are younger and more eager to participate in the Association's activities of which they are kept informed through our Newsletter *The Peranakan*, which has proved to be a successful link between members of our committee, a quarterly reminder of our heritage.

In view of the successful completion of the book *Rumab Baba*, the publication of which we sponsored in 1998, we are planning, for our Centenary Year, to launch a couple of commemorative



Mr Tan Jiak Kim



Mr S J Chan



Mr Lee Choon Guan



Sir Ong Siang Song



Dato' S Q Wong



Mr Wee Swee Teow



Dr Yap Phing Geck



Sir Han Hoe Lim



Mr Tan Chin Huan



Mr T W Ong



Dr George Tay

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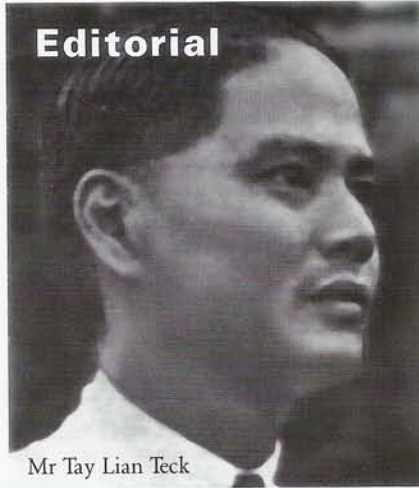
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Editorial



Mr Tay Lian Teck

books, details of which will be announced in the near future. These various publications play their part in ensuring not only that we do not forget our heritage, but also that we remember it in a fresh, lively and contemporary way.

Besides that, and, in line with our Mission Statement to "preserve and revitalise the Peranakan culture and

traditions through cultural, social and literary activities" we have formed Peranakan Choral, Dance & Drama Groups to enable us to stage a Wayang Peranakan, hopefully by next year, as well as a committee that is working hard to create a multi-media Peranakan road show for schools and other educational institutions.

With a more dynamic Committee consisting of younger members we are, through our website which keeps us in touch with the world with the click of the computer keyboard, able to communicate with Peranakans wherever they may be. We have set aside funds to ensure that the site, which has become a resource tool for people finding out information about our culture, is constantly and properly maintained.

Our Annual Dinner & Dance, dinner-talks and other gatherings have proved to be social events people look forward to attending. Such events help to maintain the sense of community and belonging in a Singapore that is modernising at an increasingly accelerating pace.

Our festivities begin on Wednesday 16 August 2000 with the launch of our Centennial Celebrations with a Dinner & Entertainment at the Far East Square Pavilion, China Street. This will be followed by a Food & Craft Fair in September at the Singapore History Museum, by our Gala 100th Anniversary & Annual Dinner & Dance on 1 December 2000, and culminating in performances from August 2000 to August 2001 by our Choral, Dance and Drama Groups. Although one may be pessimistic about the survival of the culture, what is important at this stage is to ensure a sense of continuity and history, and to express the Peranakan spirit in whatever way we can that is relevant today, as the best hope that in the next hundred years, people may still be proud to call themselves Peranakan.

Lee Kip Lee

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Nadine Kang

20+ • 4th generation Peranakan

Photographs by Wah

perANAKan

the **youth** group

In 1998, Mr Lee Kip Lee and his committee expressed concern about the future of the Association if the youth presence was not strengthened. The wheels were thus set in motion for the establishment of 'perANAKan-the Youth Group'.

Our objectives are to encourage existing young members to participate in events organised by the Association, to create awareness of the Peranakan culture, and to foster a sense of identity with other members of The Peranakan Association.

We have invited over 200 members, aged 40 and below, to events, which we organised specially for the younger set. Our efforts have resulted in a group of dedicated young Peranakans, who are passionate about their heritage, and hungry to learn more about their culture. We want to recruit more young people to fan the flames of the culture. We draw upon our colourful history of customs, dress, language, art and food, and we hope to make our unique heritage relevant to today's youth. Most of us are working

adults, so the challenge would be for us to straddle the fast-paced modern world, and the genteel world of the old Peranakans.

Our elders are a valuable source of information, so we often organise sessions where they can pass their wealth of knowledge on to us youngsters. We now know the secrets of making Nonya *kueh-tair*, *tapeh* and *kueh chang*; we have learnt to *tumbok rempah*, to make *bunga rampay*, play *chongkak* and even to *ronggeng*.

Our stage performances have been well received, and we have now embarked on an ambitious project to present a slice of Peranakan life to school students. Aimed at the young, our Roadshow will feature history, hip music, MTV-style videos & presentations.

The Peranakan love affair with food is well known. Our regular makan sessions reflect the younger (continued on pg 10)

What does it mean

“ It’s my basic excuse for why I don’t look Chinese; people react more positively to that answer because most agree I don’t look Chinese. Peranakans also have a certain articulation that’s unique, it’s in our idiosyncracies, handicraft, food & custom. ”

— Juliana Chia



Juliana Chia

40+, 5th generation Peranakan



Heather Ong

30+, 5th generation Peranakan

“ I grew up in a Peranakan household, but paid no attention to the culture, until non-Peranakan friends asked me questions about my heritage. I was stumped. It was only after some research that I discovered

the richness and uniqueness of the Peranakan culture. I enjoy wearing vintage sarongs, kebaya and baju panjang. I appreciate my family heirlooms for their beauty and for the stories behind each piece. I have even restored some old peranakan furniture to use in my new home. I am proud to claim the legacy of my Peranakan heritage, and I wish more young people would do the same. ”

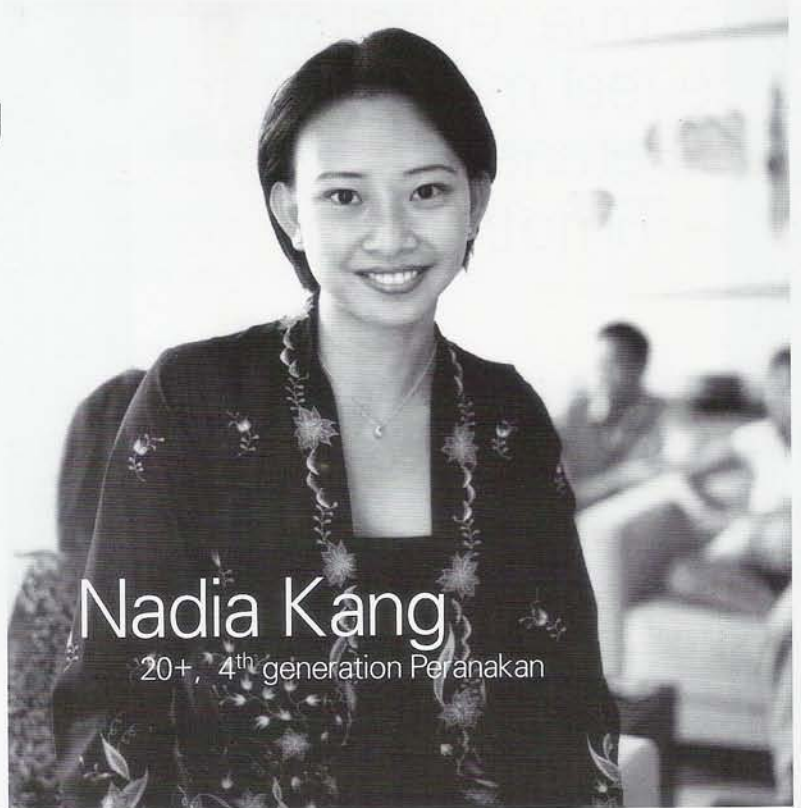
— Heather Ong

to be Peranakan?

