

MGS ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION

FELLOWSHIP 2011



ESTABLISHED 1887

CALENDAR 2011: 1 JULY LOVEMGS 2 JULY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
25 JULY FOUNDER'S DAY 29-31 JULY SCHOOL MUSICAL 27 AUGUST YOUTH CHAPTER P6
1 SEPTEMBER TEACHER'S DAY LUNCH 29 OCTOBER FUN FAIR



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Psalm 16:8

These are exciting times– the world has been flooded, shaken and even “nuked” in the first quarter of the year! Although we have not been in the throes of these disasters in Singapore, we have been affected by these events as they unfold. My children have had their geography lessons come alive and their March holiday plans cancelled as a result of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. But we still continue to enjoy our bowls of delicious ramen and in good conscience fold paper cranes in support of the people made homeless. How have these events affected you? Personally they have reminded me of how precious life is and that it's time to take a reality check.

Regarding the Alumnae, I would like to share a few reality checks with you.

The first reality check – the ‘Past’ team won the Anna Tham Shield at this year's Past Vs Present Games! Yes, after losing the shield to the ‘Present’ team in 2009 and 2010, we managed to regain our winning position! This year for the first time we introduced board games like Scrabble, Boggle and Pictionary. The girls, both young and



old, jumped in with gusto and we even had two Primary 2 girls pitting their drawing skills against their older opponents! We want the games to be a time of fun and laughter – a time of friendly competition and bonding.

The next reality check – I am pleased to announce that this year's committee for the LoveMGS event has already been formed and the committee, consisting mainly of graduands from the class of 2009, has been busy meeting and praying for this event which will be held on 1st July. To have our Youth Chapter actively producing and organising an event for us is most edifying – that the school has accomplished its goal of planting in our girls God's love and a sense of service and mission and that they want to return some of those blessings to the school. Please support this event as we gather together to Praise and Worship God.

Another reality check – the Alumnae needs to increase its membership fees. Each year the Alumnae hosts two major events in the school calendar, namely, the Founder's Day Dinner and the Teachers' Day lunch. Increasing costs from hosting these events has made it necessary for us to increase our membership fees which are a one-time payment. We intend to mandate that applicants who wish to join and are below the age of 25 pay \$200, whilst those joining from age of 26 and above pay \$500. Also, as interest rates earned on our fixed deposits are not generating enough income to pay for the medals we give out every year, we will need to top up our ‘medals’ accounts.

We will inform you when the increase in fees will take effect. God bless!

BARBARA CHEE (CLASS OF 1971)

Celebrate

MGS 123RD

The Founder's Day Dinner



The Founder's Day Dinner (FDD) came round again on 25 July 2010 on the dot at 7.30pm. What made it special this year was that we managed to bring the FDD back to our favourite (and traditional) venue, the Island Ballroom in Shangri-La Singapore! Celebrating the school's 123rd birthday in grand style together with the graduating class of 2010 were alumna from the Classes of 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000. Our two faithful photographers Mr James Chen and Mr Simon Shankar were honoured for their untiring attendance at major school events for more than 20 years! In their photos, they have captured and recorded special moments and memories of our life in MGS. Mr Chen received the Margaret Goh Service Award and Mr Shankar was given the "Friend of the Alumnae" award.



Love & Friendship

Kimberly Chong (Class of 2008) gives a personal perspective about LoveMGS and holding on to her school years.

My friends and I go for LoveMGS every year. We love the stickers more than anything, and have a not-so-secret stash of LoveMGS stickers that we are very unwilling to use. Although the annual event does not have a long history, my friends and I are able to boast of a 'collector's edition' of its memorabilia, from the shirt last year to the guitar pick!

We have been out of school for some time already, but the year I graduated, we helped to remove the posters after the event and have kept them ever since. Why such passion for LoveMGS, you may ask? To give you an analogy, my friends are like Jonathan, while I am David.

Our years in MGS are like the years David spent fleeing from King Saul who was after his life. But far from dramatic, I treasure these girls simply because they taught me friendship and love in the purest forms. They encouraged my walk with God and always brought me back to Him with godly counsel and advice. LoveMGS is something we have attended every year, which can be compared to the field David and Jonathan reaffirmed their friendship with one another (1 Samuel 20). I can only conclude at the end of every year that it is God that brought us together as friends, and our love for Him will keep us as friends.

