

# MGS ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION

## FELLOWSHIP 2010



ESTABLISHED 1887

**HIGHLIGHTS :**  **P3 :** JANICE WONG OF 2AM:DESSERT BAR TALKS ABOUT THE SWEET LIFE 

**P4 :** SERENA WEE OF CAN-CARE MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF CANCER PATIENTS

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### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is only natural that we become more involved in MGS whilst our kids are in school. Then when they graduate, we drift away from our alma mater as if our "duty" has ended. Although this promotes renewal among the ranks of those who come forward to serve in the Alumnae or Parentlink, I would like to encourage all alumna, regardless of age, to continue to support our alma mater by keeping in touch with us through our newsletter, email, attending events like the Past vs Present Games and, of course, the Founder's Day Dinner which is an annual affair.

We now can use the school's sports facilities on Wednesday evenings. So this is another opportunity to come together for some fun and games. Please look out for more details in the newsletter.

Earlier this month when I was placing an order for souvenirs, the supplier remarked that our school is really old!!! At 123, we have indeed been around for some time. Age, however, has not been a handicap; in fact MGS is a very sought after school as its reputation for excellence and for providing a holistic education are traditions which have developed through the years. MGS girls stand tall and exude confidence which comes from being schooled in traditional values, anchored by our Christian faith.

We all have memories which date back to the time when we were in school and these are reinforced through the years as we reminisce over coffee or dinner. Even chapel sessions can become topics of conversation when we recall our school days! I do not think I truly appreciated the lessons which were taught at chapel but now in hindsight, as I think about missionaries such as Miss Gruber and Rev Denver Stone who regularly conducted chapel services, I think also of Miss Sophia Blackmore and her missionary zeal to provide girls with an education so many years ago. If not for all these people, the school would not be what it is today. So I urge you to further this vision of our founder and the missionaries who served the school, to continue to make MGS a place where our daughters can be nurtured and taught.

How can you contribute? Well, first by putting your daughters in MGS: share with them the values which we learnt and continue to be taught in school. Then if you can make a further commitment, join the parent volunteers who teach Character First in school or join us in the Alumnae Room every 2nd Monday of the month as we gather to pray for the school and our members. Be an active member of the Alumnae so that your daughters will also carry on this fine tradition of loyalty.

In conclusion, I would like to share with you Proverbs 3: 5 & 6.

**"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;**

**In all your ways acknowledge him,**

**And he will make your paths straight."**

Let us not forget to give God all the glory He alone deserves for the good things we have in our lives.

**BARBARA CHEE**







# What Are They Doing Now?



## Desserts Past Midnight

One of Singapore's most promising chefs in Singapore is **Janice Wong (Class of '98)** who owns 2am: dessert bar in Holland Village. Churning out all manner luscious desserts, she tells *Fellowship* about her journey from school to professional kitchen.



### **Fellowship: What were your most abiding memories of MGS?**

Janice: I remember every year we had campfires in school, where we would gather round and sing songs. Some of the people I shared these moments with have now become my best friends. The bonds that we created during school have carried on over the years.

### **F: What ECAs were you involved in MGS? Did any involve cooking?**

Janice: I used to be a real athlete back in MGS. I joined the squash team for four years, and was even a javelin thrower for Track & Field. Now with the bar, I scarcely have time for anything else!

### **F: Why did you decide become a pastry chef? How did you build your career?**

Janice: I grew up in Japan and Hong Kong when I was little and in cities such as Japan, the pastries are remarkable and most chefs strive for perfection. Ideally, I would have preferred to be a cuisine chef but I knew it would be difficult to stand out, especially as a woman, so I decided to create a niche for myself by specialising in desserts. I enrolled myself in Le Cordon Bleu Paris right after university and specialized in pastry. I grew to love it and have not stopped since.

As a business owner, the most important thing for me is never to stop growing with my business. I have set goals for myself, including making 2am a global brand in the future. I have been working towards that by taking an average of two months off each year to work overseas in other kitchens. For example, my recent trip was to

Spain where I had the chance to work at 3-star Michelin restaurant Arzak. It was one of the most fruitful exchanges.

### **F: How did you get started on 2am?**

Janice: I was working in New York where there were a few concepts with desserts and wine. I've always craved for hot chocolate or chocolate gourmet desserts at night and there was no such place in Singapore where you could get plated dessert past midnight. There was no such concept in Singapore yet, so I jumped on the project immediately.