“ table tops creaking from the weight of dishes in a myriad colours and textures imaginable...

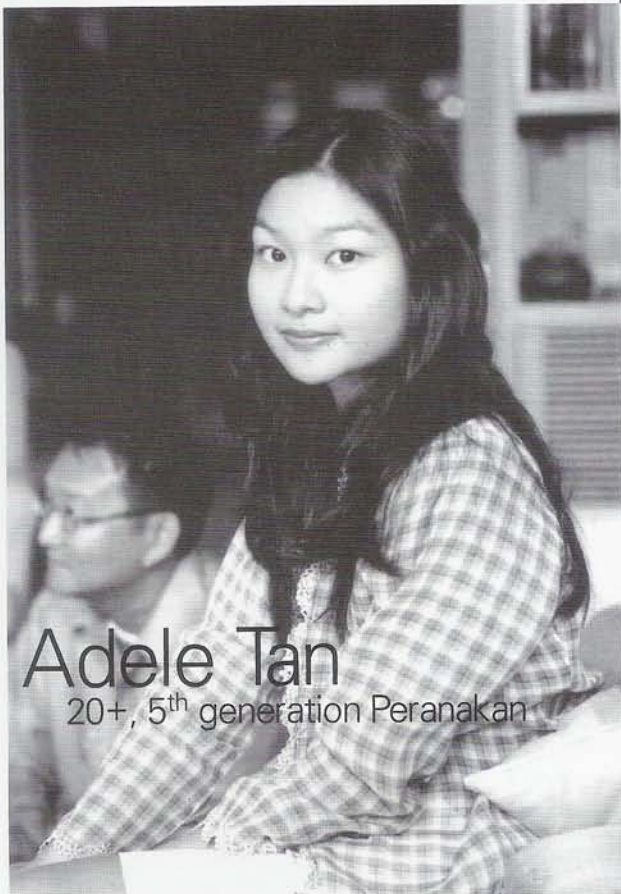
innuendos flying thick and fast amidst a rhapsody of burps over ripe bellies...”

— Adele Tan



Nadia Kang

20+, 4th generation Peranakan



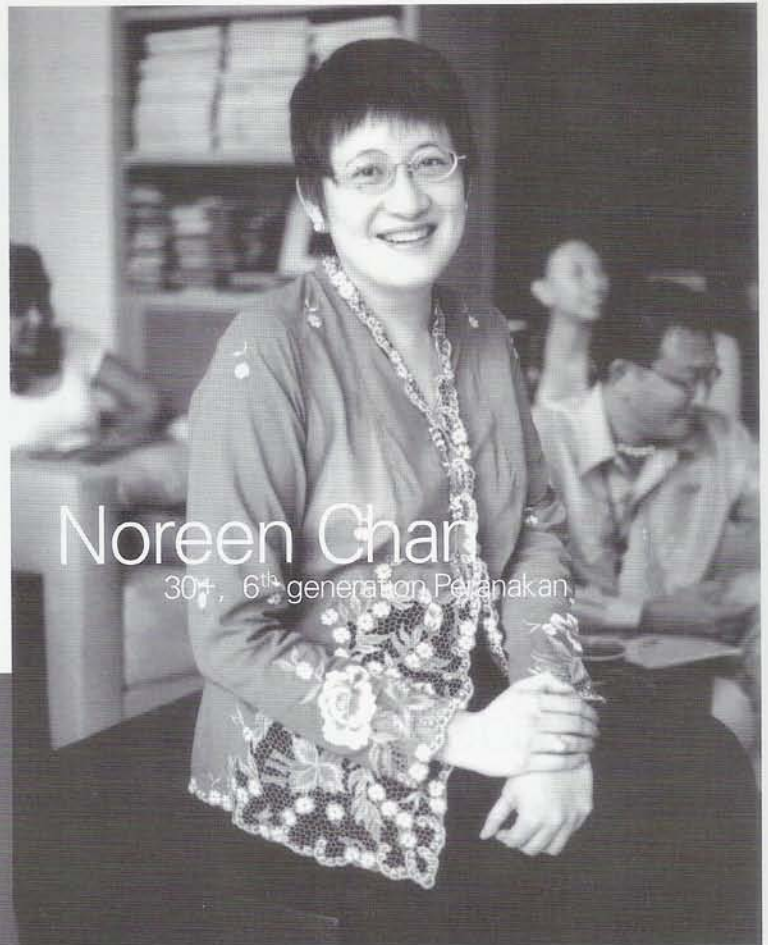
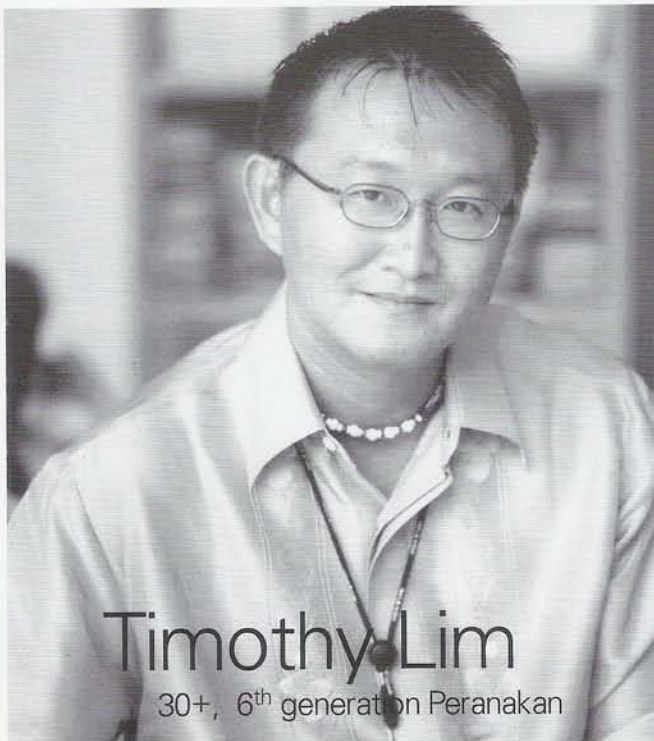
Adele Tan

20+, 5th generation Peranakan

“ Being conversant in both Mandarin & Malay incites curiosity among our new acquaintances. They're always guessing we're Indonesian Chinese & that initial misinformed impression leads into an interesting conversational topic. Many are often inquisitive about our cultural background due to the influx of fusion & fashion trends. Their knowledge is restricted to what fashion & gastronomical gurus dictate. Being young Peranakans ourselves, it is fascinating & gratifying to learn the intricacies of our distinctive heritage, and impart whatever modest knowledge we garner to our inquisitive friends.”

— Nadia & Nadine Kang

“ Being Peranakan is being Who I am! The colourful, myriad and fusionistic culture is a true reflection of the real me. I love to be Peranakan.....! ”
— Timothy Lim



“ Peranakan food was fusion cuisine long before fusion cuisine became fashionable. But then everything about the Peranakans' way of life, how they lived, dressed, ate, worked and played, the beautiful things they used and displayed in their homes, the way they spoke, reflected how they took the best from other cultures around them and made them their own. There's never been a better time to be a Nonya; suddenly everyone wants a kebaya or some beaded accessory, and I'm actually funky for the very first time in my life. I've come to realise how lucky I am to have such a rich heritage to discover and to draw on. My life doesn't begin and end with me. I believe each person is really the culmination of generations of lived experiences, the intertwined lives of so many individuals. It just keeps getting better. ”
— Noreen Chan

(continued from pg 7) Baba and Nonyas' cosmopolitan tastes—we have enjoyed Italian pasta, local seafood, Indian curries and Japanese food. Wine, tea, and liberal dashes of laughter accompany these sessions, and some new members, satiated by good food and good company, pitch in to support our cause. The recent interest in Peranakan food, fashion and collectibles has also led many young members to rediscover their culture.