LoveMGS, from what I know and have experienced, is, however, more than just an event where friends gather to worship God. It is where MGS girls of all generations come together and seek the face of the Living God. It is where He continually shines and pours out His blessing as we labour and toil as His daughters.

Last year, the theme for LoveMGS revolved around Psalm 73:26 "...God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever", and saw many girls boldly asserting 'His Love is Mine'. Like many others, the message was a timely reminder of God's Love for us. Ex-MGS girl Lorraine delivered the message through her powerful testimony and it was a night where we encountered God in our own personal ways. The evening ended with a challenge posed to the girls to share love with people around them.

I believe, beneath that obsession, is in fact an attempt to preserve a piece of our days in MGS. It is the reason why we hold MGS so close to our hearts. Yet, along the way I realise that we already own it - our years, time and memories of MGS. It's ours for the keeping. So having figured things out, you won't be able to find me in front of the memorabilia table, but perhaps behind it.

LoveMGS this year is held on the 1st of July 2011 (Friday 6.30pm), light refreshments will be provided at 630 as doors open. The theme this year comes from Psalms 139:14, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well". This year, we have also invited Pastor Wendy Yapp from Australia to deliver the message. With all the publicity and preparations upcoming, we hope you'll keep LoveMGS close to your hearts and prayers.

Till the 1st of July!



Our Busy 2010

The Alumnae had its hands full with plenty of joint activities with the school.

With the Youngsters

Starting off the year, alumnae members turned up at the P1 picnic in January and gave out sweets to welcome the young ones to their first year at MGS.

A milestone for the alumnae was the establishment of the Youth Chapter on 23 January, which aims to help those freshly graduated to stay in touch with the MGS family. We plan to hold 'homecoming' parties every year so the younger members can officially come back and see old friends and teachers. In August, we hosted the P6 class of 2009 for such a gathering. We are grateful to the P6 teachers who turned up in force to meet the girls.

Sporting Fun

Our annual Past Vs Present Games was held on April 17. Old and current girls went head

to head in sporting good fun to 'battle' for the Anna Tham trophy, engaging in sports like basketball, netball and fun games. Alas, the 'present' girls emerged the winners, extending the 'old' girls losing streak for a second year!

LoveMGS

We held our AGM on 3 July where the new committee was elected, and as usual we capped session with a lovely tea spread to end the afternoon. That same day, we gathered together for LoveMGS. The theme this year was 'His Love is Mine'. Instead of having just one guest speaker, a few people shared their personal testimonies. Leading the way was School Principal Mrs Shirleen Ong who gave a personal testimony of her walk with God. We also heard from alumna Lorraine Chee (Class of 2000) who reminded us that "His Love is YOURS".

Teachers Go Wild

September came round and on the calendar was Teachers' Day. This time, we took the teachers "walking on the wild side" to the Kent Ridge Guild House ballroom for lunch and fun. Many teachers came gamely dressed in 'leopard print', while the NUS Guild House was filled with banana leaves, ginger plants and even a tiger to boot! We were particularly glad to see some retired teachers who came back to meet up with their friends!

Second Hand Store

Ending the year was the annual fun fair on 28 October 2010. As always, the Alumnae had its "good as new" store which does a roaring business every year and sees the hoards of eager shoppers pushing in to pick up a gently used treasure or two.

REUNION Class of 1970

The **Class of 1970** took a touching, exuberant, delightful walk down memory lane, which also underlined how the words of the MGS song rings true, writes **Fiona Hu**.



THE DATE: One enchanted evening, 12 August 2010
THE PLACE: The Old School (MGS at Mount Sophia, of course!)
THE OCCASION: MGS Class of 1970 40th Year Bash
THE CAST: Some 60 MGS girls (err... 40 years later, now mothers, grandmothers, swinging singles, aspiring career women, retirees) hailing from New York, Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra, Dubai, KL, Malacca, and Singapore (and in absentia, from Vancouver and Silicon Valley via modern technology) plus four wonderful teachers.
THE SETTING: The (former) cookery room, now elegantly awash in white linen strewn with rose petals.
AGENDA: Back to school and being reminded of those dreaded exams and school life through a series of games and slide shows.

