

THE MALAYSIA SINGAPORE & BRUNEI CULTURAL ASSOCIATION

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Reflections of my life.

Author: Mrs. Fanny Chua, VP Singapore/Director

I have finally reached the winter of my life. How the years have whisked by. Where did all those years go, my childhood, my teenage years, adolescence, adulthood? Now I am in the late adulthood, what I call the winter of my life. Looking back those passing years they are just memories.

I recall the various stages of my life, my years in Singapore where I was born and lived till I was aged 12. Those were carefree years and where I had a big extended family of uncles, aunts and lots of cousins. I come from a family, from my mums side, swimmers who love the water, and the water sports of water skiing and boating. My mother and her brothers and sisters were all Singapore swimming champions during their time, and they convey to us the love of water and swimming.

My second phase of life was in Kuching, Sarawak where I spent my teenage years. My father, an electrical engineer, asked to transfer there to help build a transmitting station in Kuching, the first Radio Station in Sarawak called Radio Sarawak. Life in Kuching was one of the happiest time of my childhood. Life then was so simple, we did not have TV, no digital gadgets, we loved and enjoyed life. Loads of friends and our means of transportation were our bicycles. We gallivanted with friends all over the place and safety was never a concern for our parents. We were greatly influenced by the American music of the 50s, the rock and roll era of Elvis Presley, Bill Haley, etc. with singers like The Everly Brothers, Paul Anka, Connie Francis, just to mention only a very few of the vast popular singers at that time. LIFE magazine in 1954 published an article titled, "The Luckiest generation". We certainly were!

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Message from the President....

Dear Members and Friends,
Hope all is well and getting by during the lock down period.

Our Membership-In-Charge Mrs. Sophia Chiam had been contacting members to get a personal touch in their well being. If you have new contact information, please let us know so that we can update our membership list.

At our last Board meeting on March 08, 2021, it was confirmed that no activities will return for another three months or longer. As the vaccination is in progress, the covid protocol remains and no activities will take place. We still hold monthly 'zoom meetings' on the first Thursday of the month. Although the Agenda of Meeting is short, the Directors received financial briefing from Hon. Treasurer Rosemary Lai and other on-going topics were also conducted in brief. So, we are looking after the club and not on holidays per se. Also, it is always nice to see all the directors looking healthy.

Director Richard Liew has informed me that Director Fanny Chua will be contributing an article for this issue. Also, she encouraged Life Member Michael Wan to contribute an article as well. So, I hope you will enjoy reading their articles.

For now, the Board and Honorary Advisors wish you all the very best and enjoy the Spring season. Stay Safe.

Sincerely,

Stanley Low, President (2020-2021)



Zoom Meeting

Screen shot of MSBCA Board of Directors' meeting on March 08, 2021, hosted by Dir. George Yee, pictured, chaired by President Stanley Low. Membership-in-charge Sophia Chiam also attended the meeting.



From Richard's desk...

Hello Members and Friends,
A year of the pandemic has gone by officially. So, looks like we are on to the second year although we are getting the vaccine. I am like on cruise control, humming along to work and home, seven days a week.



I am resigned to the fact that this is the norm for a while as the variants, considered to be more contagious, are making their rounds to no end in sight. The vaccines are a relief but not a solution.

However, not all is lost. Golfing months are ahead and golfing is the safest sport at this time with a lot of social distancing especially looking for the vanishing balls in the ruff. I am looking forward to it. Hope all of you will get through this pandemic time by doing what you do best. Stay connected and stay safe.

I have asked the directors to contribute articles for this newsletter. Director Fanny Chua came through again. She then invited Life Member Michael Wan to write as well. Thank you to both of them for sharing their life stories with us. Till then and all the best!

Richard Liew, Newsletter-in-Charge

Reflections of My Life (cont.)

In the early 1960s I was sent off to London, England for further education. My brother came to join me not long after followed by my mother and later by our dad and another brother who had completed his basic degree at McGill in Montreal. My parents bought a house in London. We were permanent residents and London was our home. I got married in London and that was a happy occasion but several years down the road, the loss of my mum in London, at only aged 61 of liver cancer, was the first of the deepest sorrows a heart can ever know. My mother was the cement that held the family together. Her death dispersed the family as my two brothers were not married yet, my dad and one of my brothers went back to Kuching. One brother remained in London. I had by then gone back to Kuching as my husband who was on a Colombo Plan scholarship had completed his medical degree in Canada, was on a contract to go back home after completion of his studies. Going back to Kuching was another phase of my life.

We settled in Kuching, had a great life, had all my 3 kids there, a live in maid. Life couldn't be better! We had our house designed by an architect friend and the whole construction under his supervision. Only after staying in the house for 3 years we decided to pack up everything, leaving our home, family and friends, to immigrate to Canada to give our 3 kids a better opportunity especially in education. We left Kuching end of October 1979.