It is tiring to organise these activities continuously, especially since participation is sometimes disappointing. However, the passion for all things Peranakan, and the desire to promote the culture keeps our spirits buoyant. We hope that the urgency to instill a sense of pride in our young Peranakans, will generate the momentum needed to take the Association into the next 100 years.

~Heather Ong



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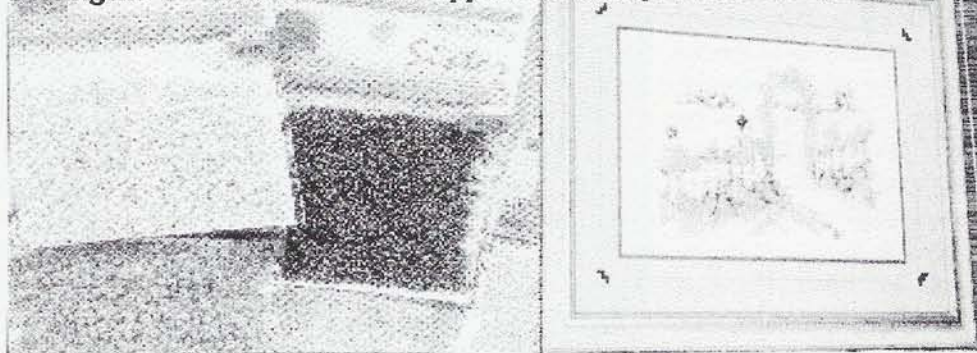
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Photographs by Wah

SEOW SIAN CHYE

TALES OF THE CENTURY

THE PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION IS 100 YEARS OLD. **MAUREEN LIM** MEETS SOME OF OUR MEMBERS WHOSE LIVES HAVE SPANNED THE SAME CENTURY.

SEOW SIAN CHYE is probably the oldest member of our Association. His mother, Siew Gek, was the eldest daughter of Chia Hood Theam, which makes him cousin to Chia Chin Siang. They still keep in touch — lunching together at least once a month. Every year on 11 December, he telephones Chin Siang to wish him a happy birthday, and the day after, it is his turn to receive birthday greetings. The two are close because, together with a host of other cousins, they spent happy childhood years at Rosedale, their grandfather's rambling house in Killiney Road.

As a boy, Sian Chye attended ACS in Coleman Street, did his Senior Cambridge in 1925, and then entered the King Edward College of Medicine to do dentistry. But before completing the course, he joined his father's printing business.

His grandfather and uncles had been compradores of the Mercantile Bank in Raffles Place. Sian Chye worked at the same bank during the Japanese Occupation, when it became a Japanese Military bank, and continued after the Japanese surrender. In all, he was in banking for twenty-eight years. For the next twenty-two years, he became a stockbroker for what is now Vickers Ballas & Co Pte Ltd.

In his lifetime, he has collected an impressive number of trophies. Even as a youth, he was a sportsman, and captained the water-polo team of Chinese Swimming Club. At that time, the team would travel to Penang to compete in friendly annual competitions with the Penang Chinese Swimming Club. He also represented Singapore in water-polo in the China Olympics. As a

member of the Mayflower Badminton Association, he was playing with champions like the late Wong Peng Soon, whose team brought the Thomas Cup to this country. Other leisure activities included going to the cinema or dancing at Great World and New World. He joined The Peranakan Association when Mr T W Ong was President, as they often lunched together and spent weekends at the Singapore Turf Club.

His teenage years were spent in Katong, for, by that time, his parents had moved into their own bungalow in Wilkinson Road, and then, later, another shift to Roseburn Avenue in Frankel Estate. Today, he still remains a Katong boy, living in a single storeyed home on Siglap Plain with his wife and two daughters; their youngest daughter lives in Canada. There are two grandchildren.

He married Winnie Ong Guek Neo, now 87 years old, in 1934. Her family residence was 14 Scotts Road. Asked the secret of their long and happy marriage, he laughed and admitted that "right from the start, I told her *No nagging!* The more you nag, the more stubborn I get! So she often gives way to me. We are very compatible."

Sian Chye walks slowly with the aid of a walking stick, but he used to travel extensively. His last trip was a Nile cruise in 1991. "I've been to so many countries all over the world. His life has now taken a quieter turn. He goes out occasionally to *makan*. He can still get *nasi ulam* from Yuen's in Upper East Coast Road but enjoys hawker food best — beef *kwayteow*, Hokkien *mee*,

kuanchang ngor-biang, and spicy Indian food like fish-head curry, *roti prata*, and *murtabab*. This is because all his life, he has enjoyed good Peranakan cuisine at home. He abstains from tea and coffee.

The interview caused him to recall the best parts of his life, and his final comment was "*Sudab puas!* Those were indeed the good old days! How time flies, and I can hardly believe that I'm 92 years old!"

TAN CHOON KENG was born on Christmas Day, 1909, into a wealthy and prominent family, the eldest son of Tan Cheng Siang. His great-grandfather, Tan Kim Tian, had been a self-made man. Arriving in Singapore from Melaka with hardly anything in his pockets, he rose to the position of compradore in Paterson Simons & Co. Eventually, with his son, Tan Beng Wan, he established a steamship company, with a fleet of twelve steamers

educated in Raffles Institution from 1924 to 1927. From there, he enrolled in King Edward VII College of Medicine. In 1932, he took off for Hong Kong University where he continued with his medical studies. For the next two years, while a student there, he was also an enthusiastic football player in the University team, until an illness left him hospitalised for two months. Upon his discharge from hospital, his father preferred that he return home to Singapore, which he did. The next step was to study medicine in England, but the Depression of the 1930s put paid to his ambitions to become a doctor. Instead, he entered the Civil Service. When racial riots erupted in the fifties, forty Caucasians and twenty locals were enlisted into the police force to deal with the emergency situation. Choon Keng was one of the twenty who joined as a police lieutenant. Six years later, he was transferred to serve as a prisons officer, first at Outram Prison and then at Changi Prison, where he remained until his retirement. But this man was far from calling it quits. He was invited by the