Embracing past and present all in one night! Don't forget the lyrics, challenging the well-roasted brains on how much we remembered of the hymns and pop songs from the '60s (*Love Divine, All Love Excelling, Amazing Grace, Proud Mary, Top of the World*). Was the MGS uniform dowdy and sack-like? Sure it was, but we are proud that it shaped our MGS identity. And four decades on, we showed how the MGS uniform could be transformed into haute couture using ad hoc models (willing or unwilling...) and applying just a few simple, deft touches. All this we did in the midst of doing assembly line packing of goodie bags!

Though we may have added some crows' feet and varicose veins, we are more uninhibited than before. MGS girls will always be earnest in whatever we do – in work or play! These photos present a case in point.

Celebrating the MGS spirit – sound and sure, gutsy and spirited, conscientious and fun-loving, hale and hearty, resilient and versatile, and we daresay, forever young. In particular, the Year of 1970 cohort will probably be best remembered for having this astounding exuberance for life and sensitivity to life's vicissitudes. Above all, the school has taught us how life is supposed to be lived, about the importance of friendships and bonding, and supporting one another through thick and thin.

"For those who worked and gave their best that we might learn to face The trials of life with faith and hope and nobly run the race."

How true that we "face the trials of life with faith and hope" as seen in the life of Yik Wai Han from our year of 1970. After looking forward with great anticipation to this memorable



gathering, she flew in to join us despite having been diagnosed with late stage cancer, had a ball of a time rekindling old friendships, playing enthusiastically, re-embracing the MGS spirit, then bade farewell at the bash followed by a final farewell a few months later in Canberra when she returned to be with her maker. She had such a blast reconnecting with her past years in MGS and we are glad we had the opportunity to be part of her last happy memories. We pay tribute to her memory and shall remember her fondly always.

"With loving hearts and joyous song we sing to MGS.... And now we're proud to raise the shout and sing of MGS."

As the evening drew to a close, we rose to sing the MGS anthem with great gusto and heartfelt emotion (the debt we owe to our school, the memories we cherish, the friendships made and lessons learned apace) as the words of our beloved MGS song finally took on a real relevance.

In work and play for honours won...

In work, many amongst us have indeed made it to the honour roll – judge, professors, doctors, lawyers, architects, accountants, entrepreneurs, journalists... and the list goes on and on.

Reluctantly, after friendships renewed and walking down memory lane, we parted with new precious memories and a bunch of MGS memorabilia – hand towels emblazoned with the original MGS badge, key chains of an MGS girl in uniform, kachang puteh, kuti-kuti, as well as other useful goodies lovingly and thoughtfully provided by classmates of our own dear MGS!

Postscript: Owing to the overwhelming popularity of the MGS towels, additional towels were specially made and subsequently donated to the MGS alumni courtesy of Marian Tay (towels are now available at the alumni office for \$15 each).



Reunion Ruckus

Carol Tham recalls the recent gathering of the **Class of 1980** after 30 years apart.

On Monday night of November 1st, 2010, the tranquil beautiful setting of a 19th century room at the Swiss Club was completely invaded by a congregation of 59 old girls from the MGS Class of 1980, there to either celebrate or commiserate 30 years out of school. We even managed to Skype in three more classmates now residing in the US.

The sounds of squeals of excitement, recognition (or not) and amazement eventually gave way to simultaneous and multiple conversations as only the MGS girl can manage. The noise, I can only tell you, was pretty deafening but it did remind me of school and classrooms unattended by any figure of authority. The food was good, the company better and the wait staff seemed terrified.

It has been a long time since many had had contact, although there are pockets of girls who meet regularly. Old class mug shots and mandatory nametags helped to put



names to faces and the photographs gave us all a good laugh as well.

The initial guessing game of "Who am I?", "You recognise me or not?" was unplanned and rather stressful but good fun all the same. Having not seen many for 30 years makes for interesting guesses, although I must say many look very much the same – youthful, in fact.

It was good to reconnect, to find out a little more about the lives of our fellow classmates from way back then. Whether our girls are high flyers in whatever field they occupy, whether amazing mothers to one, two, three or more children, whether happily enjoying a wonderful adventurous life, it is testament to the ties that we all have to MGS that managed to bring us together for a great night going down memory lane.

