

Select Race



Chinese

Malay

Indian

Eurasian

Caucasian

Others...



Mistaken Identity

How Eurasians cope with being
labelled foreign on their home ground

PLUS

FESTIVE FRIVOLITY
The year-end shindigs

ON GUARD
Edmund Twohill on military life
and charitable volunteering

EARLY LEARNING
Dr Christopher Pereira's guide
to pre-schools

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THE NEWEURASIAN

The magazine of The Eurasian
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The NewEurasian is published
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President's Message



As another year begins, I would like to thank the many people who have supported the EA over the course of last year: our numerous volunteers and donors; our Patrons, Board of Trustees, Management and various Sub-Committee members; and our Secretariat team. I would like to thank all of you for your commitment to our mission, which made it possible for us to reach out and positively impact the lives of many in our community.

This year also marks a milestone as we are increasing the monthly donations to the Eurasian Community Fund (ECF) for the first time in 20 years. I am heartened that almost all Eurasians that I have spoken to have wholeheartedly supported this increase. I am also thankful that the government has also recognised the increased contributions by Eurasians with an increase in the matching grant from MCCY. Once again, I am thankful to Minister Iswaran for championing this initiative for us and to all the Eurasians who contribute to the ECF for helping us to create a vibrant future for the Eurasian community in Singapore.

The previous months have been exciting as we enjoyed numerous events to mark the festive season. The season kicked off with the FSS Christmas Party, to be followed by the Family Christmas Carnival and Children's Christmas Treat and the Social Circle's Christmas Dinner and Dance. All the events were held at our festively decorated Eurasian Community House. And to end the year on a high note, we enjoyed our annual New Year's Eve Ball.

The FSS Christmas lunch was hosted by the FSS team and youth volunteers from the International School of Singapore. Christmas is a time for celebrating with family and friends; however for those enduring personal or financial challenges, it can be a desperate struggle. It's therefore a joy to be able to bring Christmas cheer to our FSS clients and heartening to learn that the assistance the EA provides is making a positive difference to their lives. In recognition of such help, we were delighted to receive an unexpected tribute from one of our families (see page 13).

I am grateful to all of you who joined us at the various events as it has allowed many Eurasians to come together to strengthen our bonds and community spirit.

In the past year, the EA has disbursed more than 450 education awards. Extending our education programmes to more young and talented students enables us to continue to strive for academic excellence and build a strong future for the Eurasian community in Singapore. In our recently held Project Ray of Hope Ceremony (page 8), both parents and students enjoyed an evening that also included Christmas trivia and carolling, providing them with an opportunity to mingle with fellow Eurasians and forge new friendships.

Our cover story for this issue addresses a common problem many of us Eurasians face regarding mistaken identity. While it is unfortunate and often annoying that this happens, instead of getting upset, I encourage all Eurasians to use such situations as a talking point and opportunity to explain and show who Eurasians are, about our community and heritage. We have a very interesting story to share and I have personally found this to be a useful communication perk.

With our small size, we all need to play an active role to promote the Eurasian community. The EA certainly can and does play a significant role in this and provides a platform for Eurasians to come together to enhance the understanding and notability of the Eurasian community.

As we begin 2015, I hope to see more Eurasians step forward and play an active role in the EA.

On behalf of our management committee, I wish you a very happy, exciting and successful New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Benett Theseira'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large loop at the end.

Benett Theseira
President



HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn with EA President Benett Theseira and EA representatives

Thai Royalty at the EA

The EA was honoured to host HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the King of Thailand's third child, at the ECH on 30 October. Thai Embassy representatives, military teachers and cadets also attended the event.

The EA's 1st Vice President Carla Barker welcomed the royal guest with a bouquet of flowers. The princess, who is known for her

interest in foreign cultures and conservation, was taken with the other guests on a tour of the Eurasian Heritage Centre galleries to learn more about the Eurasian heritage. She then sampled sugce cake from Quentin's restaurant and watched a Jinkli Nona dance performance.

The evening ended with EA President Benett Theseira and HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn exchanging token gifts of appreciation.

The Final Shake Up



The top five winners share the spotlight with the Balut Section's sponsors & convenor



The baluteers pose for a shot after their game in September

As the eighth and final round of the EA In-House Balut Tournament took place on 3 October, the 20 players were each hoping that Lady Luck would help edge their scores to the top of the leader board.

Douglas Nonis emerged as the Champion for the month of October, 10 points ahead of second-placed Yvonne Pereira.

The outcome was determined by the players' best scores from six out of the eight rounds. And after the last dice had tumbled out in the final throw, the prize winners for the year were:

Highest Total Aggregate for best 6 games

- 2014 In-House Balut Champion – SK John (3,671 points)
- 2nd – Peter Rodrigues (3,610 points)
- 3rd – Aloysius Fernandez (3,545 points)
- 4th – Philip Cordeiro (3,524 points)
- 5th – The Ban Khi (Yang) (3,504 points)

High Aggregate (Single Game)

- 1st – Peter Rodrigues (694 points)
- 2nd – Aloysius Fernandez (687 points)

High Score (Single Game)

- 1st – Aloysius Fernandez (168 points)
- 2nd – Rosemary Tessensohn (162 points)

Yvonne said: "The Balut Section members wish to thank Mrs Evelyn Rodrigues, Mr and Mrs Quentin Pereira and Mr and Mrs Philip Cordeiro for their overwhelming support and contributions throughout the year. Thanks, too, to Secretariat staff Daniel and Mervyn for computing our scores with great accuracy.

EA Team Shares Golfing Honours



We won! The EA golfers celebrate



Quentin Pereira gives it his best shot

A tropical downpour prevented the recently formed EA Golf Society from putting a final flourish to its successful first season in the Inter-Social Club Golf Tournament (ISCGT) when the fourth and final game in November was cancelled owing to bad weather.