### **F: Why did you name it 2am?**

Janice: I saw a dessert called '3am: apple pie', and immediately thought it would be a good name for the bar. From the name, you can immediately tell what time we close, so it reflected the right message I was trying to send with regards to the concept.

### **F: What are the most challenging and rewarding aspects of being a pastry chef?**

Janice: Singapore's geographic location and small land space makes it difficult to get a large variety of fresh herbs, fruits and flowers, which play a big part in the cuisine. With the limited choice, I feel there is a cap on what I can use to explore in the kitchen.

The most rewarding thing would be seeing satisfied customers leaving the bar with wide smiles on their faces. Since 2am has an open kitchen, we get a lot of opportunity to witness when patrons enjoy themselves. This gives me peace of mind and also keeps me going, to push harder to maintain and exceed their expectations.

### **F: You are considered a celebrity chef in Singapore these days. How has that affected you?**

Janice: Although I do not consider myself one, being a 'celebrity chef' has opened up so many doors and opportunities for my team and I to meet famous chefs from around the world, from whom we can share and learn techniques and ideas from. It has also led to my fortunate participation in a number of international events, which has allowed me to play a part in putting Singapore on the culinary world map.

### **F: Did your experience in MGS influence you in any way as an adult?**

Janice: I remember in MGS we were taught to master, to grow and to serve. This is what I aim for as a chef – to master my craft, to grow as a chef and as a person, and to serve both God and the society. This is an echoing reminder to myself to remain humble and to always strive for my best, whatever I may choose to do.

### **F: Did you take cooking classes when you were in MGS? What are your most abiding memories of those?**

Janice: Yes, during home economics. Believe it or not, I used to trade all my cooking duties with my classmates, or trade anything really, just to take on the dishwasher role! I used to dread cooking!

Looking back, I'm pleasantly surprised at how much I have grown to love the culinary arts.

### **F: What would you advise fellow alumna now if either they or their daughters wanted to go into a life of cheffing?**

Janice: It has been said time and again, but this is something that can never be emphasised enough, and that is to follow your dream. To be in the culinary world, one has to understand that it takes a lot more than just a hobby, or a passion. It takes dedication and commitment to the craft as well. When you decide that being a chef is going to be your career path, you need to have a five- or even a 10-year plan to chart where you want to take your restaurant, because this is your future you are talking about.

One of the hardest things I have learnt would be how to manage the company well, especially with regards to human resources. 2am wouldn't be what it is today without the team. You have to constantly be mindful of the type of people you work with. For me, I have found that it is important to work with good people who inspire you, and who share the same vision. That way, we can all grow together. Although we've been open for two and a half years, it feels like we've only just started. We're constantly on our toes, working towards improvement.

Another thing I've learnt is the importance of growing with the current pace and lifestyle of Singapore. You always have to be in touch with what's 'in'. If not, you have to be the trendsetter.



I remember in MGS we were taught to master, to grow and to serve. This is what I aim for as a chef – to master my craft, to grow as a chef and as a person... to remain humble and to always strive for my best, whatever I may choose to do.



# What Are They Doing Now?



## Serena Wee

**Serena Wee (Class of '84)**, a mother of two boys and Director of Can-care, knows what it means to make a difference in society as she empowers and enables cancer patients, survivors and their families to lead normal lives. *Fellowship* finds out what she's all about.

**Fellowship: So what are you doing now?**

**Serena:** I am the managing partner and director of Can-Care. Can-care stands for Cancer care, dedicated to providing cancer care products and services to cancer patients, survivors and their families. We try to improve the total well being and self-esteem of ladies with cancer as

well as cancer survivors so that she can live as normal and active a lifestyle as possible. In fact, the motto for Can-Care is "Why should life be any different?" We help cancer patients through various programs and services. For example, we help patients plan out their treatment and what to expect after treatment and mastectomy,

so they would be better prepared psychologically when the changes occur; we would schedule for a patient to purchase and fit a wig before the chemotherapy treatment. The one especially worth mentioning is a program called 'Look Good, Feel Better' for which I am Vice-Chairperson. This program falls under Singapore Cancer Society and is developed specifically for women undergoing chemotherapy or radiation treatment.

