

# The Red Feather News

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The Editor, The Red Feather News, Singapore Cheshire Home, 159 Serangoon Garden Way, S'pore 556056, Tel: 62809673

## From the Editor...

Dear readers,

The Singapore Cheshire Home marks its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. What would make it a joyous occasion as we celebrate it on Founder's Day is the presence of friends, volunteers and distinguished guests who have, in one way or another, woven themselves into the history of the Home.

Most if not all of you would know that the Home started off in Telok Paku, and then we were at Changi Creek for 8 years before we moved to our present site here in 1984. It's been 23 years since we're at Serangoon Garden.

23 years ago, the residents packed up all their belongings to move house. Early this year too, the residents packed up as if to move house because the Home undertook some major projects to get our cupboards changed and to give our rooms a new look. Our rooms were reduced to bare walls as all the cupboards were scrapped. We slept in our hollow chambers and made do with bare essentials.

For awhile, our normal system was disrupted, but we survived to see new cupboards, new windows, and new bathroom tiles. The hustle of it all is now but past. The memories of it may someday be lost. All things pass. Transformation takes place everyday.

As the Home continues to transform, may it always remain a Home of our heart because of the many memories we all have living in it.

Happy Golden Jubilee,  
Singapore Cheshire Home!

Yours faithfully,

*Elizabeth Tan*

## Our First Resident -- Joe "Best MP"

Our first resident happened to be an "MP". Alright, before you get the wrong idea, let me explain: 'MP' is a term of endearment we use on Joseph. The name got stuck several years back when he wrote it all over his belongings in big bold letters.

Joseph came into the Singapore Cheshire Home at Telok Paku 50 years ago on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1957. Then, he could walk and was a strong and helpful young man. There were only 3 staff to look after an increasing number of residents. Joseph helped out in many daily chores.

Everyday, Joseph swept and mopped the floor. He helped washed both the male and female toilets. At meal times, Joseph helped feed the residents and after meals, the washing of utensils. He had to carry some residents too.

He was strong enough to carry Margaret onto the bath chair, Lily said. Both Lily and Margaret came in two years after Joseph. Joseph often carried Lily off the floor onto the chair.

"When I was young, I didn't like sitting in a chair," said Lily. "I preferred to sit and crawl on the floor. Joseph would come and carry me to the chair. Then, he would nag nag nag at me." Hmmm, probably giving Lily a piece of his own mind for her good. He loved helping others and doing them good. Joseph had fed Lily on her first day of stay. When he saw Lily feeding herself the next day, he broke out in a broad grin. Ah! She could feed herself afterall.

There were many coconut trees in the Telok Paku compound. The residents did a good job of binding "penyapu lidi" (a broom made from the spine of the coconut leaves). Joseph helped in the binding too. They were given 1 cent and 2 cents for mak-

ing the brooms. In those days, we could buy a packet of nasi lemak for 1 cent. When the vendors came, the residents took out their money and, with Joseph's help, bought nasi lemak through the gate. The matron caught them one day and threw their nasi lemak away. Joseph was so angry, he grabbed a broom and chased after the matron until the matron and the matron's pet Great Dane retreated and locked themselves up in the office.

When Dolly came into the Home, Joseph led her to help the other residents. During my secondary school days, Joseph would take me from my room early in the morning while Dolly would wait for my return and take me back to my room. Once, after sending me out, Joseph lifted his hand and stroked my head as if to say, "Be good, study hard." That gesture took me by surprise. The memory of it stayed and warmed me to this day.

Once upon a time, he could dance to music played by rock bands, he could do his act of a grass-cutter who accidentally cut his leg, and he would made rhythmic sound as a way of serenading to anyone who would stop to listen. Now, he is 70 years old, sits in a wheelchair, haggard and at the same time mellowed.

Still, it is not difficult to picture him clad in immaculate white, long sleeve shirt complete with necktie, coat and black polished shoes, because that's exactly how he used to dress for church and for every special occasion.

So, you see, it's not that hard for us to think of Joseph as an MP. He certainly had a caring heart of an MP.

*~Elizabeth Tan*





## My Life in the Home – A Journey of Self-

For Singapore Cheshire Home's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Editor asked me to write my memorable experiences in the Home. This is one of two articles I specially wrote for this issue of "The Red Feather News".