But based on the previous games and points tallied, it was clear that the EA and Singapore Recreation Club were joint winners for the ISCGT Tournament 2014, with Serangoon Garden Country Club in third place.

The golfers celebrated their victory with a sumptuous dinner at Berlayer Terrace. EAGS convenor, Quentin Pereira, says: "It was a great end to the ISCGT tournament. We know what we need to work on and look forward to 2015. I thank all of the EAGS golfers. Without their dedication and discipline, this victory will not have been possible."

Invitation to Learn About National Health Programmes

The Ministry of Health (MOH) is currently conducting a series of dialogue sessions with grassroots organisations, led by Senior Minister of State for Health and Manpower, Dr Amy Khor.

The sessions aim to clarify to community leaders and members of the public how they can make the best use of MediShield Life, Community Health Assist, CHAS cards at polyclinics and specialist outpatient clinics in the public hospitals.

As a part of the publicity programme, the MOH is collaborating with The Eurasian Association for its next round of dialogues. The details are as follows:

Date: 30 May 2015

Time: 9 am to 12 pm

Venue: Eurasian Community House (Multi-Purpose Hall)
139 Ceylon Road, Singapore 429744

Light refreshments will be served.

For more information and to register, contact Mervyn at 6447 1578 or mervyn@eurasians.org

Golden Memories

EA stalwarts Edmund and Evelyn Rodrigues usually mark their wedding anniversary quietly at home each year, but for their latest one – their 50th – they enjoyed a big bash attended by family and friends from around the world.

Eve, whose maiden name is Leicester, has an English-Chinese ancestry, while Ed has a Portuguese-Eurasian background. The two former teachers are both avid readers and faithful participants at Read@EA, the EA's reading club. Eve says: "I also enjoy gardening and experimenting with new dishes and desserts." Ed enjoys music and is a keen composer.

Ed and Eve's involvement with the EA spans more than two decades. They were a part of the

team that revived the association in 1989 when Victor Olsen was at the helm. Ed recalls: "At the start, the association had an estimate of 200 members. Soon, the revitalised EA had more than 600 members with Burton Westerhout being the membership-drive leader." Eve has fond memories of standing outside the coffee shop near the church in Katong and asking people, "Are you a Eurasian?" If they said 'Yes', she would encourage them to join the EA and explain how it assists Eurasians in Singapore.

In earlier days, the EA did not have a permanent home and Ed remembers his time as EA secretary when he would turn up at condominium club houses for committee meetings that lasted well beyond 1am. He says: "My favourite memory



Ed and Eve Rodrigues: happy together after 50 years

is dancing at the Padang on National Day with the EA's very first high-profile public outing!"

Aware of the financial hardship faced by a number of Eurasians, the couple decided to redirect monetary gifts from guests to the FSS. The EA expresses sincere thanks to Ed and Eve for their generosity.

Winning Day at the Races

The EA was guaranteed a big win at the recent Longines Singapore Gold Cup at Kranji Race Course on 16 November – whichever jockey passed the finishing line first.

The race is the richest event in the Singapore domestic racing calendar with a history dating back to 1924, and President Tony Tan was guest of honour.

This year, the Singapore Turf Club, together with its parent organisation, the Tote Board, donated \$1.5 million to 25 selected organisations. The EA received \$65,000, which was presented to the association's 1st



Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Communications and Information

EA 1st Vice President Carla Barker (back row, second from right), at the ceremony with President Tony Tan Keng Yam and guests

Vice-President, Carla Barker. Carla says: "The President asked to speak to beneficiaries, and made time to speak to us individually. I think he remembered having lunch with us at EA, and was glad to be handing out a donation to us."

The EA expresses its sincere thanks to Singapore Turf Club and Tote Board for their generous donation.

A Centenary of Remembrance



Photo courtesy of British High Commission Singapore

Remembrance Sunday was held on November 9 at Kranji War Cemetery to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of World War 1.

The ceremony was organised by the British High Commission of Singapore in partnership with the Singapore Armed Forces Veterans' League. EA President Benett Theseira represented the EA and laid a wreath to pay respect to the many who gave their lives.

Festive Favourite Attracts Old and New

More than 70 EA members with their family and friends turned up ready to party at the EA Social Circle's annual Christmas Dinner and Dance on 20 December.

Gerard Danker multi-tasked as DJ, singer and MC and guests enjoyed Christmas cuisine prepared by Quentin's restaurant. After the dinner, it was time for games and dancing.

Impromptu guest artiste Nicholas Bulnar showcased his talent by joining Gerard to sing Christmas carols and some favourite oldies. And energetic octogenarian Helen Joseph stole the limelight when she performed two dramatic Indian dance acts with a young boy – bringing on laughter and admiring



All dressed up for festive fun

applause in equal measure. The party ended with a lucky ticket and card draw.

Social Circle chairperson Yvonne Pereira says: "I was overwhelmed to see many new members attending for the first time. Social

Circle members would like to express special thanks to Quentin and Kristine Pereira for their generous sponsorship of prizes, Daniel and Mervyn from the EA Secretariat for their invaluable assistance and to all others for making the event a resounding success."

A Night at the Oscars (Almost...)



More than 200 guests felt like A-list celebs walking down the red carpet at the EA's annual New Year's Eve Party, held at the Concorde Hotel.

The glamorous bash, on a red and gold theme dubbed 'Nite at the Oscars', began with cocktails and a welcome address by the EA's second Vice-President, Yvonne Pereira. An international buffet followed, with musical entertainment by Chris Lesslar and family, Zaggisman Batchelor, DeeJay, Bernard Jeremiah, Robert Fernando, Riem De Wolff and Gerard Danker & M.S.G.