**F: What was your motivation and hopes in establishing Can-care?**

**S:** Part of the impetus for starting the business came from personal experience, not my personal experience, but

my aunt. My aunt was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1995 and there was no shop around at that time offering a service like us. I remember going around with my mum looking for a suitable prosthesis and wig for her, but the people who sold the prostheses did not know much about the product to help us! What's more, while oncology centers are being developed region-wide, there are still very few facilities that serve the social and psychological needs of cancer survivors in terms of non-hospital based cancer care. We try to fill that gap by providing products necessary to maintain the lifestyles she enjoyed prior to the onset of cancer, counsel to patients and families and educating those affected in one way or other by the illness.

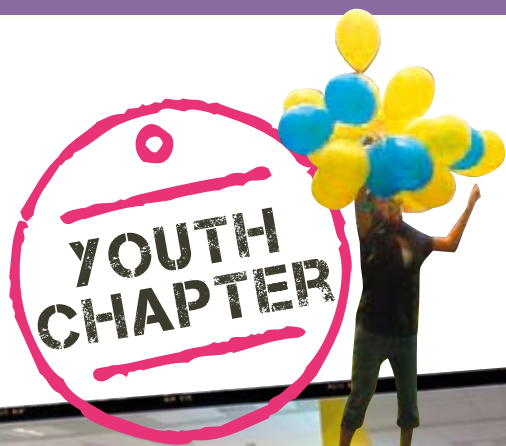
**F: Share with us some of your most gratifying experiences at work.**

**S:** You know, there was one incident that particularly struck me, that showed me that we were doing the right thing. There was one day when this lady came to our shop, carrying a pillow in front of her chest. After the fitting of an appropriate

prosthesis and wearing one, she walked to the dustbin and dumped her pillow in it, and told us, "Thank you, thank you, all these years I have never walked out of my house without a pillow in front of me, and now, I don't need a pillow anymore."

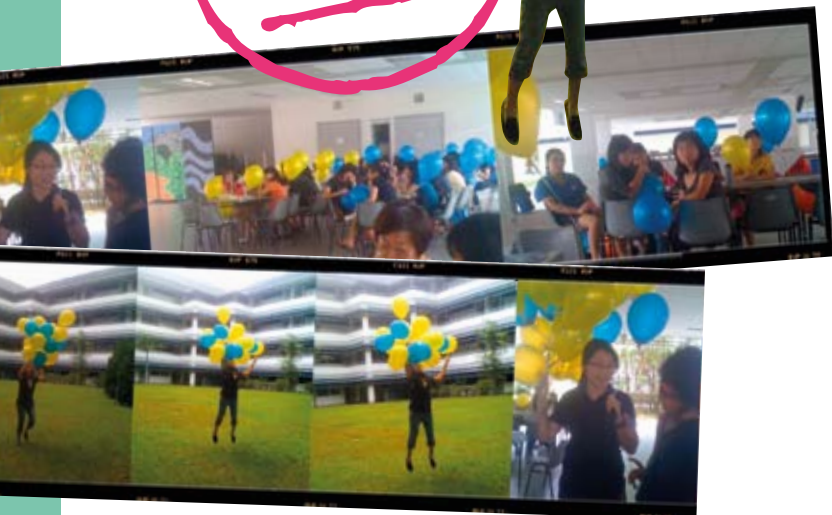
**F: How have your years in MGS shaped or influenced you?**

**S:** I am a 3rd generation MGS girl and certainly agree that once an MGS girl, always an MGS girl. Even now, when I attend meetings or functions, I would be asked if I am an MGS girl, a fact which I'll always very proud to acknowledge. I would ask how people identify MGS girls and the common answer would be that MGS girls come across as confident, self assured, outgoing and articulate. I am not saying I am all of those things, but I am always happy to be identified as an MGS girl. The MGS years also instilled in me a "can do" spirit and the belief that we can make a difference in society. I attribute a lot of what I do, especially in terms of my work and community service, to that spirit.



## Rising Aspirations, Growing Family

**Sharanya Thiru** mulls over the launch of the new MGS Alumnae Youth Chapter, with details from **Barbara Chee**.



The launch of the Youth Chapter took place at the school's Bamboo Courtyard on Saturday, 23 January, 2010 and was attended by about 120 girls from the Class of 2009.