I am sure we will stay connected for a long time to come.

REUNION Class of 1977

To celebrate our unmentionable birthdays in 2011, eight of us Fab Amiche ('beautiful friends') went on a trip to Sicily in April. Michele Lim (Class of 1977) writes.

Five of us in Singapore flew in to meet the others coming from England and New York. We missed a friend, Lorinne aka Pomfy, from Toronto who had been on our prior trips. Of course we tried to make her jealous by sending her photos of us!

What none of us had appreciated before we embarked on planning this trip was how big Sicily is. It is big enough to have three airports. We decided we would concentrate on the south east region where the

villa we chose on the internet was situated. So we flew into Catania on Easyjet from mainland Italy. The region turned out to be an excellent choice as it was thick with UNESCO protected towns. Some of these, particularly the more inland and smaller ones were lovely old towns with fabulous buildings on small streets. The interesting feature in this area was that because there were steep hills, some of these towns were divided into 'upper' and 'lower' towns. There was a lot of history in the area as it had

been occupied by the Greeks, Romans and Spanish though the ages. Archimedes (of the Archimedes' Principle fame), lived and died in Syracuse, one of the nearby ancient towns. Even St George, who we usually associate with England, was widely venerated around these parts.

Most days we would leave our villa at 10 am and drive to one of these towns to sightsee by just wandering round. We would plan a nice lunch somewhere after doing some research. Most of our



meals were lovely, both the simple ones and those at the more famous restaurants. Most evenings, we would return home to a home cooked Sicilian meal by our housekeeper. We planned for one picnic lunch as we had so much food from our forays into local markets. However, we ended up eating standing by the boots of our cars as we never found a suitable picnic ground!

As a group, this was our 4th trip together. This particular trip was marked in that we seemed to get lost more often. Not so much because we were losing our marbles (though definitely our eyesight) but because we didn't get detailed maps of the towns we visited and often the GPS failed us in the tiny single-lane streets. One particular heart stopping moment was driving between two buildings with

only about an inch (maybe even only a cm) to spare on each side of our wing mirrors!

The town nearest our villa was Scicli (pronounced "shick li") about 5 km away. On the first day of our arrival, our housekeeper pointed us to where we could get groceries. We happily chugged along, following her "just go straight" directions and finally arrived in the centre of town after going through country lanes and plunging down a mountain. That was easy, so we had assumed it would be the same way back. Unhappily for us, it was a one way system down the mountain as well as in most parts of the Scicli and in our eagerness to explore, none of us looked out for landmarks along the route. The GPS took us on a wild goose chase and after much trial and error (and an hour), we finally got home. Two days later, we

made another trip to Scicli to sight see and promptly got lost again. Then on our single day of staying in at the villa, some of us decided to embark on "The Scicli Challenge". We were going to conquer Scicli! This time we took care to remember landmarks along the way and when we got to town, we worked through the maze of little streets and one-way system. Finally we conquered it and broke the Curse of the Conad. The Conad was the name of a supermarket chain which we always saw just about every time we were about to get lost.

It was a lovely holiday with like-minded friends. No children, husbands, bosses. Maybe too much frenetic sight-seeing and eating (the holiday didn't do any good to our waistlines) and not enough lazing round to enjoy our villa. But there's always next time...

WHAT ARE THEY DOING NOW?

Common Bonds

Kelvyna Chan (Class of 1972), the Principal of the Anglo-Chinese Junior College, talks to Joy-Marie Toh about career, youth and building bonds.

Fellowship: What are you doing now?

Kelvyna: I'm an educator. Presently I'm a Principal, of ACJC to be specific. Prior to that, I was Principal of Tanjong Katong Girls' School (TKGS). I've also held some positions in Ministry of Education HQ, the last one being Deputy Director in the Educational Technology Division. I'm a mum to three kids – one each in Secondary, JC and University. I'm also much involved in my church. My husband and I host a bible study group in our home and we've been meeting for 23 years.

F: What made you go into education as a career and finally taking on the position of principal?

Kelvyna: I applied to be a teacher, never thinking that one day I would be a principal. I had done relief teaching while studying in the university. I enjoyed my experience, communicating with young people. I was most satisfied when teaching a particular topic and seeing that the students understood what I was communicating. I remember the laughter and the serious moments. Some of my former students are now teachers and principals themselves.