The first prize winner of the lucky draw walked away with a fabulous three-night stay at Best Western Kuta Villa in Bali including flights. The EA expresses sincere thanks to sponsors, Concorde Hotel, Pernod Ricard Singapore, Best Western Indonesia, Dorothy Tessensohn, the Swan Family, Grand Park Orchard, ATOS Wellness, Work-Life Balance, Kevin Aeira, Mr and Mrs Suresh Menon and Mr and Mrs Quentin Pereira. Special thanks also to MCs Charlene Lee and Gerard Danker, who helped make the event memorable.

As midnight neared, Old Father Time (aka Peter Rodrigues) signalled that 2014 was coming to a close. Chanel Roberts, Chloe Roberts, Hazel Seah and Samantha Santa Maria danced on stage to herald the countdown. As midnight struck, photos were taken and the crowd danced on.

Curry and Quiz



Guests get their head around some Christmas trivia

It was a day to fill your stomach with food and your head with trivia when the EA Social Circle's annual lunch was combined with the monthly quiz.

Those attending enjoyed a buffet of Quentin's Eurasian cuisine and desserts contributed by the guests themselves before testing their knowledge of the names of Santa's reindeers, Christmas songs and which Singapore dollar bill has the theme of education on the back (it's the \$2 to save you looking). Guests exchanged Christmas gifts and there were prizes for the winners.

Santa's Eurasian Christmas



A delighted child receives a present from Santa and his helper, Santarina



The youngsters get in on the action at the Children's Christmas Treat

The ECH opened its doors to more than 60 children and their parents for the annual Family Christmas Carnival and Children's Christmas Treat. While the adults stayed on Level 1 to enjoy the festive food and entertainment, the children were ushered to the Multi-Purpose Hall for an afternoon of Christmas treats.

The afternoon started with a range of games before talented six-year old, Camille Lesslar, accompanied by musician dad Chris on the guitar, sang a couple of songs – including her own composition: *Shine Like a Star*. She says: "I practised for two hours every day with my father!"

MacDonald's plus popcorn were the perfect choice for hungry youngsters, who were then ready for entertainment from Reuben, Mark and their cast from the Amazing ToyBox. The afternoon would not have been complete without a visit from the most important man – Santa himself – who came strolling in with his helper Santarina at his side to distribute goodies and later a present to the excited children.

The Eurasian Association's Management Committee would like to thank SE CDC for their continuous sponsorship of the annual Christmas event, Focus Network Agencies (S) Pte Ltd for sponsorship of the goodie bags, and all volunteers for their invaluable assistance.

A Tribute to Singapore's Sports Pioneers



The advent of SG50 and recent opening of the new Sports Hub provided the perfect time and place for 'An Evening of Tribute for Sports Pioneers'. The event, held on 9 October and attended by guest of honour Mr Lawrence Wong, Minister for Community, Culture and Youth, provided an opportunity for the nation's sports pioneers – both players and administrators – for a big get-together.

Eurasians have been well represented in the nation's sporting history and the sports represented by those who attended included hockey, cricket, lawn bowling, boxing and athletics. The oldest Eurasian was Gerard Clarke, 96, who represented Singapore in hockey and cricket between 1939 and 1949.

EA's 2nd Vice President, Yvonne Pereira, a former Vice President of the Singapore Women's Hockey Association and Assistant Secretary in the Softball Association of Singapore, as well as a former national hockey player, says: "It was a nostalgic evening as I recognised so many other sports pioneers whom I hadn't seen in ages. It was memorable seeing my Women's Hockey Association's President, Mrs Tan Yoon Yin, whom I haven't had a chance to see in 30 years!"

Each of the pioneers received a plaque and a copy of *The Dream Lives On: The National Stadium Commemorative Book*.

Education Programmes for 2015

This year, the EA offers many educational initiatives for students from primary to tertiary ages, especially for disadvantaged students. Below is a table of EA Education Schemes 2015 and the application period

| S/N | Education Scheme | Level | Description | Quantum | Income Criteria | Application Period |
|-----|--|---|---|--|---|----------------------|
| 1. | Eurasian Community Fund [ECF] Education Awards | Primary, Secondary, Tertiary | A one-time monetary reward to students to encourage them to continue to study hard. | \$100 - \$300 | GHI \$3,000/PCI \$800 *Income criteria is only for Bursary Awards. Merit, Excellence and Distinction Awards do not have income criteria. | Apply by 30 June |
| 2. | Project Ray Of Hope | Primary, Secondary, Tertiary | Disbursement of Popular and Bata vouchers to purchase educational items to prepare for the next academic year. | \$250 - \$350 | GHI \$3,000/PCI \$800 | Apply by 30 June |
| 3. | Temasek Cares Education Bursary | Primary, Secondary, Junior College | Covers school fees, uniforms and books for one academic year to encourage students to study hard. | Pri: \$450 Sec: \$630 JC: \$675 For one academic year | PCI range: \$626 – \$1,000 *For students not under MOE FAS | Apply by 28 February |
| 4. | Coral De Cruz Memorial Fund | Secondary | Covers school fees, books, uniforms and transport for one academic year to encourage Secondary students to study hard. | \$1,200 For one academic year | GHI \$3,000/PCI \$800 | Apply by 28 February |
| 5. | Merit Bursary Award | ITE and Polytechnic (NP, NYP, RP, SP, TP) | Covers the full cost of tuition and book stipend for the full duration of the course to defray the cost of tertiary education. | Cap: ITE: \$3,500/year for a two-year course Poly: \$5,500/year for a three-year course | GHI \$3,000/PCI \$800 | Apply by 30 April |
| 6. | EA University Scholarship | University (NUS, NTU, SMU, UniSIM, SIT, SUTD) | Covers the full cost of tuition and book stipend for a three-year course to defray the cost of university education. | Cap: \$10,000 per year for a three-year course | GHI \$3,000/PCI \$800 | Apply by 30 April |
| 7. | Oscar George da Silva University Scholarship | University (NUS, NTU, SMU, UniSIM, SIT, SUTD) | Covers the full cost of tuition and book stipend for a three-year course to defray the cost of university education. | Cap: \$10,000 per academic year for a three-year course | GHI \$3,000/PCI \$800 | Apply by 30 April |
| 8. | Mr Carlisle E.W. & Mrs Helena Josephine de Souza Award | ITE, Junior College, Polytechnic, University | To be awarded to a student(s) who have shown determination and optimism in prevailing over difficulties and who have eventually excelled in their chosen field. | \$5000 Quantum per student will be decided by the Education Committee | GHI \$3,000/PCI \$800 | Apply by 30 April |
| 9. | Minnie Leicester-D’Rozario Award (for Literature in English at ‘O’ level) | Sec 4 ‘O’-level student | A one-time award for a Eurasian student(s) who attained A1 for Literature in English at the Secondary 4 ‘O’-level examination. | \$1,000 If there is more than one candidate, the quantum per student will be decided by the Education Committee | Nil | Apply by 30 April |

