



# The Red Feather News, Singapore

Volume 01/12 MICA (P) 103/09/2012 A Publication by the Residents of The Singapore Cheshire Home June 2012

The Editor, The Red Feather News, Singapore Cheshire Home, 159 Serangoon Garden Way, Singapore 556056

## From the Editor:

Death is no respecter of persons. What is the purpose of living then when it all ends in death? Does it really end in death? I do not think so.

Death is the topic in this issue of our newsletter. It is something we'd rather not talk about. Yet it is the one thing which all of us will have to face.

In preparing us for this topic, our new Social Worker Mr. Lim, got us together to watch a meaningful Japanese movie entitled "Departures". It is about a person who eventually found meaning in a job that nobody wanted: to encoffin the dead with utmost respect. Contrary to the depressing feeling of the title, this movie teaches about life and the many aspects of it as well as the meaning and purpose of our existence.



In the movie, one of the endearing characters, Tsuyako was happy to work until her last breath, making herself a gift of service to her community. Likewise, the protagonist, Diago eventually found his job to be meaningful and fulfilling as he rendered his professional service giving comfort to the bereaved and receiving gratitude in return. The movie makes us realize that we will have a purposeful life when we give ourselves in service to others in the community we live in.

The movie also trains our thoughts on changing perspectives and, in the final scene, it teaches us the

importance of seeking understanding and forgiveness before it is too late. All too often, we are trapped in our own perspectives.

If we but only come out of ourselves a little and consider another perspective, we will resolve to be more considerate, more tolerant and to forgive and be kinder to the people by our side.

Life is not for selfish living. It is never made for 'I', 'me' and 'myself'. We acknowledge each other's right to live by respecting others and treating them with dignity. When death puts someone to his final rest, we too must, by our thoughts and actions, show our respect and send the departed on their way in a dignified manner in recognition of the person whom he or she had been.

Having stayed in The Singapore Cheshire Home for many years, I have witnessed the death of many fellow residents. Memories of them turned fuzzy with the years that passed, but from time to time, a vivid recollection of shared moments with someone long gone, flash across the mind. Such memories may dampen my eyes or put a warm feeling in my heart and a smile on my face. We all have these moments and we cherish these memories even though death has separated us.

Death brings closure and carries with it a blanket of sadness but death, as I see it, can be life-giving. It teaches us to treasure life and to look to those things that really matter. It closes a long chapter written by the departed and opens many new chapters in the lives of those left behind.

In these new chapters we will find that death has no final say, because we who live on will continue to pass on the baton of light, the good we have gleaned, and the things we have learnt from the ones who had lived and added on to our own lives.

*Elizabeth Tan*

**"Every man's life ends the same way. It is only the details of how he lived and how he died that distinguish one man from another."  
~ Ernest Hemingway**

### Editorial Board

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## A Friend Full Of Life

Nantha joined the Cheshire family in February 2009 from the Red Cross Home. When he first moved in, he often cried whenever he was alone, especially at night. This went on for two to three weeks. He was about 17 years old then. It took him a while, but gradually he assimilated into the Cheshire family. Once he settled in, he was full of life! A strong personality, a funny guy, bubbly by nature, loud at times, anything you can name it - he was quite a character. He never bothered others, but stayed at his own activities. You either loved or hated his guts!

Nantha loved movies and could spend many hours watching all sorts of movies be it Tamil, Chinese or English movies. Whether it was on the computer or going to the cinema, he would spend all he had just to enjoy that few hours of luxury. He was adventurous and would take on anything as long as he wanted and enjoyed it. Due to his "gung-ho" nature, he would at times met with 'controversies'. Punishment was a common "reward" for him and it reached to a point whereby we often joked about it, but he took it in his stride.

He never cared much for looking ahead. He lived for the day. That was Nantha in his first two and a half years at the Home. Whatever money he had, he would just spend it all away, just like that! Carefree, he lived life to the fullest. I was always amazed at his energy despite his physical condition.

Nantha was very much involved in the Genesis School for Special Education. He was given an allowance and full transport coverage for being part of the teaching staff. It was an activity he enjoyed which kept him motivated and occupied. He stopped attending the school in late 2010.

We had many discussions over lots of things but there is one that vividly comes to mind. I often shared with him about the difficulties and challenges I faced in the course of my working journey. "You will face obstacles too," I said, "but as long as you are willing, you will find solutions and overcome all barriers." One day, in one of our usual discussion, he snapped and said that he was more disadvantage physically and did not have any foundation in his education and that made it more difficult for him to take on opportunities and face challenges and so forth. It dawned upon me there and then that we sometimes forget and see the world only through our eyes acquiring only our own perception..... He had a point there. His words made a lot of sense, it also showed that he was thinking and opening-up. I learned something from him that day.