Planned by last year's Prefectorial Board, the program included songs of worship, games, quizzes and other icebreakers. Then the girls were asked to write their thoughts and aspirations on pieces of paper which were then tied to balloons. A speech was read out, then the balloons were released. Two recent alumna also shared their thoughts on how they have been able to come back and contribute to MGS, and several teachers and the Senior Management Team were present to meet up with the girls. It was a homecoming party which we hope will become a day when any of the girls who have left school can come back to visit, and see their friends and former teachers.

The Youth Chapter was conceived with the idea of giving fresh graduates of MGS an immediate and direct link to the on-goings of the school and the option of continuing to be an active member of the MGS family even before being officially a part of the Alumnae Association. Membership into the chapter is automatic and remains until one is eligible to join the actual alumnae association at age 18.

Says Barbara Chee, the president of the MGS Alumnae, "We hope the activities which the Alumnae currently has – like the Past vs Present Games and LOVEMGS – will continue to involve the Youth Chapter. With 'homecoming' days such as this, we hope our 'old girls' will maintain ties with MGS and that we can translate these ties to active membership in the Alumnae in the years to come."

No doubt the chapter is still in its infancy, but as we all know, every journey begins with a step. Now that we have launched the chapter, more steps have to be taken to continue the journey that we hope to take the whole MGS family in hand. For there is one reason common to us all – there's some part of us that has found its place here in MGS and some part of MGS that has found its place in us. And it is for this reason that we have founded the Youth Chapter.



"For there is one reason common to us all – there's some part of us that has found its place here in MGS and some part of MGS that has found its place in us."

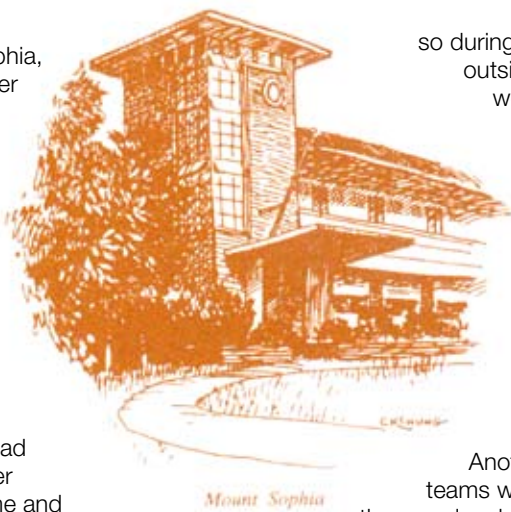


**Linda Lim (Class of '66)** wrote a vivid account of her school days in MGS with her group of friends called The Nuttes. Now a Professor of Strategy at the Ross School of Business at the very prestigious University of Michigan, and Director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, she has given *Fellowship* the permission to publish some excerpts from her memoirs.

### Primary School

MGS was located at the top of Mount Sophia, named after the wife of Singapore's founder Sir Stamford Raffles, and not Miss Sophia Blackmore. Mount Sophia was a hill in the center of town, high above the busy junction of Serangoon Road and Orchard and Bras Basah Roads. The Hundred Steps stairway led down from the School to the Cathay Cinema building, one of the earliest multi-storey buildings in Singapore. The drive up was through Sophia Road, which also led to several other smaller schools in the neighborhood. Mount Sophia was a leafy, shaded side-road lined with old colonial bungalows and other Methodist institutions, including Nind Home and Trinity Theological College.

The Lower Primary (One to Four) classes were located at the lowest elevation of the School's property, in a long two-storey, tiled-roof building with a balcony on each long side. On one side, stairs down a slope led down to the toilet. From time to time, the toilet was suspected of being haunted by "Oily Man", a perhaps imaginary naked Indian man covered in oil who occasionally made



so during that period they would run and play outside, occasionally distracting those of us who would look longingly at their antics through the window. Unlike other cohorts, ours had a large number of Indian girls, so they made up quite a troupe. Once, in an attempt to stop their play from disturbing the rest of us, a teacher assigned them to picking up trash in the grounds around the classroom building, which so incensed Mala's father A.P. Rajah (a lawyer-politician and future chief justice and ambassador to the UK and Australia) that he had it stopped.

Another game we played that involved two teams was rounders (like softball). Almost invariably, the rounders ball would bounce over the fence into the grounds of the uninhabited Eu Tong Sen Villa next door, a 1930s folly known in some quarters as "Bluebeard's Castle", complete with turrets and shuttered windows, and looking definitely haunted. We would then line ourselves up against the chain-link fence, chorusing "Thamby, Thamby" (a term used for Indian workers) until the Indian caretaker emerged, picked up the ball and threw it back over the fence to us.