* GHI = Gross Household Income (Total monthly income of all working adults in the household), PCI = Per Capita Income (Total monthly income divided by the number of people in the household)

To apply, please contact Jacqueline at 6447 1578 or jacqueline@eurasians.org. Application forms can be obtained from the Secretariat office at level 3 of The Eurasian Association, 139 Ceylon Road, Singapore 429744 or from the EA website, www.eurasians.org.sg



Rewarding Education

Vice-Principal Joseph Stanley Peterson was awarded The Commendation Medal at the National Day Awards last year. A member of the EA's Education Committee for the last two years, he describes his mission to coax the best out of his students

Joseph Peterson started as a pupil at St Patrick's School in 1982 and in 2007 he returned there to teach. Since then he has worked his way up to vice-principal. He says that he loves his work and enjoys being able to guide the next generation: "I feel that it is my mission to help all my students, especially the weaker ones, to believe in themselves and in their abilities so that that can truly reach their potential."

In his experience as a teacher, Joseph believes firmly that patience is a virtue. "Not every child is ready for change and many need a reason to change their behaviour for the better. I have also learnt not to feel discouraged as it takes time for a child to change and mature," he says.

"I feel that it is my mission to help my students to believe in themselves and in their abilities"

Joseph joined the EA's Education Committee because he wanted to help the less fortunate Eurasian students. Having come from a family of modest means, he understands what it is like to grow up with financial constraints. "I was fortunate that my parents worked hard to provide for me and my brother and encouraged us to persevere in our studies," he

says, and believes that each student should be able to pursue their studies irrespective of their financial situation. He encourages everyone in the community to contribute in order to help as many needy children as possible to make the most of their education.

He describes his biggest achievement as helping his students to develop holistically and achieve their full potential: "It really makes me happy to know that I have made a difference in their lives," he says.

He urges Eurasians to be proud of their culture. "You don't have to be rich to make a difference. You just need to make time to help others. Volunteer at the EA and help us give back to the community!" he urges.

Hope for the Future

Students receive education vouchers at a ceremony at the ECH

More than 100 pupils from primary to tertiary levels received Popular and BATA store vouchers at the Project Ray of Hope ceremony on 28 November.

The vouchers, funded by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), are awarded to disadvantaged families to alleviate the cost of education, and can be used to purchase school books, stationery and other educational resources for the new school term starting in January.

The formal ceremony was transformed into a festive occasion this year as parents and students gathered for a night of fun, games and a meal provided by Quentin's restaurant – and a few stopped to offer their thoughts.



"I want to be a lawyer and once I grow up, I will volunteer at the EA and thank them for all they've done"

Mohd Feroz, 11 (pictured with his mother, Florence)



"I feel very grateful for receiving these vouchers. They are helpful as I can buy things for school. I am already planning to help children by providing them with tuition"

Esmeralda Crisanta, 16



"I did not expect to be selected to receive these vouchers. My message to all Eurasian youth is to keep looking forward and not to listen to negative remarks"

Cheyenne Holland, 18

"I enjoyed the Christmas gathering! It was different from the usual ceremony and helped to integrate guests of all ages"

Ari Storm van Huizen, 19



(Re)gaining Recognition

How does it feel to be identified as a foreigner by your fellow Singaporeans? That is the fate of an increasing number of Eurasians, who describe here the frustration of being considered an outsider in their own homeland



The Civilian War Memorial at the Padang representing the four races



Julia d'Silva believes that many older Eurasians feel that they have lost their once-respected position in society

Every Singaporean will be familiar with the Civilian War Memorial near the Padang in Beach Road, the affectionately named 'chopsticks' with its four pillars soaring into the sky and joining at the top. But how many realise that each pillar was designed to represent one of the four main races in Singapore: the Chinese, Malays, Indians – and Eurasians?

Today, many Eurasians are increasingly being mistaken for foreigners by their own compatriots, many of whom do not even understand the concept of a 'Eurasian', despite many local Eurasians being able to trace their ancestry to the first colonial settlers in Singapore. Some of the earliest recorded Eurasians in Singapore came as

early as the 1820s with Raffles and many are descendants of the first Portuguese settlers in Malaysia more than 500 years ago. Eurasians have played a leading role in much of the Singapore's history and progress.

Eurasians are officially recognised as one of the four ethnic groups in Singapore. So who are they? As the name suggests, they are descendants of a marital union between a European and an Asian. They are considered as a living testimony of the Europeans who arrived in Singapore between the 16th and 18th centuries. Most Eurasians in Singapore are able to trace their lineage back to the Portuguese, Dutch or British. The Asian component of their ancestry is usually derived from Chinese, Malays or Indians.