In the last few months prior to his passing away, I saw a gradual change in him - the 'gung-ho-ness' simmered down. He was open and willing to do things that were asked of him. Through our former social worker, Suet Fong's recommendation, Nantha had a stint with Eureka Call Centre Singapore, but resigned after two weeks. I thought it was a good start.

Four days before he passed away, Nantha went for a job interview on his own accord, accompanied by his sister. When he came back that night, chirpy as usual, he shared his day and talked about the interview. Although he was breathing heavily, I could see the sparkle in his eyes. I could see he wanted it. He had the eagerness in him that was never there before!

Although he never lived to fulfill his dreams and wishes, in spite of all the setbacks and difficulties he faced emotionally and physically, he took a great step forward when he took the initiative to attend his last interview before he got admitted and passed away four days later.

Taking a quote from Gustave Flaubert, a French Novelist, "A friend who dies, it's something of you who dies." How true this is. Nantha was only 19 and had much to look forward to. His death was so unexpected to all of us, but then again, we started dying the moment we were born. Life is a ride on a journey that heads us all towards death. Let's make this ride enjoyable and live without regrets.

Thank you for the memories, Nantha, my friend.

~ Osland Bin Othman

**"Make every day count...**

**Even when you think it's the worst day of your life;  
for you never know when it'll be your last."**

**~ Solange Nicole**

## Uncle Tha Tun

Tha Tun came to be our physiotherapist at The Singapore Cheshire Home on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1991. He was from Myanmar. Incidentally, many of my former physiotherapists were from Myanmar too. Come to think of it, Tha Tun had faithfully served The Singapore Cheshire Home for 21 years!

When I first came to the Home on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2005, I was shy and quiet and hardly talked to Tha Tun, but after a few months, I got to know him as a joker. That was when we started to have more conversations.

I addressed Tha Tun as 'Uncle Tha Tun', as I have addressed all my former physiotherapists 'uncle' or 'aunty' as a form of respect. Tha Tun was a great advisor to me, guiding me especially during my two years' term as Chairman of the Resident Committee in the Home. I remember even when he was having a serious conversation with me, he would never fail to include a joke to make me laugh. Tha Tun once told me that when he first came to Singapore, he could not speak English at all! He knew only two English words, 'Yes' and 'No'. He was then sent to the British Council to learn the English language.

Tha Tun lived near the Home. He walked to work every morning and always had a cup of tea before he started work. No matter how busy he was with his own work, he would spend time with his therapy aides and day care clients. He would also find time in the afternoon to play Chess with some of the day care clients. Once in a while, Tha Tun would give a lunch treat to the staff, residents and day care clients.

I remember fondly how Tha Tun loved to tap our shoulders with his hand. He would show his concern towards the lower function residents like Dolly who is one of his favourite residents. One of Tha Tun's dreams was to see my fellow resident, Pang Lee Lee, able to walk again just like her sister, Pang Lan Mui, who was a resident with us. Lan Mui has since gone home after gaining mobility with her legs through Tha Tun's care and is now gainfully employed at McDonald's.

Tha Tun often told us stories about his experiences when he first came to Singapore. He enjoyed sitting by the pond outside the Day Care Centre and looking at the fishes when he came in for work in the morning and before he left for home at the end of the day. Indeed, my memories of him are still fresh in my mind.

Sometime last December, Tha Tun went back to Myanmar for a holiday. He fell ill there, however, he managed to fly back to Singapore after the holiday. Sadly, just one day after he came back, he was admitted to Tan Tock Seng Hospital with a high fever. We thought it was a normal fever but found out later that it was much more serious than we had thought. He was in a coma by then. His heart stopped at one point in time. The doctors at Tan Tock Seng Hospital tried their best to save his life. I later found out that he was suffering from gastroenteritis.

I can still remember when Tha Tun was battling for his life, all of us were feeling depressed. The therapy aides were especially affected. Therapy aides, Yu Htet and Nan and occupational therapist, Vincent, took turns to visit him in the hospital. I visited him as often as I could too. On my way to the hospital in the MRT train, I often broke down in tears. My hope back then was to see Tha Tun wake up from his coma and get well, even though I knew the chances were slim.

On 11<sup>th</sup> February, I was involved in a handicraft sale at the United World College. I had an uneasy feeling about Tha Tun then. However, I carried on with the sale and told myself that I must visit him the very next day. Sadly, I missed the chance to see him one last time as he passed away that fateful day.