# Sig-nettes

## of an MGS Life

...the kacang puteh man would deftly roll a sheet of discarded exercise book paper into a cone, fill it with a fistful of the desired snack, then hand it over to you for five or 10 cents.

'appearances' elsewhere in Singapore besides school toilets. Although I never saw him myself, I was once deputed by the other girls to report his appearance to our Primary One school teacher Miss Ho, who was distinctly unimpressed, despite my adding "and he had blue legs" to the report. Below the toilets was the barracks-like housing of school care-takers and their families."

### Recess

There was a 20- to 25-minute recess period in the middle of the morning, when everyone rushed to the "tuck-shop" to buy a snack. Our tuck-shop was an open-sided shed with cement floor and tiled roof; when it rained, heavy bamboo blinds were lowered to keep the rain out. Inside the tuckshop were various stone tables, each occupied by a different food vendor. There were long tables and benches in the center of the tuck-shop where students sat while slurping down noodles from the hot-food sellers. As soon as the recess bell rang, there would be a massive rush of girls to the tuckshop to line up to buy food, all of which ranged between five cents (e.g. for a packet of peppermint sweets) to 30 cents (for a bowl of prawn noodle soup).

My friends and I usually made a bee-line for the kacang puteh man, an Indian who sold an assortment of local dry snacks, such as sugar-coated peanuts, broad beans (boiled and soft in skin or shelled, baked and crispy), watermelon and parrot seeds, chickpeas, salted crispy green peas, and various other nuts and pulses. Upon taking your order, the kacang puteh man would deftly roll a sheet of discarded exercise book paper into a cone, fill it with a fistful of the desired snack from one of his large glass jars, then hand it over to you while pocketing the requisite payment of five or 10 cents. Sometimes he would ask us for old exercise books to replenish his stock of wrapper. Besides kacang puteh, I often snacked on a pink-and-white nonya jelly, sold in slices.

After snacking at recess, we would play around the classroom building, either running around on the grassy lawn, or sliding down the smooth concrete slope adjacent to the stairway which led up to the school drive and Primary School principal's office. The Malay and Indian girls did not have to take Chinese lessons,

### Sports Day

Once a year, we had Sports Day, where we were divided into four teams named after various early missionary teachers, such as Blackmore and Olson (the Olson sisters from Wisconsin). The teams competed in various games involving running, and using hoops and balls. The winning team would receive a silver cup or trophy decorated with navy blue ribbons, the school color, and team members would also get small trinkets for prizes—all awarded by some VIP or other. Not being good at sports, I rarely, if ever, brought home any prizes. Sometimes our P.E. lessons included learning to do English folk dances to recorded music. I think it was in Primary Five that our class got picked to learn the maypole dance. Somehow the school had acquired a genuine maypole, a tall wooden pole with long colored ribbons attached to the top. We danced in pairs in our white blouses and navy bloomers, each holding on to a ribbon and skipping over, under and around each other until we had woven one of several patterns with the ribbons. Mala was my maypole dance partner since we were arranged by height

### School Plays

Probably our most memorable collective theatrical effort, done for the Christmas concert at the end of Secondary Two in 1964, was Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women", which was one of our recreational reading favorites together with "Anne of Green Gables", books by Jane Austen and the Bronte sisters, and other similar girls classics. I cannot remember if we performed Little Women from an established script or whether we created the dialogue and screenplay ourselves. Casting was done by personality: Cinda was Marmee (of course), Singo was Meg, the oldest sister, Mala was Jo (of course), Min was Amy (ditto), and Chum was Beth. I was the stern but rich Aunt March (with wrinkles drawn on my forehead, and allowed to wear my glasses on stage), and Rachel was Hannah, the maid. Our costumes all came out of the backstage cupboards in the auditorium. Presumably sewn or otherwise acquired by previous generations of MGS thespians, they were long 19th-century European ladies' gowns complete with frills and padding, and definitely helped transport us to another place and time.

Log onto the Alumnae pages on the MGS website for the full version of this article.  
[www.mgs.sch.edu.sg](http://www.mgs.sch.edu.sg)





# So Young & Vibrant!

**Lillian Chee Yuet Meng (Class of '65)** recounts her cohort's Peach Party in celebration of this feisty group's 60th birthdays.