After some years teaching, there was a growing awareness of the role of educational media in the classroom. I went into MOE HQ to work on educational media in Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore (CDIS). After 2 years, I was given with a Masters scholarship to Boston University to study educational technology. Upon my return, I worked in a number of roles in CDIS, and subsequently the Educational Technology Division when it was set up. After some years, I rejoined the school scene as Principal of TKGS before my current position as Principal of ACJC.

F: What was your most gratifying experience at work? And most challenging?

Kelvyna: There have been many and it would be difficult to pick one. But I can say that they all have to do with people. I remember a student who had impressed me with his strong

feelings for the school, his empathy for his fellow students and his strong belief that he could make a difference. I would have conversations with him, and would appreciate his perspective of things which gave me an understanding of the mind of a young person. Moments like that always lifted my spirit and made me believe more strongly in the future. And then, there were moments when as a school, we had come together to undertake challenges. The common bonds and unity of spirit are truly precious and most difficult to strategise for. It is built up through the millions of interactions and sincere relationships, and by the grace of God.

F: Do you enjoy your work? Why?

Kelvyna: What an understatement! I don't think I can be anywhere but in education. Being with young people and getting involved in their growing up years is a privilege. It is not an easy road but only in education do you get to benefit from interaction with so many people – young (students) and the not so young (staff).

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

Kelvyna: My friends in MGS have been my mainstay through the years. We are still friends and our families meet regularly. Even our spouses have become close. Our children are the same age and go to the same school. (The girls go to MGS, of course.) With such long-term friends, they have shaped my values and shared my experiences. My class of 1972 still meet and we feel 16 when we do! MGS is one of the reasons why I put relationship-building as one of the more important things in life. Time is a leveller of most things, but relationships that we build especially during school days grow stronger with each passing year.

F: What are the most abiding memories of your schooldays in MGS?

Kelvyna: I would have to say the 100-steps leading up to Mt Sophia. That was my daily challenge. If I can overcome the 100-steps every morning at 7am, I can overcome anything!

Her Famous Chicken Wings

Not exactly an old girl, but definitely from the MGS family. Fellowship was lucky to trace down Mdm Tan Ah Mui, the lady who sold her legendary chicken wings in the MGS canteen from 1974-1988 at the old Mt Sophia campus.

Fellowship: Tell us about your stall in the old MGS canteen.

Mdm Tan: We sold a wide variety of items such as mee siam, mee rebus, Indian rojak, lontong and chicken wings. The chicken wings were sold every day, but the other items were rotated during the week.

F: How did you come to set up shop in MGS?

Mdm Tan: We applied for the stall with the assistance of the then Vice-Principal Mrs Lily Koh, after seeing the notice on the notice board. There were 7 or 8 applications and we were very lucky to be given the offer to run the stall.

F: How did you come up with your famous chicken wings? Can you share the recipe?

Mdm Tan: The chicken wings recipe was taught to us by my sister-in-law and her friend. We are very happy to hear that many old girls still remember our chicken wings! The recipe was never written down, but essentially, the chicken wings were marinated with 5-spice powder, salt, sugar, pepper and then kept in the fridge overnight. The next morning, the chicken wings are taken out, dipped in tapioca flour and then deep-fried.

F: How much chicken wings did you sell each day on average?

Mdm Tan: We sold about 15 packets (or about 300 pieces) of chicken wings daily

F: What did you enjoy during your time working in MGS? What were your most memorable experiences there?



Mdm Tan: During the years I spent there, I really enjoyed the interaction with the girls and watching them grow up. When I first started at MGS, I could not speak much English. I enjoyed speaking with the girls and learnt a lot of English from them.

F: What was your impression of MGS girls?

Mdm Tan: MGS girls are very friendly and chatty and they often talked to us. Even after many years, when they see us , they would say hello and tell us how much they missed out food.

F: What are you doing now?

Mdm Tan: We are retired for 12 years now. After we left MGS, we worked in a childcare centre for 11 years cooking for the little children.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING NOW?

Letting Kids Flourish

Valarie Koh (Class of 1987) is now Principal of Mayflower Primary School. She tells Joy-Marie Toh about how music, teaching and MGS has influenced her life.



