



# The Red Feather News, Singapore

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*From the Editor:*

Different sounds have different effects on different people. Generally, we like sounds that we had associated with happiness in our childhood days. Think of a sound you like. Can you recall hearing it as a child and how it made you feel? There are sounds and noise I have gotten used to as a child that I like hearing now in the middle of the night if I should lie awake: the pattering of raindrops on zinc roof and the ticking of a clock. Some sounds irritate us and disrupt our peace. They become too loud; we stop thinking of them as sounds. They are NOISE!

Noise aplenty! That's what we have here in Cheshire Home right now on every working day from morning till sunset. There's no escape from it. We can avoid the dust, mud, construction materials and blocked up areas, but we cannot get respite from all the noise coming from all directions!

Our Home is undergoing some renovations and the place is as noisy as can be. It's not just the drilling going on within our Home that's causing all the racket. Noises are coming from outside our Home as well. Piling and digging is being carried out for the up-coming 'Haus@Serangoon Garden' next to our Home, and there are three houses being constructed directly behind my bedroom. All of these put together is not the worst yet. Throw in grass-cutting and fumigation coming at the same time and we have a perfect score for noise pollution.

It is increasingly difficult to find a peaceful, quiet place in the world that we are living in. Often when planning a lunch out with friends, we lamented the lack of a quiet ambience. Long ago, we used to say, "It's a market!" when the noise got too loud. Noise doesn't just belong to the market anymore. The rush of traffic on the road, loud music in the mall and people shouting to each other in an effort to communicate above the din, all contribute to our already noisy and stressful environment.

In my hopeful search for some silence and solitude, I kept moving away from one noisy place only to find myself in another noisy place. Is man so afraid of silence that he has to be constantly kept entertained by noise and sound? Televisions, radios and gadgets that provide music videos on the go are made to shut out silence in case people discover what silence is and are bored by it. Man has forgotten that through the door of stillness and silence, we enter the world of nature where noises are made of sounds that soothe and sounds that awe.

Compared to the noise made by man, sounds made by animals, birds and the elements blend themselves peacefully and harmoniously into nature. When a solitary bird breaks the silence of dawn by singing its loudest, we feel sure the day is going to start soon. The low droning sound of a airplane in the wee hours of dawn is a completely different thing. The sound waves sent vibrations so deep into our grey matters, it is a wonder to me that mine is still functioning and had not turned into a lump of jelly. Certainly, the seed of migraine found fertile soil, took root and germinated in my head long after that.

Now, there's really nothing wrong with having some noise around. After all, we like many types of sounds and sounds are noise. Humans make noise everyday. We lived with noise, we get distracted and we carried on. There's no big deal. Too much noise, however, is not good for our health and sanity.

Constant noise can cause stress which in turn lowers our immunity. Noise is something I rather stay far away from. I wish noise doesn't exist, and I'll do anything to run away from it. Too bad, noise is here to stay for a long time while our Home undergoes its major renovation, set to end in the first quarter of next year. Fortunately, things are quieter on Sundays and Public holidays. And, in the middle of the night, it is always quiet enough to hear the ticking of the clock.

Yours,

I have often lamented that we cannot close our ears with as much ease as we can our eyes.

~ Richard Steele

## *My First Time Singing*

On 13th April 2013, staff from Sony Electronics Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd. visited the Singapore Cheshire Home to play games and interact with our residents. After playing a fun-filled game of Bingo, a projector was set up in the Maggie Murphy Memorial Hall for an impromptu karaoke session.

The residents were asked to sing songs of their choices shown on the projector screen. As always, those residents who are not shy and ever ready to sing took hold of the microphone and sang away. They sang happily as they always do, even if they didn't know the lyrics of the song and couldn't sing well.

One of the staff from Sony Electronics asked me to sing my favourite song towards the end of the program. I decided to sing "My Immortal" by Evanescence as I know its lyrics well. Being the second youngest resident at the Home, my choice of song was something only the 'generation' closer to my age could relate to. I am a great fan of heavy metal music.

In the past when I was younger, I listened to rock music simply because of the screaming voices. Now, every rock song I listened to, whether it's fast or slow, reminded me of someone I know or have known in my life. So when I was singing my song, all those fond memories came back to me.