I came into the Home on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1978 at age 31. Prior to that, my mother took care of me, so I was clueless as to what life would be like in a Home for the physically disabled. Nevertheless, I embraced this opportunity as a new beginning of an exciting adventure.

The Home in Changi Creek was an old British Army holiday resort bungalow near the beach and near Changi Village. It was partly built of wood. There was a ramp and my room was on the upper level. My first unforgettable memory was the sight of red "saw dust" fallen from the ceiling. It was everywhere. I was later told it was woodworm faeces and that I should always cover my food and drinks. Failure to do so would result in an extra "ingredient" in my meal!

After a few months in the Home, the residents chose me to succeed their first Chairman of the Residents' Committee because of my proficiency in English. The Residents' Committee was formed in 1977. As Chairman, I was to represent the residents and present their complaints, concerns, needs and problems to the Matron. Unfortunately, for personal reasons, I didn't complete my term of one year. Other duties I helped out with included selling flags to raise funds. The Community Chest came about only in 1984.

We enjoyed life in Changi Creek for several years until we moved here at Serangoon Garden Way in 1984. Here, too, there have been several memorable experiences in my life. I became Editor of the first issue of "Red Feather News" in 1996. After three years, I resigned because of the difficulty of getting contributions from the residents. I remained on the Editorial Board as an occasional contributor and now, as Vice-Editor. To facilitate my writing articles, the Home allowed me to have a laptop in my room. I had problems accessing the Internet from my room but the problem was solved after my church friend set up the wireless network.

Another memorable opportunity was the stint of being a Community Chest's "Ambassador" for the year 1999. My duty was to give persuasive speeches in schools, factories and corporate companies to increase their awareness of those less fortunate and get them to donate money to the Chest. In preparation for the role, the Home sent me to attend a speech training course for a few months. Later, I received a Diploma for public speaking, and a letter of commendation from the Home for my "job" well done as the "Ambassador". Several members of the Management Committee had also written to me.

I find as I recollect there are so many memories and experiences that I can't possibly put in an article. Perhaps, in the future issues of "The Red Feather News", I'll tell you more about my encounters with some wonderful staff, volunteers and personal friends during my 29 years in the Home.

Finally, I *emphasised* that if I had remained with my family and had not come to this Home, I would not have had such experiences and encounters. Through these experiences, I have known more about myself, my capabilities and the human spirit. So, three big cheers for the Singapore Cheshire Home on her 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for fulfilling her objectives for her residents!

~Stephen Sng

## How old are they?

Counting the number of years in Singapore Cheshire Home...

Joseph	- 50 yrs
Lily	- 48 yrs
Margaret	- 48 yrs
Yong Yin	- 48 yrs
Janet	- 47 yrs
Barbara	- 46 yrs
Dolly	- 43 yrs
Sin Beng	- 41 yrs
Cheong Hoe	- 41 yrs
Mary	- 41 yrs
Katherine	- 41 yrs
Chin Ngo	- 40 yrs
Chong Choo	- 37 yrs
Maimunah	- 37 yrs
Jason	- 34 yrs
Susan	- 34 yrs
John	- 33 yrs
Emily	- 29 yrs
Stephen	- 29 yrs
Bee Hong	- 28 yrs
Dulcie	- 28 yrs
Osland	- 27 yrs
Hung Siang	- 27 yrs
Choy Chee	- 27 yrs
Eileen	- 25 yrs
Elizabeth	- 24 yrs
Ah Meng	- 23 yrs
John Sim	- 23 yrs

From Telok Paku days  
From Changi Creek days

Life is an opportunity, benefit from it.  
Life is beauty, admire it.  
Life is bliss, taste it.  
Life is a dream, realize it.  
Life is a challenge, meet it.  
Life is a duty, complete it.  
Life is a game, play it.  
Life is a promise, fulfill it.  
Life is sorrow, overcome it.  
Life is a song, sing it.  
Life is a struggle, accept it.  
Life is a tragedy, confront it.  
Life is an adventure, dare it.  
Life is luck, make it.  
Life is too precious, do not destroy it.  
Life is life, fight for it.