Fellowship: What made you go into education as a career and finally taking on the position of principal?

Valarie: My first taste of teaching was as a relief teacher in Chemistry in MGS after my A Levels. I subsequently accepted a teaching scholarship to study Music in the UK. In the course of serving, I was humbled by how as educators, we can make a difference in the lives of the people that we teach and are often hope-givers to the people that we lead. I enjoyed igniting in my students a deep interest, knowledge and appreciation of music as well as imbibing in them values and life skills through the discipline. As much as I have done my best to teach them, I have also learnt a lot from my interaction with my students and treasure my relationships with them. In the schools that I have served in, I was blessed to have been given many different platforms by my school leaders in which to contribute. When the opportunity came to serve as principal, I accepted the role and responsibility to continue to be a difference-maker and hope-giver in this new capacity.

F: What was your most gratifying experience at work? And most challenging?

Valarie: The impact of our work as educators is both tangible and intangible. To see the joy and hope radiate from students and staff as we work through even the smallest of challenges is both inspiring and satisfying. Some of the outcomes of our work may not be immediately visible, but to have had the opportunity to speak into the lives of young people is deeply gratifying.

The rapidly changing environment of the 21st century will only deepen in its complexity and fluidity. Our challenge is to provide an education that allows our students to thrive in this setting yet never losing sight of their values and moral principles.

F: Do you enjoy your work?

Valarie: No two days in school are ever the same! The diverse community that I work with is energising and the multiple perspectives that they bring stimulating. I am grateful for the many opportunities to learn, question and reflect everyday – being bored is never an option!

F: You're an MGS girl and we all agree that "once an MGS girl, always an MGS girl". How have your years in MGS shaped you?

Valarie: Our beloved school motto, To Master, To Grow, To Serve, continues to resonate strongly with me. It was in MGS that my Christian faith and values were nurtured. I believe my years in MGS nurtured and developed in me a deep sense of service, a love for learning and a commitment to excellence. MGS also allowed me to discover my interest and pursue my passion in music. As MGS girls, we always prided ourselves in striving to be strong young ladies of good character – there were so many role models amongst our teachers and alumni, including my mother who was also an old MGS girl. It was never right or cool to be a 'delicately precious' girl who could do nothing for herself!

F: What are the most abiding memories of your school days in MGS?

Valarie: I remember singing songs during music classes in primary school, like "Rainbow Connection" and "Bless This School" and then going home to try to play them on the piano in a vain attempt to imitate my music teachers. Yet looking back, I think that might have unconsciously contributed a significant part to building my aural skills! I remember spending



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many happy afternoons and Saturdays in the MEP rooms during my secondary school days making music with friends and enjoying the air-conditioning!

MGS played an important role in developing my leadership skills. I was a very busy but happy student – serving on the Prefectorial Board eventually as Head Prefect, leading the Music Society and Olson House as well as being a member of the Singapore Youth Orchestra. Our teachers empowered us to organise school events like our Secondary 4 Graduation, Talent-Time of the Century and even producing our own musical, Noah's Ark. Such occasions allowed us to practice multi-tasking and to hone our leadership and management skills from a young age.

F: How have you brought your MGS experience into your work now?

Valarie: In MGS, it was always about friendship and teamwork – you were never alone, you always felt a part of a larger family of teachers and friends where you were valued and cared for. In my work, I strive to build relationships that are true, sincere and authentic amongst the people I serve as I believe an organisation built upon trust, respect and hope allows its members to flourish. I enjoyed coming to school and did not actually like school holidays as I looked forward to learning with my friends daily and engaging in many diverse activities. This has, in turn, shaped my belief that education is about teaching pupils in a manner that enables, motivates and inspires them to learn, inculcating in them an innate curiosity, passion and openness to new ideas and perspectives.

Like my MGS educational experience, I wish for my students to also look forward to coming to school every day because they enjoy and find meaning in what they are learning, have a voice in the school and can exercise choices according to their talent and abilities in their educational journey.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING NOW?

Loving Memories

Angelina Fung caught up with Miss Kam Poh Kin, a much loved former Domestic Science teacher at MGS (1954-1977) and old girl from the Class of 1937!