Heavy metal was an influence by my brother who listened to classic 90's rock songs when I was living with my parents. He would play them on the big HiFi set at home every time he was in. After I came into Cheshire Home and had access to the internet, I would search for different types of rock music on the web. Listening to these songs has become a sort of therapy to me now.

I would imagine myself to be the professional singer performing the songs to a big audience. It was my first time singing live in front of everybody that day Sony Electronics came to visit. I felt shy and didn't sing out loud enough. If given another chance, I want to do it differently. I want to sing like a real rock star with a band!!

~ Viki Mohan

## **Songs and Music**

Many residents in Cheshire Home have mini Mp3 players or radios hanging about their wheelchairs. They listened to their favourite songs as they wander about. Sometimes, when they moved close to each other, we would hear a noisy mixture of Mandarin, Malay and Indian songs.

I noticed most residents who are "low-function" like listening to the radio too. It may be that they can't express themselves well. Listening to the radio is a good pass time for them. These residents treasure their radio very much. If we should tease any one of them by hiding his radio, he would search for it high and low or made a lot of noise to get it back.

We all enjoy nice music and songs. Whenever I hear a nice song being played, I would stop and sit with the resident to enjoy the music together. My roommate likes listening to Mandarin oldies. I was surprised she knew the names of the singers from the 40's and 50's. Out of curiosity I ask her how so. She told me she like oldies very much because she was influenced by her father.

One day, I passed by a group of residents who were listening to some oldies and decided to join them. We sang along with some songs and chatted with each other. We discussed the song's original singer and which singer sang better. As we were chatting, one resident, Ee Nah, told me her story: She couldn't talk at all after she got a stroke, but she loves singing so much, she used the karaoke to practise singing until she got her voice back. Now Ee Nah speaks so normally, you would not have thought she had lost her speech before.

From Ee Nah's story and many similar stories like hers, I have learnt that song and music has a way to bring about cures. As night fall, some residents relaxed by listening to songs on the radio before they sleep. Knowing that I get stressed and have insomnia sometimes, my friend advised and suggested I use music as a therapy to help tackle the problem. I did that and found that music is very helpful indeed. ~ Tiew Tsui Ling

Taylor Swift

"People haven't always been there  
for me but music always has."

## Our 'Mini-Orchestra'

Our 'mini-orchestra' came about sometime before September last year. It is made up of residents with more mobility in their arms, and staff to help those residents with lower function. It is conducted by Mui Leng and our Occupational Therapist, Vincent.

Before selecting the residents for the group performance, Vincent and Mui Leng tried us for a week. We were given all kinds of funny instruments including bells and egg shakers. I grabbed my egg shaker and put all my effort into making some noise with it. But I had difficulty shaking the instrument. No sound came out no matter how hard I tried. I thought it was so comical trying to hear my egg shaker, such that I didn't pay attention to the song being played. The other residents in the group didn't pay attention too. After three weeks of practice, we proudly presented the popular Mandarin love song, "The Moon Represents My Heart", on Founder's Day last year.

We performed on two other special occasions: our annual Christmas party and during Chinese New Year. We had only three practices before the Christmas party performance. On the day itself, I was running a high fever and had a sore throat, thought I couldn't perform then, but I did. I was trying to be strong and I was happy to perform a Christmas song using shakers made out of drink cans. The music (noise) we made out of the recycled items sounded better than egg shakers!

During Chinese New Year, Ms. Sheila Lim celebrated her birthday with us by giving everyone a 'KFC and pizza' treat. We performed two songs, "Feng Yang Hua Gu" and "Rasa Sayang" for that day. For "Feng Yang Hua Gu", Peng San had to hit a standing cymbal at certain intervals while some residents waved a pair of chopsticks in their hands. The sudden clash of the cymbal made me jumpy and nervous. Unfortunately we had to practise very hard for that song. I felt my heart beat faster each time we play the song and wished we were performing something else.

Through much practice, I slowly became familiar with and came to enjoyed the songs which I had never heard of before! I realized that sound and noise can be either irritating or soothing! While writing this article, I had a hard time concentrating because of the noisy construction work going on in our Home.

Here, in my article, I would like to thank Mui Leng, Vincent and the therapy aides for helping us out with the performances. Thanks also to Alex Wong for taking pictures and being the emcee on two occasions to introduce our 'Mini-Orchestra'.