The venue was OCBC Executive Club, 15th August at 12.30pm. It had a panoramic view of the city, Marina Bay, Padang, and the then-upcoming IR. It was indeed a great occasion to celebrate, the second year running, the 60th birthday of some of the girls in our cohort.

The first celebration was held a year ago at the same place to celebrate the birthdays of those born in 1948; and, even though some of us would have been there the previous year, there were new faces around this time. Most notably was that of our once much-feared prefect Sim (Leong) Peck Yen from Sydney. Another person who had come from afar was Elizabeth Cheah (Giam) who is currently working in Brisbane.



During the reunion, Peck Yen shared about her life after having left Singapore. It was indeed a touching testimony about how her life has been transformed by the love of Jesus Christ. She asked for forgiveness from those she might have hurt in the past and wished everyone restored and loving relationships. As a token of her love, she gave each one of us a wonderful treat of a panforte dessert as well as a recipe book with spiritual lessons within. The panforte was 'to die for' and many girls were soon clamouring for the recipe from Peck Yen.

Next were the table games where we pitted the speed of our minds and fingers in competitions like the 'saga seed' game, 'name your schoolmates' and the 'fastest fingers'. There was, of course, the lucky draw as well as the singing of our MGS School Song.

In view of the H1N1, wise Fawziah suggested fanning off the candles instead of blowing the many candles on a birthday cake. The new 60-year-olds fanned with gusto. The food was excellent, thanks to Peach Garden Restaurant who gave us a very good deal. Before long the lunch celebration was over.

We had interesting gifts, generous donations of vitamins, moisturizers and snacks, thanks to the efforts of Siew Kim, Fawziah and Evita. Our thanks to Maureen Chan for the careful management of our funds and also for buying the Awfully Chocolate cake and Hoi Neng and Kiem Kiok for being our official photographers.

We already have 'mini-makan sessions' (organised by Siew Kim and Yok Fong and others) among the girls and nature walks



(organized by Miranda). And most certainly, we will continue our yearly affair to renew friendships and share our lives.

Considering that we have all become senior citizens, our functions would have to be in the day to compensate for poor night vision and sense of direction that comes with this label. But meet again we will, and we certainly look forward to it! For after all, we are and still "look so young and vibrant"! (as said by Liang Kim's colleagues.)



## NEWS

EVERY WEDNESDAY IS  
**Racquet Night**  
FOR ALUMNAE MEMBERS  
7pm – 9pm

Head over to the  
**MGS Sports Complex** and  
avail yourselves to the  
school's facilities

- 1 tennis court
- 2 badminton courts
- 2 squash courts

Call Yvonne Chong at **69762553** to book for free! Players need to sign in at Guard house on arrival

## INTEGRATED PROGRAMME AT MGS FROM 2013

Methodist Girls' School is happy to announce that we are one of seven selected secondary schools to be included in the extension of MOE's Integrated Programme (IP).

When launched, MGS will be the only all-girls school to have a through-train programme to the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme at ACS (Independent). We are looking to admit students at the Secondary 1 and Secondary 3 levels, with the first Secondary 1 IP intake targeted for 2013, and the Secondary 3 intake in 2015.

In many ways, the progression to the IP is a natural choice for our school as MGS has always promoted the ethos of excellence, not just in academic performance, but in all aspects of education. It is the school's desire that each MGS girl excels within a holistic learning environment.

Our Sophia Blackmore Class (SBC) curriculum was started in

2005 as a customised learning scheme for high-ability students, and the IP's introduction will serve to enrich the holistic learning of our students. MGS's mission, vision, values and motto will form the basis of the programme's implementation so that the distinctiveness of an MGS education is retained.

The IP was one of the key recommendations of the Junior College/Upper Secondary Education Review Committee (2002). It allows secondary students to proceed to Junior College without taking the 'O' levels (ie straight to 'A' levels or International Baccalaureate), so that they can use the time freed up to engage in broader learning experiences.

For more information, log on to [www.mgs.sch.edu.sg](http://www.mgs.sch.edu.sg).





REUNIONS

## The Class of '79

# Celebrate!

With girlish exuberance and hearts of thankfulness,  
**Elaine Toh (Class of '79)** writes about this close-knit  
cohort who is living testimony to the truth behind  
our school song.