Board of Directors (2020-2021)

President: Mr. Stanley Low,
(604.889.9288)

VP Malaysia: Mr. George Yee,
(604.790.2468)

VP Singapore: Mrs. Fanny Chua
(604.222.2323)

VP Brunei: Mr. Danny Thong,
(604.649.2931)

Hon. Treasurer: Ms. Rosemary
Lai, (604.649.2006)

Hon. Secretary: Mr. S.K. Chin
(604.862.1887)

Director: Mr. Michael Mok,
(604.323.0178)

Director: Mr. Henry Mo,
(604.307.2326)

Director/Newsletter:
Mr. Richard Liew, (604.377.1201)

Honorary Advisors:
Mr. Yeo Sing Lim, OBC
Ms. Polly Voon

Membership-in-charge:
Mrs. Sophia Chiam,
(778.840.9479)

In the next issue, “**Going To America**”, a journey in search for a better future, a recount of the hippies’ era, experiencing life living with an American family, the first moon landing excitement, the earthquake experience and working life. It will be in a four part series. Stay Tuned!

Canada was not new to us as we had been here before so we knew what to expect before we came. We loved the the place and the life it offered. Our kids settled in very quickly as most kids are adaptable. Vancouver was our choice even though we stayed in Manitoba for a year on arrival. In Vancouver our very good friends, Mary and Michael Wan, were kind enough to offer their basement suite to us for 3 months until we purchased our home in Burnaby, Eventually my brother from England and my father came over to join us. My father loved Canada. His passing after 5 years here was the second painful sorrow and loss.

I have lived through so many phases of my life and have been in Canada for 41 years. Much longer than any place I have lived. Time has whisked by like the blink of an eye and now I have reached the winter of my life. This chapter of my life on earth will at some point in time come to a close. However being Christian there is the hope of another new and everlasting life with our Resurrected Lord. There is another universe free from pain and suffering, filled with unending beauty and adventure. It will be a new chapter of a different life and adventure that I will look forward to. One thing for sure that I know - in that new life I will never experience another winter in my life ever!



Mrs. Fanny Chua,
VP Singapore/Director



St. Thomas's School, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

Nostalgic Impressions and Memories about my Old School: 1948-1960

Dr. Michael T. Wan, M.Sc. (U Queensland), Ph.D. (SFU), Vancouver, B.C., Canada

I was indeed very fortunate to have been a student of St. Thomas's School, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, during the 1950s, when it embarked on a course of rapid expansion and upgrading of both primary and secondary educational facilities. That was the period when the school started preparing students to qualify for, and take advantage of, the Colombo Plan (CP) scholarship programs. The timing for me was perfect. As a Cambridge Higher School Certificate graduate in 1960, I competed for, and won, a CP scholarship in 1961. My future prospects then became bright and exciting. It was the beginning and opening to a new opportunity for my career development via tertiary education overseas. That would not have happened had I not studied at this school.

Born in 1940, I attended St. Thomas's School as a day student from 1948 to 1960. St. Thomas, in my opinion, was then an excellent educational institution. Besides my parents' guidance, my achievements to date were largely due to the school's immense influence. That school guided, and molded me to face a challenging world. Second to none at that time, this English medium school was set up to teach students not only academic excellence but also promoted good character development, a foundation critical for a successful life beyond school. Determination, hard work, honesty, ambition, loyalty, perseverance, patience, self-responsibility and control, as well as spirituality were encouraged and nurtured. Spoon-feeding to attain grades was frowned on. Students were guided and motivated by teachers to be independent, take initiatives, and undertake self-learning, for example, by carrying out experiments, conducting their own research, being self-reliant in problem solving and with class study projects to accomplish the desired results.

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Web Advertising Rate



Business Card Size: \$25 per month or \$250 per year with link to your webpage included.
Our Webmaster is Director Mr. George Yee



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Please inform us by email at msbcahq@gmail.com if you are moving or have moved or have changed your email address. Also, inform us if you like your email address removed from our list.

IMPORTANT: There are members not receiving notices about events, etc. Either their email addresses are out of date or they do not have a computer altogether. Therefore it would be the member's responsibility to notify us as to how we can best communicate with them. Take a minute to send us a note or call any of the directors. Thank you.

Clubhouse Rental Rates (Effective Jan. 01, 2020)

Members —\$20 per hour

Definition: Private use by members for family parties and gatherings; not to be rented for second party use. Renter must be present for that period of time.

Community —\$25 per hour, min.4hrs; \$180.00/day.

Definition: Non-business type Social Group Meetings, Church Groups, Community Groups. *Members and non-members.*

Business/Corporate—\$30.00 per hour, min. 2hrs;

Definition: Business being conducted such as for dancing lessons, seminars, marketing and sales. *Members and non-members.*
Exception for Regular Renters (*min. three times/week*): \$25.00 per hour.

Rates are subject to change without notice.

Audio/Visual Equipment not included.

Capacity: 50 people seating, 90 standing.

Please contact any of the directors for rental.

MEMBERSHIP

Please make your cheque payable to:

MSBCA
Unit 238-2680 Shell Road,
Richmond, B.C.
V6X 4C9.