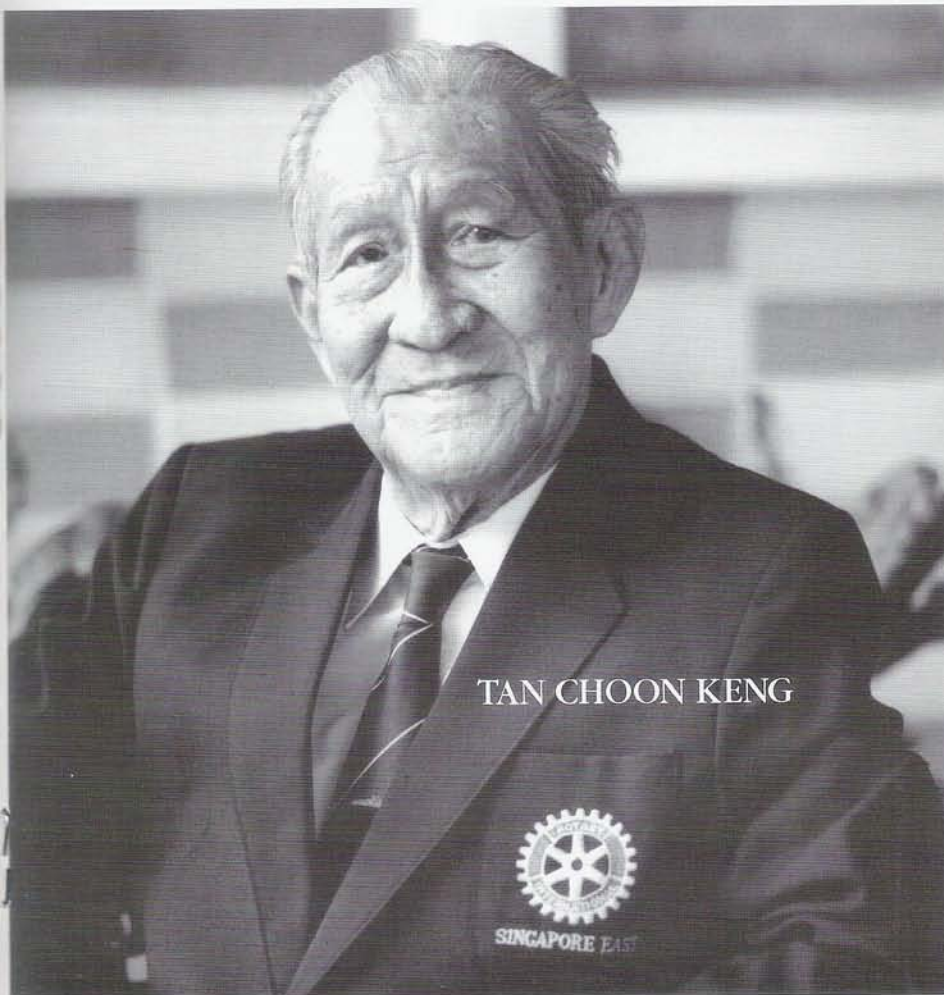
Brunei government to take charge of a detention camp for two thousand detainees. With twelve men from Singapore, he spent several years in the sultanate. Not entirely happy with the work conditions there, he resigned and returned to Singapore.

As a member of The Peranakan Association, he has served as VicePresident. He was 'roped in' by an old friend and former RI classmate, the late T W Ong, who also happened then to be the president of the association. "One day, I happened to pass by his office. He called me in and asked me for \$20. I wondered why this millionaire needed my money. After he took it from me, he told me that I had become a life member of The Peranakan Association!" At that time, it was the practice for the committee members to take turns to host monthly lunches, usually at the seaside restaurants along Upper East Coast Road.

Sports has always been a part of Choon Keng's life. In school, he was part of RI's first football team. In adulthood, he joined the Singapore Chinese Football Association. But football was not the only form of sports he enjoyed. There was also badminton and the Mayflower Badminton Association. These were the golden years, when Wong Peng Soon and his team won the prestigious Thomas Cup. But billiards was Choon Keng's game. In fact, it is clear that this gentleman played a mean game

of billiards. For sitting proudly on a shelf at his home are his trophies — winner in the Singapore Cricket Club Billiards handicap 1986, and runner-up in 1990; Billiards champion in the Rotary Club Games for two consecutive years in 1986-1987 and 1987-1988; Snooker/Billiard champion in the Inter-Rotary Club Games in 1990-1991; Snooker Doubles Champion and 3-ball Billiards Champion in 1992-1993.

Choon Keng has a daughter and two sons; the elder is married with two daughters, the younger lives with him. On the walls of their Mountbatten Road home are portraits of ancestors and family. There is a large sepia photograph of Botan House, and another of the colonial buildings that once housed his alma



transporting cargo mainly between Singapore and Indonesia. Tan Beng Wan's only son, Tan Cheng Siang, continued the family business. Choon Keng remembers as a young man visiting Indonesia several times on these ships, a journey which some times took several days. The family business also included shipchandlery. Their handsome bungalow at 83 Neil Road was named Botan House and was a well known landmark. After the death of Tan Cheng Siang, the property was sold; in its place now stands Chinatown Plaza. However, Kim Tian Road, named after his great-grandfather, still exists.

As a child, Choon Keng was a student-boarder at St. Joseph's Institution. Then, following in his father's footsteps, he was

mater, Raffles Institution. Many more record his sporting activities, the gala receptions, cruises aboard luxury liners, and formal lineups of past Peranakan Association committees.

There are newspaper cuttings as well; the most recent is a review of a newly-published book titled "Living Hell" by Goh Chor Boon. Published last year, it tells the story of Choon Keng's dreadful experiences as a POW working on the infamous Death Railway which the Japanese planned to build from Thailand to India.

In contrast to that tumultuous time and to the varied and rich experiences, this senior gentleman now spends quiet days at home. He has had to curtail his physical activities since a knee operation fifteen years ago. But everything around him testifies to a life lived to the fullest.