*It was*

a dream in a few hearts  
even as far back as  
two years ago. That's  
how the 30th anniversary reunion of our class started.  
Birthed in Jennifer Hu's mind, the planning wheels were  
put into motion late last year. On June 27, 2009, 58 of  
us converged on Mt Sophia at Chalk Bistro, a restaurant  
where our Science labs once stood!



The occasion was made even more special by the arrival  
of nine classmates who flew in from across seven other  
countries at a time of swine flu pandemics and heightened  
security checks. This was a test of our faith and God  
proved faithful yet again. Every single one of them arrived  
healthy and happy!

While many exclamations of "You haven't changed at all!"  
were exchanged, there were also some instances of "I  
remember you ... but help me recall, what class were you  
in?" In all, the evening was one of non-stop chatter and  
laughter – no different from any other gathering of MGS  
girls, only louder!

While we didn't sing the school song that night, we did  
fly her beautiful flag (as can be seen in our photos) and it  
seems appropriate to reminisce here about those words  
that, as girls, we sang daily, but didn't realise what a  
genius the composer was. It is amazing to think it took  
three decades to finally see that, truly, there was so much  
to give thanks for.

*"Down through the years, our memories had indeed kept a  
loving place for friendships made and pleasures shared."*  
That evening, we rekindled some of those sentiments.  
Many were living testimony to our *"hope that we may  
honour bring"* to our alma mater, evidence that indeed,  
*"heaven has ever blessed  
our school!"*



Part of the thanksgiving was fleshed out in the more than  
\$2000 collected for the school's Grow A Seed Fund – in  
aid of students' who needed help paying school fees.  
In addition, a sale table for MGS souvenirs was well-  
patronised throughout the evening as many bought items  
ranging from mugs to journals to umbrellas emblazoned  
with the school badge and even cute caricatures of  
MGS girls.

The night went quickly, but in truth, the Reunion of the  
Class of '79 had really started online a few months earlier.  
And it didn't end when the evening drew to a close.  
While there were several mini pre- and post-reunion  
event gatherings (we had to make the most of the short  
time available to those who had flown into town for this  
special event after all), our reunion is on-going, thanks to  
the Worldwide Web and our web group manager Lim Jin  
Geok! More than 80 of us are currently part of an online  
group (MGS 1979), and the number will keep growing as  
we locate more of our classmates.

Since much of our energies went into the June reunion,  
our showing at this year's Founder's Day Dinner (FDD) was  
modest. Nevertheless, we managed to cheer the loudest  
when the classes of '99, '89, '79, '69 and even '59(!),  
were recognized at the 25 July school dinner.

Our first large reunion was during our 10th anniversary's  
FDD, and again at our 20th and 25th. As the obvious  
question was asked, we agreed that our next appointment  
as the Class of '79 should not take another decade  
to materialise. While only time will tell, our rekindled  
friendships and the wonderful world of technology now  
puts our cohort in a constant state of reunion, as many  
chat online daily now!

One of the things that  
absolutely encourages us all  
is the camaraderie and love  
that binds us together as  
'old MGS girls', something  
that is incredibly hard to  
define and yet is a very  
tangible part of our many  
generations. While several  
of us have daughters who  
have gone through, or are  
going through, or have yet to  
go through, the school, and  
others may have nieces, and  
yet others have only sons,  
we are still part of the MGS  
family. So "with loving hearts  
and joyous song, we sing,  
To MGS!"



*"Down through  
the years, our  
memories had  
indeed kept a  
loving place for  
friendships made  
and pleasures  
shared."*



# All Hail the New President!

Beloved in MGS, **Mrs Tay Poh Imm** has nurtured generations of girls through Primary one and the Girls Brigade. Recently elected the President of the Girls Brigade in Singapore, she chats with **Koh Bee Ann**.

One of my own happiest memories (of course there are many) of MGS is that my class was privileged enough to have had Mrs Tay Poh Imm (she was Miss Tan then) as form teacher for both Pr 1 and Pr 2. Apparently, we were one of the few batches to have had this privilege as she has taught mainly only Pr 1 classes since the early 1970s.

For many lucky girls, their first taste of MGS life when they came fresh from kindergarten was moulded by the firm but loving hands of Mrs Tay. Those who have been taught by her will remember how nurturing she was and the wonderful transformation made to the classroom from the adopted class pets that she brought in to teach the six-year-olds the

value of responsibility. Till today, my classmates and I still remember Pinky and Snowy, two beautiful white rabbits that were the first pets for many of us.