How do we decide who belongs to which race or nationality? Does it have to do with appearance, personality, speech or other traits? In an era of mixed-race marriages, multi-ethnicity is among us like never before. Recently, Joseph Schooling, a third-generation Singaporean Eurasian was mistaken for a foreigner. His father was interviewed by several media platforms and took the opportunity to explain who Eurasians are and how they have been an integral part of building the nation to what it is today. Indeed, Eurasians have a proud history in the sporting arena. On page 6, you can find out more about the nation's tribute to sports pioneers, in which many Eurasians were honoured. And Eurasians have played their part at the very top of Singapore society. Past president Dr Benjamin Sheares was Eurasian.

“There are several official documents that still categorises us as ‘Others’”

So why does this confusion prevail? For Eurasians and many other mixed-race families, identity is a complex matter played out in evolving cultural and political arenas. Julia d'Silva, 62, is a retired civil servant. She believes that many of the older Eurasians feel that they have lost their position in society as there is a lack of understanding of who Eurasians are. She says: “There are several official documents that still categorise us as ‘Others’. Aren't Eurasians supposed to be one of the four main ethnic groups in Singapore?” Moved by the furore around Joseph Schooling's identity, she penned a note on Facebook describing who Eurasians are, their culture and traditions. Her post, encouragingly, garnered much support.





Jerald Francisco: "Why must we be categorised as 'others'?"

Jerald Francisco, 18, is a student at Temasek Polytechnic and he shares similar views to Julia on this subject. He also questions: "Why must we be categorised as 'Others'?" He believes that in modern Singapore, many people have not heard of the term 'Eurasian' and that it is about time for the community to be recognised as one of the pioneering racial groups that contributed to the progress of Singapore. Jerald, himself, has been mistaken several times for a Filipino, Thai or Hispanic. Although he found it frustrating at the start, he now explains to others about the unique Eurasian culture.

Jerald, himself, has been mistaken several times for a Filipino, Thai or Hispanic

Although Julia and Jerald are from different generations, they both agree that the lack of understanding about Eurasians stems from the lack of education about Eurasians. Julia says: "They are not teaching children about Eurasians in schools today. Even some Eurasian youth do not realise what their culture constitutes. This has led to many feeling a sense of detachment towards their identity."

Although some Eurasians are frustrated by the lack of recognition, others take a more relaxed stance. Trampas Peter, 41, of Scottish-Portuguese descent, says that he has been mistaken for North Indian, Malay or Australian. During his younger days, he often thought negatively about those who questioned his race or nationality. Eventually, he learnt that in order to make a change, he had to accept some responsibility for educating them. "I learnt from my aunt that instead of criticising them, I should explain who a Eurasian is. It's easy and I like that we



Melissa de Silva uses her blog to spread the word about the Eurasian culture

have our own style of the English language, food and traditions that we can share with others," he says.

Although Trampas is enthusiastic about spreading the word about Eurasians, he has faced his fair share of mishaps. He recalls having his handphone knocked out of his hand and being verbally abused in a train by a man who thought he was a foreigner. Owing to the influx of foreign workers, Eurasians have become blurred with foreigners in people's minds. Trampas adds: "We appear foreign looking and are getting a severe backlash from the public. Let's showcase to everyone the positive traits of the Eurasian community and continue to have a positive outlook."

Approaching the problem of mistaken identity positively is critical – and a number of Eurasians suggest that the community itself can be a part of the solution.

Melissa De Silva is in her 30s and of Portuguese, Chinese and Indian descent. She has her own blog (<https://eurasiansg.wordpress.com>), which she says, "is my own space to express the Eurasian identity. I am



Faustina Francisco admits she'd like some Eurasian friends

sharing with others, who am I, one person at a time."

She comments: "During the colonial times, Eurasians lived together as a community, in enclaves like Waterloo Street and Selegie, and many even went to the same convent schools. With mass migration in the 1950s and 1960s, our numbers have dwindled." And with most of the Eurasian community scattered, many Eurasians no longer knew other Eurasians except for their own family and relatives. She recalls having a teacher named 'Dorothy Schooling' and points out: "If not for her, I will not know that Schooling was a Eurasian surname!"

Eleven-year-old Faustina Francisco, who attends Raffles Girls Primary, agrees with Melissa that many Eurasians do not have enough contact with one another. Although Faustina is proud to announce to others that she is Eurasian, she admits: "I don't have any Eurasian friends. It will



Trampas Peter was once attacked in a train by a man who thought he was a foreigner

be exciting to mingle with other Eurasians and learn more.”

The small Eurasian community is now expanding to include a new wave of Eurasians, whose ethnicity is the result of modern-day marriage to Europeans who have moved here to live and work. Jerald believes that many of the ‘new’ Eurasians identify themselves as ‘mixed’ rather than Eurasian, and he says that they will grow up with a new and completely different kind of Eurasian traditions, which they will assimilate from their parents.

“Let’s showcase to everyone the positive traits of the Eurasian community”

He says; “Today, my parents utilise words from the Portuguese creole, also known as Kristang. Many Eurasian youth today, and even some adults, might not even be aware of the Kristang language’s existence.”

With the Eurasian population shrinking, migration and the arrival of new immigrants and expatriates each year, is it possible that the Eurasian community, together with its culture and heritage, is being submerged by new faces and trends?

Helen Fernandez, 84, who arrived in Singapore before the war, is a modern senior citizen, who has regular contact with children and teenagers. She believes that although the Eurasian community is feeling the effects of new cultural trends arising from new interracial marriages, it is not only the Eurasian race that has been affected. “All races have evolved and will continue to evolve.” She asserts that

all races will continue to strengthen as long as people are able to impart their culture, heritage and traditions to the next generation. She advises: “Don’t throw your race away. Always remember to educate others, stay united and support the community.”

With evolving racial identities, what is the future of the Eurasian community in Singapore?