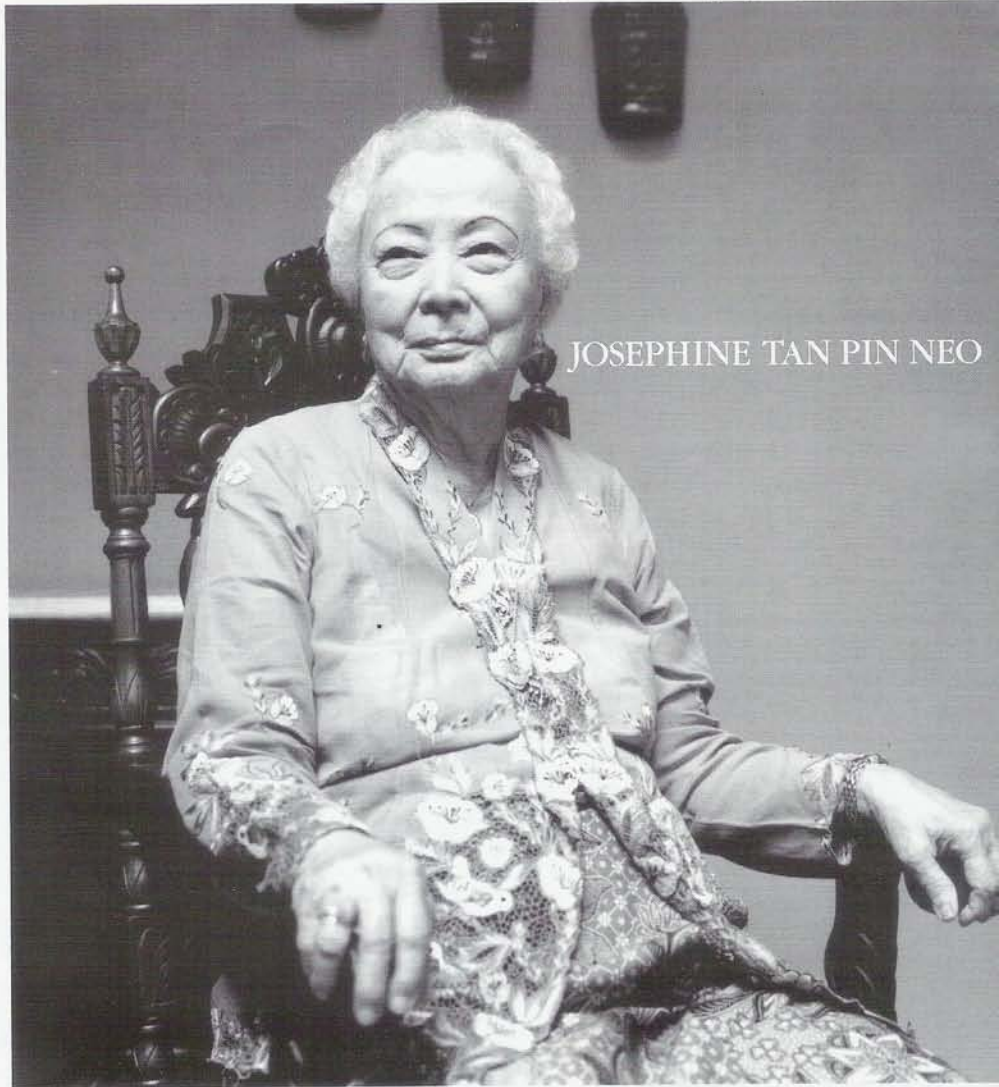
JOSEPHINE TAN PIN NEO

— what a genteel, old-fashioned name be longing to an equally genteel lady. To meet her, you have only to walk through the Peranakan swing doors of Katong Antique House, itself a landmark in Katong and owned by her younger son, Peter Wee. On most days, you will be met by a pair of twinkling eyes and the kind of gentle smile reminiscent of the ladies of the silver screen. Here, she gets to see a parade of people who come in to view Peter's fine collection of all things Peranakan. Here too she enjoys *cherki* with friends. On the afternoon I visited, she was playing her own version of Solitaire — "on doctor's orders," she says, "to strengthen my hands and fingers."

She was born on 9 October 1914 into a very wealthy family, the granddaughter of millionaire Tan Keong Saik, from Melaka. He owned the rows of houses along the road named after him and was one of the founders of the Straits Steamship Company, together with renowned businessmen such as Tan Jiak Kim and Lee Cheng Yan. Josephine's father, Tan Cheng Kee, was one of four sons of Tan Keong Saik; he owned considerable property in Katong and Changi, and two cinema halls — Alhambra and Marlborough, both at Beach Road.

Although her mother died when she was just a young girl, her father never remarried. She was educated at the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus at Victoria Street, and led a sheltered life well schooled in the correct behaviour for the ladies of her time. That does not mean that she did not spend happy afternoons lost in the worlds of Rudolph Valentino and Johnny Weismuller's Tarzan.

At 21 years old, she married Joseph Wee Guan Hong. Although he was born in Singapore, his family was originally from Indonesia and conducted business in



JOSEPHINE TAN PIN NEO

Tanjong Pinang and Riau. They were married at St. Teresa's Church. She can still remember the name of the officiating priest — Father Steven Lee. The wedding feast was held in the Tan family house at 67 Waterloo Street. Josephine was widowed more than ten years ago, and now lives at Dunbar Walk with Peter.

Like many Peranakan ladies, Josephine has done her fair share of beaded slippers; diamond-studded ones completed her wedding finery. She is always in *sarong kebaya* — beautifully embroidered, colourful ones for going-out, and less elaborate ones of patterned material for home. She comments that hardly anyone nowadays uses this version. She admits, however, that she neither sews nor cooks, as there were three Hainanese cooks in the kitchens of her father's house.

Always a devout Catholic, she would attend daily mass at the church just next to her house in Waterloo Street. These days she wakes early in the mornings for devotions, and never misses mass on Sundays.

She has always enjoyed going out and I have often spotted her having tea at Delifrance in Parkway Parade. But ever since her knees have started giving way, she stays in more, enjoying the more sedentary pastimes with her Earl Grey tea. Her favourite TV shows are *Wheel of Fortune*, *Under One Roof* and *Phua Chu Kang*. Not one who turns in early, she stays up to watch the latenight shows too. When she's at a party, this lady loves to stay on until the very end. She especially enjoys and hardly ever misses

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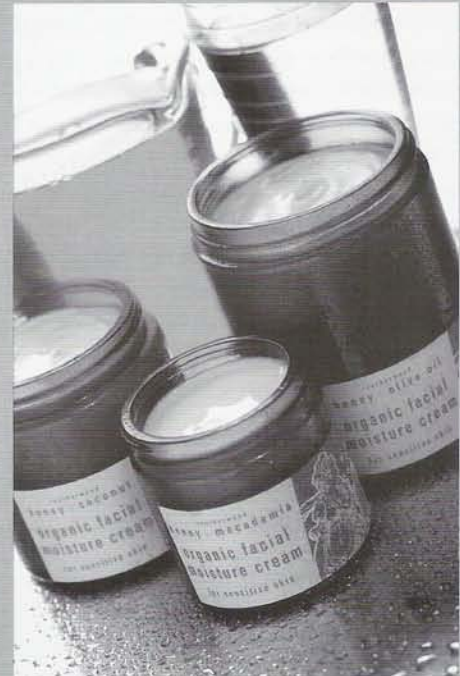
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the PA gatherings. The next time you find yourself at one of our functions, do look out for a pair of twinkling eyes above a lovely smile.

ANNIE YEO CHEE CHEE lost her mother when she was only 12 years old. Home was an attap house in the Kembangan area. Yet Annie Yeo Chee Chee has a happy and relaxed attitude to life. She was educated at Fairfield Methodist Girls' School and, at 24 years, married Chua Joo Seong, a relation of Tan Kah Kee. It was a matched marriage, and their "dates" were usually to the cinema shows at Roxy, Rex or Capitol, always accompanied by chaperones! Their wedding day was a dramatic event. Annie laughs as she recounts the ceremony. Just as she was about to light the traditional wedding candles, they heard the drone of Japanese bomber planes overhead, too close for comfort. Everyone dived for cover. The bride in her wedding *cheongsam* ended up under a table. Fortunately, they survived the day.

Now a widow, her time is really all her own. Mornings are leisurely. Breakfast, to my amazement, is only a cup of cold water; but then, later, it's often off to meet friends for lunch at one of the many food outlets in her Bedok neighbourhood. Other pastimes are playing *cherki*, *si-sek*, *mahjong*, and *tua ji*, the latter played with small narrow cards carrying Chinese characters.

Annie is a very active member of the Gunong Sayang Association *joget* group, which meets every Friday night from 8-10pm. She showed me several photographs of the group's public appearances. Not only are they on stage at every performance of the Gunong Sayang Association plays, but they have also, amongst other things, danced in the streets at a Chingay

Parade, performed at an NTUC Carnival Day, and at Senior Citizens' Week functions. "But the Twist is still my favourite dance," she says enthusiastically. And this coming from a *bibik* born on 3 April 1917, which makes her all of 83 years young!

She has a daughter and a son, and four grandchildren, two from each. She now lives in a Bedok Reservoir Road apartment with her son Ronald, his wife Emily (both are in the nursing profession) and a granddaughter. Another granddaughter is married and has made her the proud great-grandmother of 16-month-old Mathias.

She tells me she is a very good cook, and the family has enjoyed years of Peranakan dishes like *bee pio* soup, *itek tim*, *ayam buah keluak*, *sioh*, *masak pedas*, *sambal udang*, *laksa*, *mees iam*, *achar*, etc. And if that does not make your mouth water, you should get a sniff of her homemade *sambal belachan*. However, nowadays, she enjoys simpler meals, her favourite being *tougay* with salted fish. Could this, I wonder, be the secret of her energy and zest for life?