One thing that strikes her old students – many of whom were only taught by her for a year or so in primary one! – is that though they now come back as parents of current girls, Mrs Tay can still remember them by their full names!

Her explanation for this is quite simple: In those days, class registers and various class lists had to be written by hand. After writing a class list for the umpteenth time, the full name would be ingrained in her memory!

A familiar and beloved face around MGS, Mrs Tay Poh Imm has been teaching in MGS since 1970. Generations of girls have passed through her hands, including Mrs Kian Lan Gosian (aka Quek Kian Lan) who was one of her first students.

But even then, she is no stranger to MGS as, in her own words, she has “not left the school since she was enrolled in 1964

into Secondary One”. She remembers a very happy four years as a student in MGS, and was active in athletics, netball as well as Girls’ Brigade (GB) which she joined when she was in Secondary 3, under Mrs Cheah Heng Sin.

Mrs Tay’s own mother and Mrs Cheah were her role models, who, she says, were true servant leaders who demonstrated dedicated service by example. This led to her own commitment to the activities of the Girls Brigade Singapore, and this recently culminated with her election as President of Girls’ Brigade Singapore on 27 March 2010. Those who know her will know this is a well-deserved recognition after nearly 45 years of untiring service and love for the Brigade.

We caught up with Mrs Tay in a recent interview to find out what gives her the energy and motivation to be active in the Brigade both at the national and company level, where she continues to serve as an officer. After rising through the ranks, she served as Captain of the 1st Singapore Company between 1973 and 1999 and continues to serve as

an officer in the unit today. In 1996 she was appointed to the Executive Committee where she served in various capacities – from Captains’ representative to Deputy Brigade Commissioner – until her illustrious appointment as GB President.

**Fellowship: What is your mission in the Girls Brigade?**

**Mrs Tay:** My message to the girls – whether in GB or my little Primary 1s – is always that whatever life may bring you, remember God loves you and to cling to His promises for support through good and bad times. Stay the course. I’m very blessed to be used to touch the lives of some of the girls. Recently an old girl that I had taught in Primary 1 and who was also a GB member passed away from cancer. Her family knew she loved the Lord and wanted to be baptized – I am glad the Brigade family was there to help facilitate this and also to be there for the family. The GB is a very powerful ministry and it is this mission and vision – to help girls become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ – that spurs all of us on.

**F: What is your best memory of all the years of service in the GB?**

**Mrs Tay:** That would be the year when a group of old girls successfully bid during the Founders’ Day Dinner for one of the six orchid hybrids put up for auction to raise funds for MGS. The Dendrobium Tay Poh Imm was a total surprise and I was also very touched by the effort.

**F: What are your goals as the new President of GB Singapore?**

**Mrs Tay:** To have programmes that help young girls grow, and rise up to be godly women and find true enrichment in life. We need to lead like Jesus and meet the needs of those we serve. Regionally, we hope to build on the companies that have been sprouting overseas. This is something that GB Singapore has been privileged to do. The Brigade is an organisation that has moulded me into what I am today. I am really honoured to have been elected President, but am mindful of the call to serve in humility and obedience. I am just

answering God’s call – it is God that’s going to be working through me.

**F: A few people have asked me – why is it you’ve only ever taught Pri 1s?**

**Mrs Tay:** That’s not quite true. I came in and started with the Pr 2s, and also went up with one class to Pr 2 from Pri 1. But after I got married in 1976 and had my first child in 1978 – Tay Eng Ai, Cherylin (Class of 1994), I requested to be allowed to teach in the afternoon session and the Pri 1s were all in the afternoon session then. The senior management never asked me to move after that!

**F: What have you observed about the girls in the 1970s compared to those you teach today?**

**Mrs Tay:** In some ways, the children today are quite different. They used to be so sweet and innocent. Now, some are still sweet and innocent, but some also enter school very ‘wise’ and street smart in knowing what they need to do to get their own way. Maybe it’s because their parents do not have so many children these days but the girls today are very used to being given the best and there is sometimes a “me first” mentality which shows no consideration for others. We have to be very careful to watch the children and teach them the right values from young, as it is very difficult to change this later on.

**F: Any words of advice to the old girls whose own daughters are coming in to primary school?**

**Mrs Tay:** While the child is still in school, let her build a strong foundation of values, glean the best the school has to offer and stay positive. Even better if she develops a deep faith in God that will help her throughout life.



MGS Alumnae Association

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