Please call Membership Director for
Membership Form or visit our website to print the form.

Annual Membership Fee (effective from date of application for 12 months):

	General	Life
Single/Seniors (60 & over) -	\$25.00	\$250.00
Family (excluding children over 18 years) -	\$30.00	\$300.00

Corporate Rate: \$200.00 Annually

Most of all, instilled upon students the importance of having creative thinking and thoughts, as well as respecting what was right and wrong.

While arithmetic, reading and writing were the basics of an early educational program, I was also obliged to learn by heart many other core subjects such as Christian scriptural books, English poems and literatures, Shakespeare's plays, and other worthy works. At the time, I loathed those subjects. But as time elapsed, a knowledge and understanding of those topics were the very basis that helped shaped my personal character, integrity and philosophy for a balanced life. It also reinforced my preparation for the survival and endurance of a competitive, sometimes rather harsh, uncompromising and unknown world called ...the *reality* of life!

I also benefited greatly from lessons that were not formally taught in classes, viz., learning by observing the positive aspects of essentially four 'exemplary' groups of school contemporaries: those who were studious ('bookworms'), those extra-curricular achievers (athletic and socially inclined), those striking a balance between the two, and those who, for various reasons, were neither of the three groups but were simply disinterested about learning. I opted to emulate the third group.

Although St. Thomas was basically a Christian school at that time, it also opened its doors to students of other ethnic groups of different faiths, thereby enriching my exposure to other people and cultures. Interacting with so many different sorts of students helped me understand their points of views about the world we all live in. It also fostered my conviction regarding the need to be more compassionate and tolerant about others' beliefs and cultures. These and other character-building experiences at St. Thomas taught me to be a better person, which proved to be helpful when dealing with less than stellar classmates with mutual respect and understanding.

Extra-curricular school programs, such as athletic sports, camping, debating, hiking, mountaineering, social clubs, other organized school events, and most importantly, the once-a-day class recess, were the fun part of my learning episodes at St. Thomas. These activities were a welcomed relief from the more 'heavy duty' and mundane courses! They not only enhanced my awareness about various elements of human nature but also contributed to a more wholesome development of my cognitive attributes during my early formative years at the school.

A particularly memorable daily event was lining up at the school 'tuckshop' during class recess to buy freshly prepared, delicious snacks such as '*ang-taw-peng, char-kway-teow, chwee-mee, kolo-mee, laksa, pop-pia, rojak*' or other local foods. Besides gratifying my hunger, this habit became a welcome ritual, as it also provided an opportunity to meet and socially interact with schoolmates, even briefly!

The school had, and most likely still has, the most progressive and open-minded culture and receptiveness about encouraging and putting in place extra learning opportunities. Despite a plate full of core curriculum activi-

ties, the school at that time also provided opportunities for its students to learn, besides English, a second language based on popular request and interest, be it Bahasa Malaysia, Latin, Mandarin Chinese, etc. Since ethnic Chinese students were the largest group at my time, Mandarin classes were arranged biweekly in the afternoons for those interested. Unfortunately, I did not seriously take that chance to learn the language. Looking back, that was my most regrettable lost opportunity.

Had it not been for the solid foundation of my schooling and training at St. Thomas, I would not have had an opportunity to complete my tertiary education and professional training in Australia and Canada. After university graduation in 1968, I worked as an Agricultural Research Entomologist for the Sarawak Government for a while before immigrating to Canada, where my very first job was a blueberry picker! I was later employed by the Government of Canada as an Environmental Toxicologist for more than 33 years. St. Thomas's School also contributed to my happy personal life as I met my wife, Mary, in Brisbane while I was studying there as a Colombo Plan Scholar. We have been married for 55 years now; I am a father of three children and a grandfather of four, now living in Vancouver. I enjoy my retirement years doing some consulting and volunteering work (also gave presentations on 'Career Development' to St Thomas's senior students during past visits), golfing, and continuing my education via global trotting until CV19 pandemic struck in 2020.

These are highlights of my nostalgic times at, and association with, St. Thomas. Besides reminiscing about them each time I drove past Jalan MacDougal or Jalan Reservoir whenever I visited Kuching, I would like to reiterate that if I had to start my school life all over again, I would indeed not trade St. Thomas for any other school. I continue to admire the historic and majestic landmark of the school's twin towers, standing atop a hill, over-looking the rapidly changing Kuching city skyline. From Google Earth's satellite images, I can see the school complex has progressively expanded from six buildings during my time to an impressive aggregation of more than ten modern, multi-storied structures, with immaculate landscaping. In terms of the quality of educational excellence, I am confident that St. Thomas would continue the same tradition of doing what it did and does best – the teaching, training, motivating and promoting of quality students each year after educating and preparing them for *real* life beyond primary and secondary schools!



**Dr. Michael T. Wan, M.Sc. (U Queensland), Ph.D. (SFU),
Vancouver, B.C., Canada**