Melissa says that there are two possible futures: “The first one is very depressing: our community intermarries with other ethnicities and our culture gets diluted over time until a day where there are no ethnic Eurasians. The second is in line with Helen’s prediction that Eurasians will educate their children about their culture. “I believe that it’s one of the most important ways to ensure our traditions expand and grow,” says Melissa.

All the interviewees agreed that creating awareness about the Eurasian culture and heritage was vital.

Julia believes strongly that more could be achieved if the Eurasian Heritage Centre was relocated in a museum in town for greater exposure and accessibility and that it is little known as it is tucked away in Ceylon Road. Similarly, Eurasian heritage fests should be held in a central location. She also suggests: “To raise greater awareness of Singapore’s Eurasians, the EA should work with the MOE, NHB and NLB on ways to educate others about the Eurasian community and how it has contributed to the progress of Singapore.”

Trampas suggests creating a film about Eurasians. He says: “Singaporeans love movies! It will be exciting to watch a film

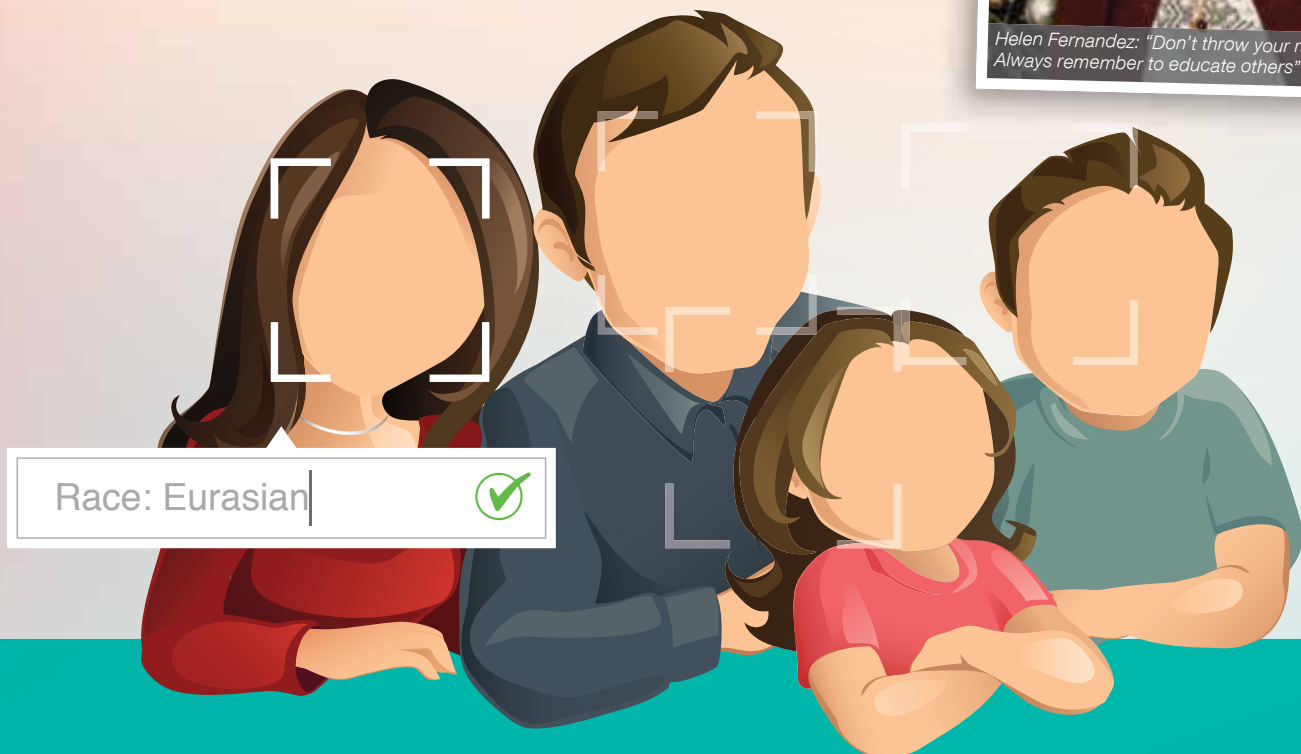
or television series about the Eurasian community in Singapore.” Julia agrees that such a TV series would be helpful. Jerald feels that awareness can be created when Eurasians participate in national events such as the Racial Harmony Day or National Day as they can then reach out to other ethnic groups and build new friendships.

Helen highlights that awareness can only be created if the younger generation is willing to step up. She asks: “Where are the Eurasian youth in Parliament?” She believes that there is a need for younger Eurasians to take on leadership roles and responsibilities and that they are critical to spreading the message about the Eurasian history, culture and heritage.

Melissa calls on Eurasians to seize the opportunity to explain to others who Eurasians are. She encourages the community to create awareness at an individual level. She says, “Speak up and be confident in sharing with others that we are Eurasians and proud to be one!”



Helen Fernandez: “Don’t throw your race away. Always remember to educate others”



Packed and Ready to Go

FSS volunteers turned a room full of groceries into a pile of festive food hampers for the needy



Christmas goodies for the hampers



Edmund Soh puts a festive decoration on the boxes

A packed day for Francesca Eber and Christine Pereira

The annual FSS Christmas hamper distribution is an exercise in logistics that results in dozens of disadvantaged families enjoying seasonal festive treats.

Seven FSS volunteers gathered on 17 December for the EA's annual Christmas hamper packing and spent more than three hours making up parcels of celebratory foods to be distributed to disadvantaged families in time for the Christmas celebrations. The hampers comprised more than 20 food items, including chocolates, candies, biscuits, cereals and more. Other volunteers then took more than two days to deliver the items to more than 80 beneficiaries.

Funds for the hampers are raised from the community, well-wishers and donors who support the hamper fund-raising each year.

Francesca Eber, who chairs the FSS committee and was among the volunteers says: "The FSS would particularly like would like to express our special thanks to Silent Donations, which donated 30 hampers."