- Mother Teresa

## Editorial Board

Editor	: Ms. Elizabeth Tan
Assistant Editor	: Mr. Stephen Sng
Members	: Mr. Michael Lim Mr. Loke Peng Mun Mr. Chan Yu Leong
Layout Artist	: Mr. Neo Ah Her
Caricature by	: Mr. Alejandro Rosarita
Official website	: <a href="http://www.cheshirehome.org.sg">www.cheshirehome.org.sg</a>



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## Remembering a Part of the Past.....

There was only 3 full time staff to look after all the residents: A matron, a nurse and a housekeeper. The housekeeper had to cook. All the staff stayed in the Home with us. One day, somebody agitated Dolly. Dolly took her bag and made to leave. Joseph went out to the gate, and brought her back in.

Lily Chua,  
resident since 1959

In the early days, Joseph would help carry me. There were not many staff and no one could carry me. When we shifted here, I got close to Janet who became my roommate. She could walk then, and although she couldn't see, she would push me everywhere I want to go with a little guidance from me.

Margaret Queh,  
resident since 1959

Polishing and repairing wheelchairs for my fellow residents kept me busy. It started in 1983 when T.T.S.H. gave me a wheelchair. I polished it and kept it shiny all the time. The staff took note of that and I found myself polishing and repairing wheelchairs for others.

Tan Hung Siang,  
resident since 1980

Now and then, at Telok Paku, there were vendors passing by selling rojak, ice-cream, nasi-nemak, Malay kuehs. When we saw them, we'd called out excitedly to another fellow resident, "Siew jie, Siew jie, rojak lei ler" or "ice-cream lei ler". (Cantonese: lei ler = has come). At Changi Creek, Cheong Hoe and I went out to eat at the market very often. We often eat free of charge because the hawkers got to know us so well, we were like good old friends.

Chin Chin Ngo,  
resident since 1967

### I've Learnt to Feed Myself

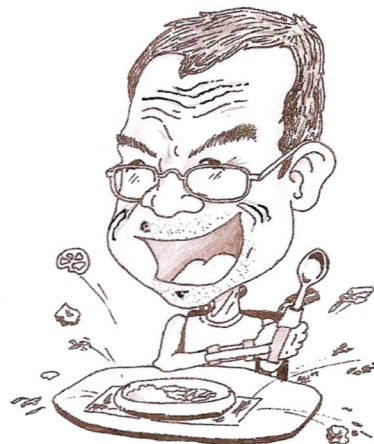
I'll never forget the day (14<sup>th</sup> May) the Home's Filipino Occupational Therapist Ali, suggested I should try to feed myself. Although I had been exercising my hands for a few months in preparation, I felt it was too early. I had lost the ability to feed myself for over ten years, and wherever I went, I needed to be fed. Everybody knows that.

In the Home, as I sat at the last table in the far end of the hall, I was usually the last to be fed, as the staff were busy with other residents. When it was my turn to be fed, I had to eat very fast with big mouthfuls as the staff were by now hungry or had other work to do. Hence, I developed a habit of eating very fast. My friends often ask me to slow down as they are afraid that I might choke.

You cannot imagine how I felt on seeing a plate of food placed before me but was unable to eat. This torture was especially acute when I was very hungry! Being able to feed myself changes everything. The first day I tried to feed myself, some of the staff were staring at me with anticipation. They wondered how or whether I could do it. I found it very amusing to suddenly be the centre of attention.

Now I wait for no one. I can eat first and finish early. And I somewhat enjoy feeding myself when everything is ok. This new found freedom is possible because Ali, our Occupational Therapist, and Florence, our General Manager, had put their strong faith and belief in me and helped me achieve it. Thank you very much!

P.S.: But I still eat very fast. You see, old habits die hard, and the staff want to clear the table.