Tha Tun's funeral was held at Mandai Crematorium the following day. When I arrived there with some other residents and staff, I still could not believe that it was really Tha Tun inside the coffin. There was a 45 minutes prayer session for Tha Tun and the residents honoured him with a bouquet of flowers before he was sent for cremation.

Life comes and goes. Friendship is like a colourful rainbow. Life and death is like an open diary to be closed at the end. Rest in peace, Uncle Tha Tun and thank you for your 21 years of service to The Singapore Cheshire Home. You will always be in our hearts.

~ Noraini



**“All that live must die, passing through nature to eternity.”**

**William Shakespeare**

# A FATHER TO REMEMBER..



Among the few superiors I've encountered in my life, Mr. U Tha Tun can be considered as a father to me. He might have sometimes scolded the therapy aides but it seemed more like fatherly advice from someone who wanted his children to behave their very best at all times.

He had mentored us very well to a point where we were able to function on our assigned tasks independently without supervision. He had great confidence in us and trusted our knowledge and skills learnt through his teachings.

Aside from work-related matters, I will never forget his great sense of humour that never failed to always send us all into laughter and made us so happy. His punch lines never failed to impress me. He had a favourite cliché, "something wrong", which he uses whenever he observed someone making a mistake. This cliché became viral among the therapy aides as we used it in our jokes with each other even until now.

It is sad to know that he is not around anymore but I'm sure he is in God's hands, knowing him to be a very good man, surely he is in heaven now.

I will treasure the legacy he left us and will promote the valuable things he taught me, especially the etiquette and moral lessons I have learnt from him so that my own future subordinates will become like me, who was moulded into a better person by Mr. U Tha Tun.

*~ Senior Therapy Aide, Khaing Yu Htet*

**"What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal."**

**~ Albert Pike**

# Dear Nantha's Passing

I came to The Singapore Cheshire Home on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011 and met my friend Viki whom I knew while working together at Effusion Company as telemarketers. Viki invited me to join him and his best friend, Nantha, hanging out in a corner of the Home where the "dummy taxi" was. That was when my friendship with Nantha started.

In the first few weeks of my stay, and not knowing many residents here yet, I would take my dinner to our corner to eat. There, the three of us would chat for an hour before breaking up to take on our personal tasks.

One day, I came home early from work and somehow Nantha knew I got my salary. I asked him how he knew it, he replied, "If not, you wouldn't come back so early!". A few minutes later, he asked if I would like to have McDonalds. I agreed to give him a treat and asked him to place the order. Nantha ordered the family meal which was too much for the two of us. We ended up sharing the meal with some caregivers at the Home.

Once we went to watch 'Alvin and The Chipmunks' together. My godmother waited for us at Ang Mo Kio Hub. Mark, the caregiver, was with us as well. We had lunch at the Hub and did some window-

shopping before the movie. We had a very good time.

I could not go out with Nantha as much as I liked due to work commitments and time in church. However, my god-mother would bring me to the market for lunch after church and we would often buy some fruits to bring back with us to the Home. Nantha would join us in the garden with my god-mother feeding him the fruits.

Nantha and I spent eight good months being close friends. Looking back now, I see that there were so many more things I wish we could have done together. We had even planned to go out for a small lunch after my upcoming job interview.

I feel very sorry for the loss of a good friend. He was a very young man with many ideas and skills. It is hard to believe he left us so suddenly, but at the end of the day, I have to accept that he is no longer with us. I realise now, that a person who has severe disability needs friends around him, because we do not know when anyone of us may leave. Even if we wish to be together forever, life is unpredictable. I will never forget the time spent with Nantha.

Thank you for your friendship, dear Nantha. We will miss you.

~ Ivan Lin

## IN MEMORIAM OF THE LATE MR. THA TUN, PHYSIOTHERAPIST

### Eulogy by Kim Go

I felt a great sense of loss when Tha Tun's death was announced on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2012. I wish to express our sincere condolences on behalf of everyone at The Singapore Cheshire Home.

Tha Tun had been serving the Home as a physiotherapist for the past 21 years since September 1991. He was an amazing person with a good temperament and a great deal of kindness in him. Residents and clients know him as an attentive and gentle physiotherapist, who treated people around him as family.

On the other hand, he was also deeply bonded to the working staff. Some of the many fond memories include him buying ice cream and food from McDonald's upon his salary adjustment, as well as the braised duck treat when he won some money in a lottery. Not forgetting about the special 'sambal chilli' from his hometown in Myanmar, whenever he came back from holiday. And also, one of his favourite phrases was "No Problem!".