To say that Miss Kam has spent a long time in MGS is an understatement. Indeed, she spent 40 years in close quarters with MGS, starting off as a little 7 year old girl with a big bow in her hair! She recently celebrated her 90th birthday in September 2010, giving all glory to her Heavenly Father who has been leading her all these years.

○ Fellowship: How did you come to teach in MGS?

Miss Kam: I first started teaching in MGS as a primary school teacher. During this time, I decided to further my qualifications. I applied for a Froebel scholarship to attend a specialised course in the UK to teach young children. I didn't get the scholarship but the Englishman interviewing me asked, "Why don't you apply to study Home Economics?"

I was taken aback because this wasn't a subject I had ever considered and I simply did not know how to cook at all. His response to me was: "They will teach you."

I went to study Home Economics in Bath, UK. I had never threaded a needle, I couldn't even cook rice or fry an egg! It was a scary and very lonely time. When I came back to Singapore, Mrs Ellice Handy, the principal then, asked me to join them in planning the Home Economics syllabus for the school. She was very clear that I should not teach English recipes but a local syllabus that included dishes like Mee Siam.

Mrs Alice Tan and I took all the Sec 1 and Sec 2 classes. When Home Economics was eventually offered as an examinable 'O' levels subject, we went on to teach the Upper Secondary girls.

○ F: What aspects of teaching did you find most satisfying? What did you dislike the most?

Miss Kam: I definitely have always found needlework exasperating. The needle and I are not friends! I had no choice but to teach it.

What I found most satisfying was being able to interact on a personal level with the girls. Many of the girls in MGS come from loving homes and are cheerful and happy. I had great fun with them. However, there have always been some girls who come from difficult or troubled family backgrounds. I was blessed with opportunities to talk with them and understand their need for love and attention.

Sometimes, these opportunities came at unexpected moments like once when I drove one of the girls home to pluck limes from her garden to use in a tea spread we were preparing for VIP visitors to the school. In the car, she was able to tell me about what was troubling her at home. That girl has been in my prayers since then and up till today, we are friends.

○ F: We would love to hear some memorable incidents from your life in MGS.

Miss Kam: One thing I learned from my teaching experience is that we need to be a good example to children who watch and imitate everything we do. I remember giving one of my first demonstrations to a Sec 1 class. I laid everything out on the table and showed them the steps. Then it came to their turn. When I went round to each table, I noticed in amazement that without exception, they had all laid out their ingredients and utensils exactly as I had done at the beginning of

my demonstration. I hadn't asked them to do that but they followed it naturally. It was an eye-opener for me.

Today many of the girls still associate me with my rolling pin. I remember that once I was at John Little Department Store and I saw a very nice rolling pin. I asked the salesman if he had 20 rolling pins that I could buy. He looked at me and asked, "Do you have 20 husbands?" I didn't but I certainly had some very cheeky girls to deal with!

I don't remember if I ever waved my rolling pin at them in anger, but I do remember that they did many things that still make me laugh today.

There was one time when one of my girls turned on the gas in an oven before she lit the match. She had her head poking inside the oven when she struck the match and there was a minor explosion. She came out of the oven with one eyebrow completely missing! I'm so grateful that nothing more serious happened.

On another occasion, I was teaching a Sec 2 class how to make Kueh Dadah. They were so messy and most didn't get it right. I was getting angry and trying to control my temper. I had to step out for a while and when I came back, I found that a cute Jewish girl had made a huge giant Dadah. I told her that I would give it to King Kong when he next comes to my house for tea. She opened her eyes really wide and asked me in all seriousness if I really knew King Kong. I then realised that she had taken my words for the gospel truth! That made me laugh and completely cheered me up.



(Left) Domestic Science Club 1972, Ms Kam seated on the extreme right.

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Yet another unforgettable incident was when I was teaching a class how to make Mee Siam. A group of girls came to me with a bowl full of prawn shells and asked me what they should do with it. I asked them where the stock was and they said they had thrown it away! Alas! Their Mee Siam would not be as tasty as it should be.

Not too long ago, a group of fun-loving girls who I call the 'Cookie Monsters' came to visit me. They were with me when they were in Sec 3 and 4. As schoolgirls in my class, they were always giggling and

trying to distract me by telling funny stories. Some of them are already grandmothers today, but they are still the same – joking and teasing just like the old days!



MGS Alumnae Association

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