CHIA CHIN SIANG's eyes light up the moment you mention 'tennis'. For he has been having a love affair with the game since 'nineteen nought belum'.

It all began when, as a boy, Chia Chin Siang watched his father and his father's friends play the game in the grounds of Rosedale, the family home in Killiney Road. It was then the first privately-owned tennis court in Singapore. And from the day he first took up the racket, there was no turning back. He was to spend the rest of his life devoted to the game, and even as a senior citizen, he won club titles in the veterans' section.

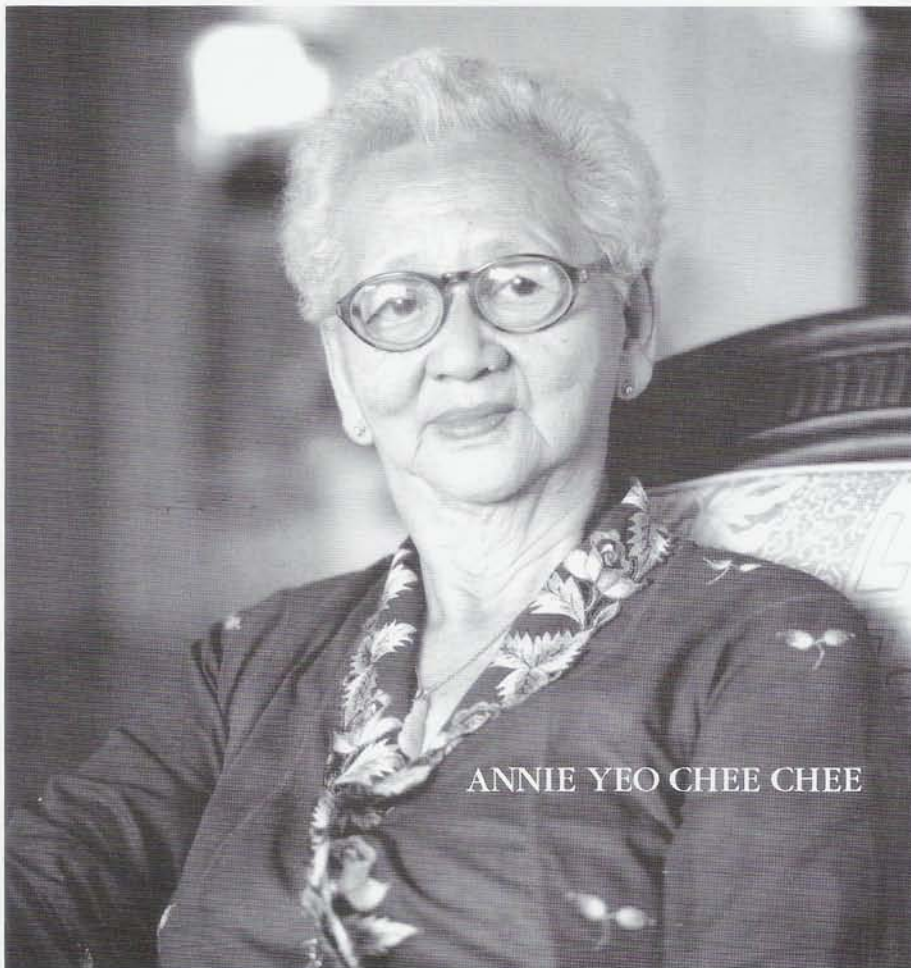
He was tennis captain of YMCA in 1959-60, the same year that he and his son Barry won the YMCA doubles championship. He held this post until the mid-seventies, when the government acquired the YMCA tennis courts for development.

In 1961, he was elected to the post of honorary treasurer of the Singapore Lawn Tennis Association, an office which he held for twenty-six years, which is something of a record. He continued to serve the association as a committee member.

On the invitation of the Chinese government, he accompanied a team on a tour of five cities for friendly matches.

In 1977-1980, Chin Siang was appointed coach under the Cando and Jackson Tennis Training Scheme, a joint programme of the SLTA, the Singapore Sports Council and Jackson Sports Company. He still has these certificates. Says he, "When I was young, my friends and I didn't have a coach. All of us mastered the game through trial and error."

His contribution to the game has certainly been recognised. In 1981, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs and Culture, Mr. S. Dhanabalan, conferred on him a certificate of commendation. And over the



ANNIE YEO CHEE CHEE

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years, he has been featured in sports journals and in the local papers (even the Chinese language ones). One report referred to him as a "walking encyclopaedia of tennis", and indeed, he still keeps a close eye on the tennis scene in Singapore. I saw in his file newscuttings dated as recent as May 2000.

Since 1989, Chin Siang has been a member of the Veterans Tennis Association of Singapore — "a founder member", he proudly tells me. This group plays regularly at various venues. On Monday and Thursday evenings, you will see them at the NUS Sports and Recreation Centre. On Wednesdays, they play at the public courts opposite the Botanic Gardens, and Saturday mornings find them at Raffles Junior College.

Such is their boundless energy that they cannot be contained in Singapore. These senior citizens travel overseas annually to take part in veterans' tournaments. Their tennis shoes have taken them to Beijing, Pattaya, and Tokyo.

Born on 11 December 1919, Chin Siang came from a privileged background. His grandfather, Chia Hood Theam, and his father, Chia Keng Tye, were both compradores of the Mercantile Bank.

When Chin Siang completed 'Senior Cambridge' in 1937, he went on to Raffles College until 1941. He later became a cashier in a bank before managing the dispensary in his brother's medical clinic, until his retirement in December 1994.