-Stephen Sng



# Newsflash!

- 17.01.07 -- Games and karaoke by Conoco Philips Asia Ventures Pte. Ltd.
- 26.01.07 -- Movie and Lunch at VivoCity by Defence Science & Technology Agency.
- 10.02.07 -- Magic Show and Buffet Dinner given by Ashram Pte. Ltd.
- 12.02.07 -- Lunar New Year Celebrations by Air Engineering Training Institute.
- 14.02.07 -- Visit to Chinatown by NEC Tokin Singapore Pte. Ltd.
- 22.02.07 -- Movie and Lunch at Great World City by Olympus Singapore Pte. Ltd.
- 21.03.07 -- Movie premier "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" at VivoCity organised by Radio Gold 90.5 FM.
- 21.03.07 -- Treat by McDonald's Restaurants Pte. Ltd. at Ang Mo Kio drive-in branch.
- 04.04.07 -- Bingo games and karaoke by Microsoft Singapore.
- 08.04.07 -- Visit to the Central Christian Church at Punggol.
- 27.04.07 -- "Chorus of Dreams" concert by Spore Association of the Visually Handicapped at Republic Poly.
- 28.04.07 -- Karaoke and buffet lunch by Singapore Technologies Marine Limited.
- 09.05.07 -- Play at Esplanade, "Off Centre" by The Necessary Stage.
- 12.05.07 -- Karaoke and colouring session by Aon Risk Services Singapore Pte. Ltd.
- 16.05.07 -- Puppet show by Fingers Players arranged by Anderson Junior College.
- 19.05.07 -- Games, karaoke and buffet lunch by Transit Link Pte. Ltd.
- 31.05.07 -- Vesak Day "Great Joy Party" at Orchid Country Club.
- 01.06.07 -- Visit to the Singapore Zoological Garden by Dunman High School.
- 03.06.07 -- "Runway Cycling" at Paya Lebar Air Base by Air Engineering Training Institute.
- 17.06.07 -- Visit to Botanic Garden by "The Sowers" from Novena Church.
- 22.06.07 -- Visit to National Museum by General Electric (Singapore) Pte. Ltd.
- 23.06.07 -- Bingo games and dinner given by Mr. Paul Teo and family.
- 24.06.07 -- Realm of Tranquility "Care and Share Day '07".
- 07.07.07 -- Games and snacks by Astute Pte. Ltd.
- 21.07.07 -- Games and movie by Singapore Boys' Brigade.
- 28.07.07 -- Games, painting session, goody bags and buffet lunch by OCBC Bank.
- 28.07.07 -- Dinner at Singapore Expo Hall by Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society.
- 01.08.07 -- Performance by the Tang Quartet at Lecture Room.
- 08.08.07 -- National Day Celebrations at ITE West Dover Campus.
- 16.08.07 -- Cheque Presentation and performance at Singapore Press Holdings.
- 17.08.07 -- KPMG Community Day outing at Jurong Bird Park.
- 18.08.07 -- "Heartstring Walk 2007" at Marina Bay participated by 4 residents in support of NCSS.
- 24.08.07 -- Outing at Suntec City by Defence Science & Technology Agency.
- 30.08.07 -- Games and snack at Home by McDonald's Restaurants Pte. Ltd.

## The farewells:

We bid farewell to Major(Ret) Simon Tan, Assistant General Manager, left on 10.04.07; Rina Ong, Clerical officer, resigned on 25.05.07 and Katrine Lim, Medical Social Worker, resigned on 14.07.07. Nursing Officer Sr. Ruby Rudra passed away on 20.03.07. She had resigned on 01.01.07 to rest as she fought a brave battle with cancer. After 12 years of nursing service in the Home, she is sadly missed by many. Resident Lee Kok Wah was discharged from the home on 06.01.07. Resident Lim Hai Swee passed away in T.T.S.H. on 11.06.07. Resident Jessie Tan passed away on 27.08.07.

## And the warm welcomes:

We have 1 new resident, Mr. Woo Chong Leong(admitted on 27.06.07). New staff include: nursing officer, Sr. Elizabeth Tham(started work on 05.02.07), Assistant Executives, William Tan and June Leow (joined on 07.05.07 and 23.07.07 respectively), and Winnie Lim who took a new post of Executive Admin and Human Resource(09.07.07). Female nursing aide, Gayani from Sri Lanka joined the Home recently(07.08.07). We had one temporary staff, Kathleen Tan(28.05.07 till 31.07.07) to help out in office work.

## Congratulations to:

3 staff being promoted to Executive Post: Rosie Ong(Executive, Admin and Logistics), Nigel Choo(Executive, Programme Management) and Joanne Teo(Executive, Volunteer Management). Congratulations to Resident Philip Ang who married Maria Kathrina, a former staff of the Home, in December last year. He moved out of the Home on 27.07.07 to live with his wife. We wish them a blissful and happy married life.