Getting By (With a Little Help from Your Friends)

How the EA helped put the Batchelor family's lives back on track

There was a surprise in store for the FSS team during their annual Christmas party when the Batchelor family unexpectedly presented EA President Benett Theseira and the FSS Committee with a trophy and a letter. The letter expressed their heartfelt gratitude towards EA and the FSS Committee, who they believed had helped them overcome what had seemed like insurmountable problems.

After the party, Zaggisman Batchelor, who wrote the letter with his two children, explained more fully the family's circumstances and said: "It's not easy to find sincere people who genuinely want to help us move forward".

Zaggisman, 55, says that he suffers from a heart condition and arthritis. He was introduced to the EA team about a year ago by FSS committee member Ron Pereira, who is also a social worker at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, and his life has improved considerably since then. Ron referred him to Secretariat staff member Ram, who works in the FSS department, with whom he has since been liaising.



"I am very happy that my son has managed to get into Secondary school,"

In addition to his health problems, Zaggisman was also concerned about his son, who was struggling with his Primary Six subjects. "I spoke about it to Ram and soon after, Francesca [who chairs the FSS Committee] had recommended a tutor, Miss Fatimah for him. With her help, I am very happy that my son has managed to get into Secondary school," he says happily.

If you can make an online donation, visit: <http://www.eur Asians.org.sg/contributions/fundraising/>

Making a Song and Dance of Christmas



FSS recipients got into the Christmas spirit early at the EA's annual party

Clients of the EA's Family Support Services got into the festive spirit early when they attended the annual FSS Christmas Party on 7 December. More than 90 guests who are receiving aid from the EA joined in the celebrations while some 25 friends of the FSS, including 20 students from the International Singapore School, volunteered to assist with the event.

Guests enjoyed a meal sponsored by Quentin's restaurant and feasted on roast turkey ham, devil's curry, feng, achar, vegetables and bread pudding. MC Ron Pereira led the entertainment, which included an Indian dance performance by Sudesh Kumari, Christmas trivia by Edmund Rodrigues and songs by two FSS clients themselves: Zaggisman Batchelor and Kenneth Gomez. The afternoon continued with dancing and singing along to Christmas carols.

EA President Benett Theseira thanked the guests for allowing EA to spend time with them on during the festive season, and he also paid tribute to Francesca Eber, who chairs the FSS committee, donors, volunteers and all others for making it a successful event. He then picked out the four lucky draw winners, who walked away with hampers donated by Mr S R Nathan, and many others got to take the Christmas centre pieces. The party ended with every guest walking away with a devil's curry meal and goodie bags.



Fighting Spirit

Kirstie Gannaway's day job began to seem a tad unadventurous when she realised she could turn her talent for combat sports into a career



Kirstie Gannaway is a woman who can look after herself

Like many younger sisters, Kirstie looked up to her brother, Nick, as a role model. So when she saw him competing in boxing matches – and dominating his opponents in the ring – she wanted to be able to do the same. While many young girls would have left the wish as an unfulfilled fantasy, at the age of 15 Kirstie took up the sport herself.

After boxing came Muay Thai, to which she added Brazilian jiu-jitsu and MMA (mixed martial arts).

She joined Evolve MMA as a student and her determination and skills soon earned her a trial with the professional Evolve Fight Team, resulting in her becoming only the second female MMA fighter in history to receive an invitation to join what is Asia's most decorated professional fight team.

She was also signed by ONE FC after a five day try-out. And on 7 November at the Singapore Indoor Stadium, the 23-year-old made her victorious debut at ONE FC: Battle of Lions

against Malaysia's Adek Omar. Emerging as the winner, says Kirstie, was "definitely one of the biggest achievements of mine to date".

She decided to jettison her fledgling career as a graphic artist to work as an assistant instructor at Evolve Mixed Martial Arts.

“You have to fail a lot in order to succeed”

She says: "Training in any martial art will undoubtedly challenge your physical and mental abilities." Through intense training, she has learnt to overcome negative thinking and motivate herself. She believes that feeling fit and strong give one a stronger sense of confidence.

"The greatest challenge that you will face learning MMA is that you have to fail a lot in order to succeed," she says. "Go with an open mind, positive attitude and respect. If you persist, you will reach your goals."

High Pointes and Low Points

Eurasian ballerina Alison Carroll fought off injury to resume her career and is currently rehearsing for her next role in *Sleeping Beauty*

Alison Carroll took her first ballet steps as a four-year-old toddler in Gibraltar, where she was born, before moving with her Singaporean Chinese mother and British father to Singapore when she was six.

Before each performance, Alison eats a banana: "It helps me to calm down"

She trained at the Singapore Ballet Academy, eventually joining the Singapore Dance Theatre four years ago at the age of 22. Alison believes that "ballet is an art form that looks effortless and beautiful, but behind that beauty is years of hard work and dedication by the dancer."

Shortly after joining the SDT, she had to have a bone spur surgically removed from her ankle, which created immense challenges – both physical and mental – in attempting to resume her career. Through discipline and practice, she made a successful recovery.

She admits that she is lucky to be living at home: "A lot of the dancers are foreigners and do not get to see their families often," she says.

Artists and sportspeople are often known to have rituals that help them. Before each performance, Alison ensures that she eats a banana. "For some reason it always helps me to calm down," she laughs. "And I believe that it gives me energy." She is also very particular about her ballet shoe



Alison Carroll and Etienne Ferrère in *Chant* by Val Caniparoli

ribbons, which have to be very neat. She says, "I usually use hairspray on my ribbons or sew them so that they don't come loose!"

Sleeping Beauty is being performed from 12 to 15 March at the Esplanade Theatre.