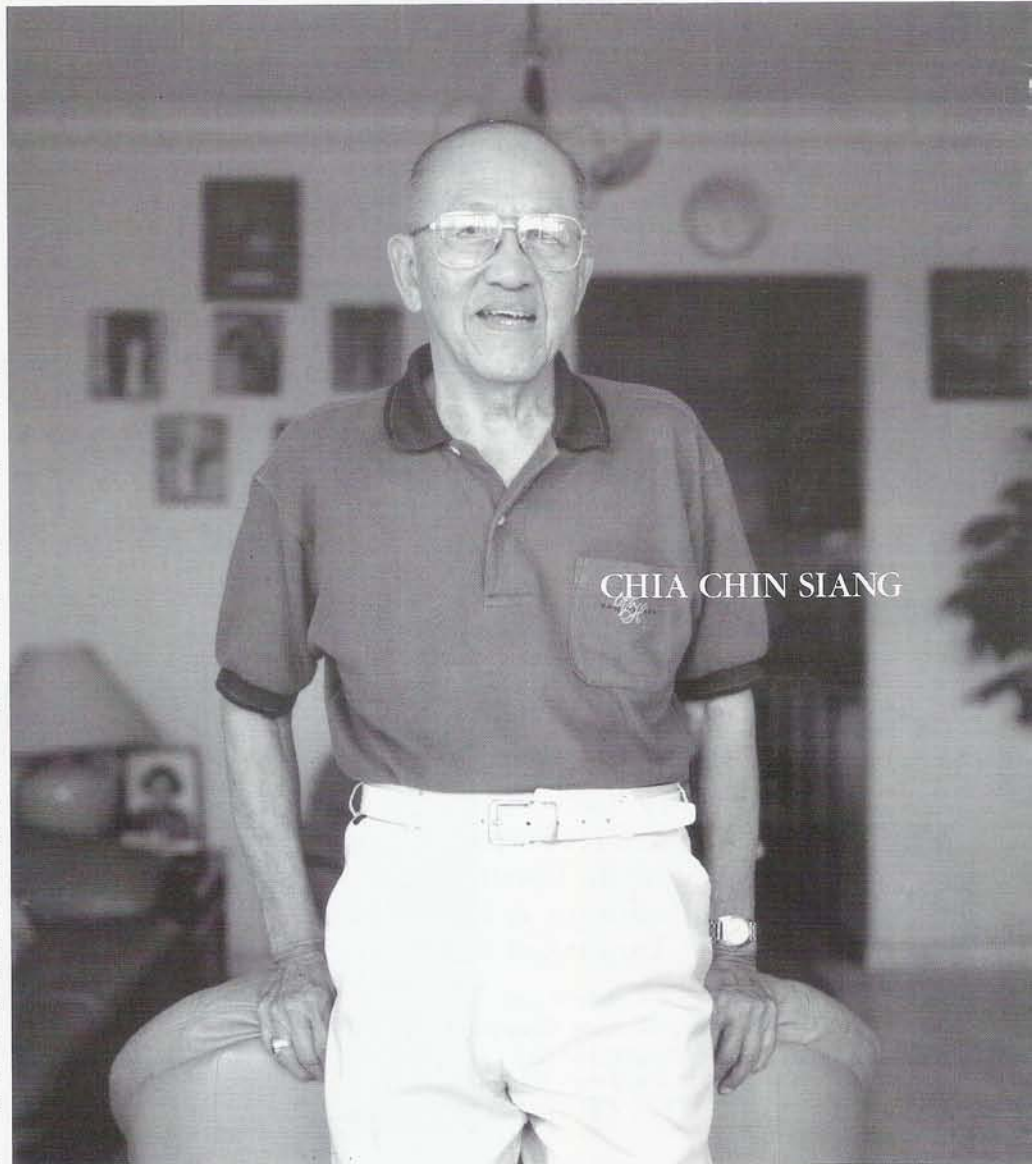
In his youth, he enjoyed a wealth of enviable experiences. There was rowing and power-boat racing off the coast of Pasir Panjang where the family had a seaside bungalow. There was fishing off Raffles Lighthouse, and shooting snipes — migratory birds from Siberia — at the former Alkaff Gardens in the Sennet area. In school, he was captain of the ACS swim team. All these pursuits were eventually given up for, yes you guessed it — tennis!

Besides keeping tennis 'dates', he lunches with friends and family. "I like Thai food, especially tom yam soup, and nasi ulam. I sometimes go to Katong to indulge my palate." Nonetheless, he is a very disciplined person. At home, breakfast is toast with either jam or peanut butter or tuna; lunch is usually rice with fish, and it's bread again at dinner. No wonder he keeps so trim.

He is very much a family man. Although he lives on his own (his wife, Irene, a granddaughter of Lee Choon Guan, passed away some years back) each Sunday afternoon sees a gathering of the clan at his Holland Close apartment; it is the headquarters for his immediate family, as well as his sisters and their children. "It's quite a crowd", he says proudly. He himself has twelve grandchildren from two sons and three daughters, all married.

From the smile on his face as he talks of them, it is clear that they enjoy a close and loving relationship. A son and a daughter live with their families in Australia. We don't really need to guess where he heads for each time the Australian Open comes around.

Except for a neurological eyelid problem some six years ago, for which he needs some medication, he is one of those lucky people who enjoy good health. He sometimes goes for acupuncture and lately has been taking Glucosamine/Chondroitin sulphate supplements to keep those ligaments spritely. Speaking to him, one cannot help but be impressed by his



CHIA CHIN SIANG

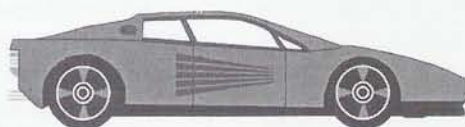
cheerful state of mind, his lively personality and the physical agility of a much younger man. Can he really be an octogenarian? He still drives too, zipping around in his Mazda Astina. (Before, it was a Holden 2-door Sports!)

Asked the secret of his youth, he threw back his head and laughed. "I'm very relaxed and I have no worries. I'm just a happy-go-lucky guy."

If readers know of other members who are in their eighties and more, do write in to:

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Padang Nite Irene Ooi To The Fore

The Padang Nite was a social event organised by Bebe Seet, ably assisted by Irene Ooi and Shia Ai Lee. The event, which was a sellout weeks before the actual date, was held at The Singapore Recreation Club on Sunday 11 June. The evening commenced in true Peranakan style with dancing before dinner which consisted of a sumptuous buffet. This was followed by party games at which Irene Ooi sportingly excelled in the banana game which left everyone in stitches. Then when the band struck up the appropriate music eager participants crowded the floor to show off their skills in the latest dance craze — line dancing. To crown the evening, Irene Ooi received a pleasant surprise when a birthday cake was wheeled in and when VicePresident Peter Wee, in wishing her many happy returns of the day, presented her with a traditional Peranakan gift of *mee sua* and red eggs as tokens of longevity and happiness.

~ Shia Ai Lee

Peranakan Association. Frederick was assigned the task of weighing the portions of ingredients that mom had to *agak-agak* so that the novice cooks gathered round her would not be confused. *Daun pandan* (used for wrapping the *kueh chang*) had to be plucked off the plant from an aunt's garden — the usual K.K. market stall being closed for renovation on that day.

Although space constraints limited the number of participants to twenty, all those present — comprising ladies of all ages and a lone gentleman — thoroughly enjoyed their attempts to wrap and tie up their own *kueh changs* under the expert guidance of Bibik Neo. This was the first cooking session organised as a social activity for members. If you wish to have more of it in future or if you have a recipe to share and wish to conduct a cooking lesson please contact Ms Bebe Seet — Tel. 98162177.

~ Bebe Seet



AN ACT OF CHARITY

PERANAKAN NIGHT GOODWOOD PARK HOTEL

In an effort to promote the Peranakan culture and also for a worthy cause, the Goodwood Park Hotel held a Gala Peranakan Night on 13 July 2000 in aid of the building fund of the Church of St Mary of the Angels. Gracing the occasion were Guest of Honour, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Dr Tony Tan and his wife Mrs Mary Tan. When the show was repeated the following night it was sheer delight to realise that almost all the 200 guests present were Babas and Nyonyas, mostly dressed in batik and Peranakan attire. They were treated to a lavish Peranakan dinner prepared by Mr Kenny Chan, celebrity chef and versatile actor of Malaysia's TV sitcom *Baba-Nyonya*, who also presented a Peranakan skit *Miang Keladi* performed by a cast of six supported by their own six-piece band from Melaka. After the sketch the cast and musicians remained on stage to entertain the audience the whole night with sing-along sessions and by inviting them to some impromptu dancing.