~ Noraini Adnan

"Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and that which cannot remain silent." ~ Victor Hugo

"After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music." ~ Aldous Huxley

"Nowadays most men lead lives of noisy desperation." ~ James Thurber

Soon silence will have passed into legend.  
Man has turned his back on silence.  
Day after day he invents machines and devices that increase noise and distract humanity from the essence of life, contemplation, meditation... tooting, howling, screeching, booming, crashing, whistling, grinding, and trilling bolster his ego.  
His anxiety subsides.  
His inhuman void spreads monstrosly like a gray vegetation.

~ Jean Arp

## **Newsflash!**

- 01.01.13 - Sponsored lunch given by Sri Ragavendra Group.  
06.01.13 - Charity Event at Ulu Pandan Country Club organized by Ms. Irene Kalmen Lim & Friends.  
10.01.13 - Chinatown outing organized by NUS Rotaract Club.  
01.02.13 - Visit from Temasek International Private Limited with games and goodie bags.  
05.02.13- Chinatown outing organized by The Singapore Cheshire Home.  
13.02.13 - KFC & Pizza treat for residents and staff sponsored by Ms. Sheila Lim & Friends in celebration of Ms. Sheila's birthday.  
14.02.13 - Lion Dance performance, Talent showcase & distribution of goodie bags by A.E.T.I.  
16.02.13 - Tea & Interaction by Deeper Life Christian Centre & Raffles College of Higher Education.  
18.02.13 - 'Lo Hei' lunch sponsored by our General Manager, Florence Chow.  
19.02.13 - Tea, bingo & entertainment given by Mdm. Christina Tan & Friends.  
22.02.13- Visit with Lion Dance performance by The Emerald Hill Group.  
22.02.13- Steamboat dinner organized by The Singapore Cheshire Home.  
04.03.13- Percussion Workshop by National Arts Council.  
08.03.13- Performance by Mr. Baisho Matsumoto, Master of Shamisen.  
28.03.13- Visit by Millennia Institute.  
01.04.13 - Percussion Workshop by National Arts Council.  
05.04.13- Visit by the Board of Visitors from Ministry of Social and Family Development.  
08.04.13- Percussion Workshop by National Arts Council.  
08.04.13- Dinner sponsored by Mr. Rumi & Family in remembrance of the late Mr. Vellasamy.  
12.04.13 - Visit by Mr. Chan Chun Sing, Acting Minister of Social and Family Development.  
13.04.13 - Interaction, bingo & singing by Bijhar (Singapore).  
13.04.13 - Entertainment & buffet dinner sponsored by Sony Electronics Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd.  
21.04.13 - Vegetarian buffet lunch sponsored by Mahabodhi Monastery.  
27.04.13- Visit by Samsung SDS Asia Pacific Private Limited.  
27.04.13- Bingo game by Buddhist Fellowship Youth.  
03.05.13- Outing to 'Gardens by The Bay' organized by Hong Wen School.  
17.05.13 - Visit by Mr. Luis Manuel, President of Sonangol Asia Ltd., and some of his staff.  
24.06.13- 'Fun with Towel' by International Student Seminar (ITE).

### **Comings and goings:**

Executive for Volunteer & Programme Management, Alex Wong, resigned and left us on 29.05.2013. He had been with us for 3 years. Female Nursing Aide, Saduni, finished her 2 years contract and left on 05.06.2013. She is replaced by another Nursing Aide, Manohari Ruwanmali, on the same day. Kitchen Helper, Madam Lee Choon Khim joined the Home on 06.03.2013.

We welcome Resident, Doris Lee Mei Jen, 53, who came into the Home on 31.01.2013.

### **A change of Red Feather News team members**

We welcome 3 new members onto our editorial board. They are Residents Tiew Tsui Ling, Noraini Bte Adnan and Vinayagam s/o Mohan a.k.a Viki. You will be seeing their articles regularly in our bi-annual newsletter.

We would like to thank the outgoing members, Residents Stephen Sng and Chan Yu Leong for their past contributions. They had been on the board for many years. Stephen had been on the editorial team since its inception in 1996. He was the chief editor for the first 3 years of publication of the Red Feather News and had made many contributions in writing. Thank you, Stephen!

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• An inability to stay quiet is one  
• of the most conspicuous failings  
• of mankind. ~ Walter Bagehot  
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### **Editorial Board**

Editor : Ms. Elizabeth Tan  
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          Ms. Noraini Bte Adnan  
          Mr. Viki Mohan  
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