In January 2012, Tha Tun went back to Myanmar for a three weeks' holiday. When he returned during the Chinese New Year period, he was admitted to Tan Tock Seng Hospital with a high fever that brought him into a coma and eventually to his passing within three weeks. It was a great shock to his family, friends and everyone in The Singapore Cheshire Home. Sadly so, his wife recounted that it was Tha Tun's dream to retire within the next two years and return home to Myanmar. We join in unity with all who knew Tha Tun in offering our deepest sympathies at his passing.

All in all, Tha Tun was more than just a wonderful person. The time he spent in the Home had touched all the residents, clients and staff. He will definitely be missed by all who know him. May he rest in peace.



## **Newsflash!**

- 07.01.12 - Visit by Singapore Police Force (Operations Department).
- 18.01.12 - Outing to Chinatown by the Home.
- 19.01.12 - Outing to Nexus International School.
- 20.01.12 - Outing to Chinatown by the Home.
- 25.01.12 - Visit by A&J Creative Danceworld.
- 28.01.12 - Visit and buffet lunch by Eventus Gifts Group.
- 28.01.12 - Visit by USS John C Stennis, CVN74.
- 28.01.12 - Visit by Trafigura Pte. Ltd.
- 31.01.12 - Visit with Lion Dance performances by The Emerald Hill Group.
- 02.02.12 - Steamboat Dinner for residents, Council members and staff by the Home.
- 03.02.12 - Visit by ASG Acquisition Pte. Ltd.
- 04.02.12 - Live band, Lucky Draw & North Indian Buffet dinner by Mr Alvin Tan & Friends.
- 11.02.12 - Visit by Delphi Automotive Systems Singapore Pte. Ltd.
- 15.02.12 - Visit by CDCs & Family Service Centre.
- 25.02.12 - "Love on Wheels" by The People Association.
- 23.03.12 - Outing to the Singapore Zoological Garden by Sony Electronics Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd.
- 31.03.12 - Visit by Kim Seng Youth Executive Committee & Xinmin Secondary School.
- 05.04.12 - Visit by Millennia Institute.
- 14.04.12 - Visit and lunch by Global Services Engineering (Asia).
- 27.04.12 - Visit by Greendale Secondary School (Red Cross Youth).
- 11.05.12 - Outing to Jurong Bird Park by Hewlett-Packard (Singapore Social Impact Committee).
- 12.05.12 - Visit by Bijhar (Singapore).
- 21.05.12 - Visit by The Talented People Company.
- 24.05.12 - Visit by Mrs Dorothy Chan, PBM, BBM, Executive Director of Far East Organisation.
- 02.06.12 - Outdoor Bingo and lunch by Kim Seng Youth Executive Committee & Outram Secondary School.
- 19.06.12 - Performances by Mr Baisho Matsumoto, Master of Shamisen.

### **The farewells:**

We bade farewell to several staff members who left. S.W. Poon Suet Fong and N.A. Alex Jr Labra (also known as J.R.) resigned and left in February (02.02.2012 and 17.02.2012 respectively). T.A. Johanna Todas (left on 07.03.2012), Kitchen Helper, Samikkannu Mary (21.03.2012), H.A. Suneth (08.05.2012) and Housekeeper Agnes Chia (resigned and left on 10.05.2012)

Resident Pang Lan Mui was discharged from the Home on 06.01.2012.

### **In memoriam:**

We extend our deepest condolences to the family of the late Resident Nantha Kumar s/o Rajenchan who passed away on 09.04.2012 and the family of the late Physiotherapist Mr. U Tha Tun who passed away on 11.02.2012. We regret to add that Resident Rona Eu passed away on 25.05.2012 while this newsletter was being prepared.

### **New staff and residents:**

We welcome 5 new staff... S.W. Lim Hian Guan (joined on 15.02.2012), T.A. Roane Claridad (02.03.2012), N.A. Brixnelle Jervy (05.03.2012), Kitchen Helper, Nancy Quek (12.04.2012) and H.A. Panagodage Don Manushka Udara (25.05.2012).

The Home took in 2 residents on 30.01.2012 - Michelle Teo Wan Ping and Anton Pereira Fernando.

**\* S.W. = Social Worker, T.A. = Therapy Aide, N.A. = Nursing Aide, H.A. = Healthcare Assistant.**

**“And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count.  
It's the life in your years.”**

**~ Abraham Lincoln**