Our Vice President Mr Peter Wee, of the Katong Antique House, exhibited his personal collection of Peranakan beadwork and *sarong kebayas* to enhance the theme of the evening. He and his team of nyonyas from The Peranakan Association also sold a wide variety of *kueh-kueh* and cookies, the proceeds of which were donated to the church building fund. ~ Marlene Foo

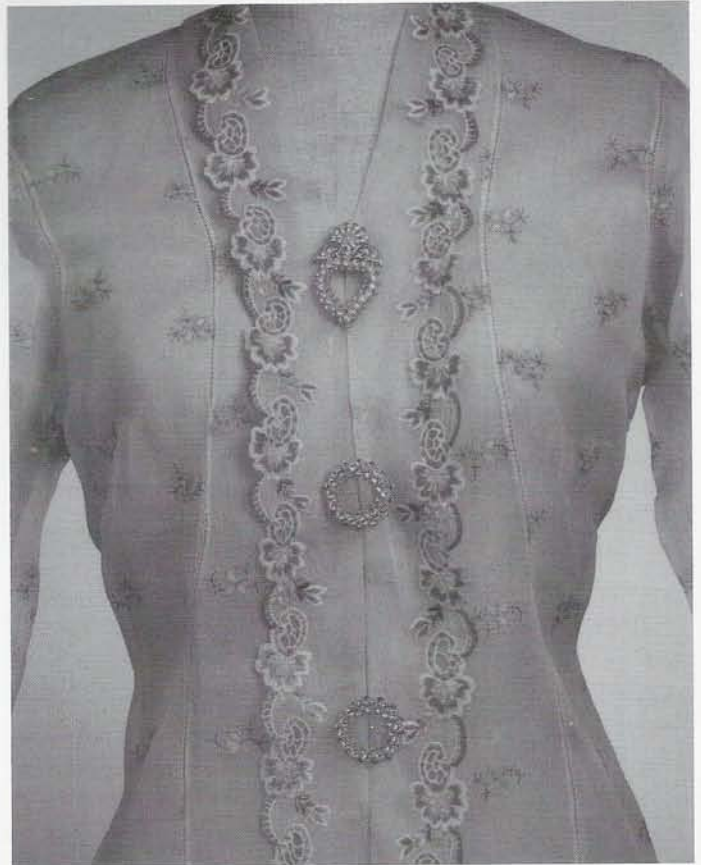
Bibik Neo Kim Neo & The Art Of Making Kueh Chang

The aroma of *ketumbar* (freshly-ground coriander) and *daun pandan* filled the air in the kitchen of Katong Antique House where Bibik Neo Kim Neo, a veteran cook, took the barrage of questions in her stride as her hand expertly stirred and fried a wok-ful of finely-chopped mushrooms, pork and melon strips for the *kueh chang* fillings. "Mom makes the best *kueh chang*. Someone even offered to buy her recipe," quipped her son Frederick. And that was how Bibik Neo ended up by conducting a cooking demonstration for members of The

RISIS

launches new *Peranakan Collection* at our Centennial Celebrations

In conjunction with The Peranakan Association's Centennial Celebrations, Risis will launch an exciting new range of Peranakan-inspired gifts that will be sold country-wide. Members and their guests will have the privilege of a preview at the launch of our Centennial Celebrations on Wednesday 16 August 2000 at the Far East Square Pavilion, China Street/Cross Street at 7 pm. The range, which will see the addition of new products throughout the year, for the moment comprises two fine 24K gold-plated works of art — a *kepala bantal* or pillow end with a phoenix and *qilin* motif, presented in an elegant gold frame within a rich, red Thai silk border or as an independent item; and a modern set of *kerosang ati ati* (or *kerosang serong*) embellished with high quality Swarovski crystal diamantés. The Peranakan Association is proud to welcome RISIS to be part of our year-long Centennial Celebrations. •



FOOD & CRAFT FAIR APPEAL FOR HELP

The Food & Craft Fair
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Proceeds go towards Association's general fund

The organising committee is appealing to members to contribute in these possible ways:

- Sponsor a food or craft stall at \$200 a stall
 - Donate food or craft items
- Supply and manage a food or craft stall.

Please contact
Mrs Irene Ooi, Telephone 4667149
Mr Peter Wee, Telephone 3458544

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1 December 2000
Neptune Theatre Restaurant

please contact
Bebe Seet-Wong or Esther Lum
Tel: 2478781

NOTICEBOARD

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome aboard the following 17 new ordinary members whose addition increases our roll to 1523 members.

Dr Chan Guek Cheng Noreen	Mdm Lim Mee Goh Pauline
Mrs Chan Rosalind nee Yeo	Mdm Lim Siew Cheng
Mdm Choa Christine	Mdm Lim Soo Hwee
Mrs Chua Jeen Tee Irene	Mdm Lim Soo Lim
Mr Chua Tiang Choon Keith	Mdm Neo Lily
Mr Chua Tiang Kwang Allan	Mrs Scully Iris
Mr Gan Siow Kee Clement	Mr Wee Chin Swee Henry
Ms Goh Jo-An	Mr Wee Richard
Ms Lim Gek Chin Mavis	

COMING EVENTS

MALACCA TRIP TICKETS SOLD OUT

As a result of an overwhelming demand, all seats for the bus taking members to Malacca for the 100 Years' Celebration Dinner of the Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka on Saturday 12 August 2000 have been taken up.

GSA PLAY *CHUEH IT CHAP GOH*

Gunong Sayang Association's new play *Chueh It Chap Goh*, written by GT Lye and starring GT Lye, Sally Gan among others, will be staged at the World Trade Centre Auditorium from 24th to 26th August 2000 at 8 pm. Tickets \$26, \$36 & \$46 are available from SISTIC outlets.

LAUNCHING OF OUR CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

Our Centennial Celebrations will be launched on Wednesday 16 August 2000 at the Far East Square Pavilion, China Street/Cross Street at 7 pm with a Peranakan *Tok Panjang* Dinner, the launching of Peranakan-inspired jewellery by RISIS and entertainment by our Youth Group. Tickets at \$20 for members and \$30 for non-members are available from The Hon Secretary, The Peranakan Association, 101 Thomson Road, #01-80 United Square, Singapore 307591 — Tel. 2550704.

FOOD & CRAFT FAIR

The Peranakan Association Food & Craft Fair will be held at the courtyard of The Singapore History Museum, Stamford Road on Sunday 10 September 2000 from 11 am to 4 pm and in the evening on Saturday 16 September 2000 from 6.30 pm onwards.

Details will be announced later

perANAKan THE YOUTH GROUP GET TOGETHER DINNER

Saturday 16 September 2000

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13th BABA CONVENTION PENANG

Friday 24 November to Sunday 26 November

Friday 24 November

Arrival in Penang and check in at Paradise Hotel

2.30 - 6 pm

• Registration of delegates

8 pm

• Bangsawan at Dewan Seri

Saturday 25 November

9.30 am

• Opening of 13th Baba Convention.

• Exhibition of Paintings by Martin Loh.

• Seminar

8 pm

• Convention Dinner

Sunday 26 November

10 am

• Visit to Penang Association Clubhouse

2 pm

• Lunch Delegates depart

More details will be announced later

GRAND CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION 100th ANNIVERSARY & ANNUAL DINNER & DANCE

Friday 1 December 2000

Neptune Theatre Restaurant.

Details will be announced later.

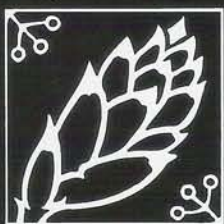
OBITUARIES

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families of the following late members on their recent bereavement:

Rev Charles Wee Thiam Quee

Mdm Chua Kim Neo

Mdm Chua Kim Neo, a 95 years old retired midwife, was one of our oldest members. At the age of 90, she was still actively making weekly trips, sometimes by bus and MRT, from her home in Toa Payoh to The Singapore Children's Society (SCS) at Tiong Bahru to cut used postage stamps from envelopes. The stamps were then sold to stamp dealers to raise money for the SCS, which, in 1995, presented her with an award in appreciation of her voluntary work.



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