In at the Deep End

Behind the smiling photographs of teenager Joseph Schooling being presented with yet another swimming medal is a young man with a steely determination to reach the top of his career

Joseph Schooling has been featured frequently in the news lately – most often punching the air at the end of a swimming pool or standing on a podium as he notches up yet another triumph in his sporting career. This has been an exceptional year for the poster boy of Singapore swimming as the new national record time of 51.69 seconds he set for the 100 metres Butterfly at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland was surpassed at the recent Asian Games in Incheon, Korea, when he broke the 100 metres Butterfly record and ended Singapore’s 32 year wait for a men’s swimming gold.

Joseph says: “I have many people to thank for the achievement: my grand-uncle, Lloyd Valberg, who encouraged me to do well in all my undertakings; my parents for believing in me; and my coaches for training me, both psychologically and physically all these years.”

Joseph’s father had set times in various events as goals for him to achieve annually from the age of six years old. The times were achievable provided Joseph was disciplined and determined – and he did achieve them. His love of swimming grew daily and by the age of five, he was already competing. Now, the Olympics are within his grasp. He says: “I realised that the Olympic Games were a possibility for me when I qualified for the London Olympics 2012 at the SEA Games in 2011”. He describes a medal at the Olympics as the ultimate achievement for every athlete.

But it comes at a price. Having been living and training in Florida, USA since 2009, the 19-year-old enrolled last September at the University of Texas at Austin in preparation to enter Business School next year to major in Banking and Finance. He has perfected time management to allow him to fit in both studies and training. His working day starts at 6am for an hour and a half’s practice. Then it’s time for lectures. At about 2pm, he starts with dry land practices and continues training

until 5pm, after which it’s back to the academic studies. He says: “Every day there are younger swimmers who are getting better and faster. I have to train hard and smart to improve consistently”.

He has come under fire from critics in Singapore who claimed that he does not appear truly Singaporean and many people mistake him for being foreign. It is a measure of his composure that the third-generation Singaporean Eurasian simply laughs and points out that he is a true mixture of cultures. To set the record straight: his paternal great-grandfather was of English and German descent and his paternal great-grandmother was Eurasian of Portuguese descent; his maternal great grandparents were of Dutch and German descent and his paternal grandparents were Eurasians. “He says: “My father is Eurasian and my mother is Chinese – it can be confusing for many!”

“Success is a journey. Start with the first step and keep climbing up the stairs”

He has accepted that he is often considered a foreigner and believes that a lot of Singaporeans are unaware of the Eurasian culture and heritage. But he adds: “To keep the Eurasian culture alive, we must create awareness programmes for fellow Singaporeans and expose them to it. We need to reinforce that Eurasians are one of the four main racial groups in Singapore.”

He recalls his father telling him that many of our Eurasian forefathers were great athletes and role models on and off the track, the pool and the field.

He has learned that “success is a journey; not the destination. To get there, there is no elevator. Start with the first step and keep climbing up the stairs”.

Currently, Joseph is training hard for the SEA Games 2015, hosted by Singapore in June. His plan for the following year (2016) is to stand on the podium at the Rio Olympics with a medal round his neck.

17th Asian Games
INCHEON 2014

All photos courtesy of
Sport Singapore

The Truth about Bahau

Fiona Hodgkins talks about how she came to write her new book, *From Syonan To Fuji-Go*, the story of hardship in the Malayan jungle for 3,000 Singaporeans during the Japanese Occupation

When Fiona Hodgkins was small, she and her sister would enjoy the stories their Eurasian mother would tell of her childhood. “My mother used to tell us stories of her living in the jungle; of elephants needing to scratch their backs and rubbing against houses, which fell down.” The light-hearted stories delighted Fiona, and she had no idea of the seriousness that those stories represented.

“The most exciting part was meeting people that I had read about elsewhere. It made my research come alive”

Fiona, who was born in Japan to a British father and a Eurasian mother and now lives in Singapore, developed a keen interest in social history and when her mother died, she felt the need to find out more about her ancestry to educate her three children.

In 2008, Fiona was taken to the Eurasian Community House for the first time and the dark truth about Bahau and its place in World War II as a so-called refuge for Singapore’s Eurasians began to emerge. Her mother’s death prompted her to research her ancestry for her own children.

It was far from being the enchanting place that her mother had remembered and described to her young daughters. Fiona heard stories that in order to alleviate the food shortages in Singapore, the Japanese had touted the settlement as a pleasant and idyllic setting. However, the place was malaria-infested and could not sustain farming. People resorted to eating snails and their pets to survive. Fiona was inspired to research Bahau and started writing the book, *From Syonan To Fuji-Go*. The book, which took nearly six



Fiona Hodgkins



years to write, describes the hardship faced by the people sent to Bahau during the Japanese Occupation. Soon, she came to realise its significance to the social history of Singapore.

She unearthed information from places such as people’s memoirs and articles from the *Syonan Shimbun*, an English newspaper run by the Japanese. She visited several countries to interview people. She recalls: “The most exciting part was meeting people that I had read about elsewhere. It made my research come alive.”

As she wrote the book, she realised that the story was not accessible to children. She developed the idea of a version for children, which she has called *Voices Under the Rising Sun*. Both books were launched on 15 October. In addition, the flag raised by Force 136 when the camp was liberated in 1945 was ceremonially presented at the event to EA President Benett Theseira and the National Museum.

Colourful Reflections

St Joseph’s Church has restored its beautiful stained glass windows

St Joseph’s Church in Victoria Street – built by the Portuguese Mission in to serve Portuguese and Eurasian Catholics in Singapore – recently celebrated the restoration of 72 panels of stained glass. The current church was built in 1904 and was completed building in 1912.

The ceremony, on 29 November, was attended by Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, Mr Lawrence Wong. Worshippers at the church, which was gazetted as a national monument in 2005, still practise many Portuguese Catholic traditions.

Professor (Dr) James Newton Boss, who headed the restoration committee, says: “There are more than 4,000 square feet of stained glass. That’s the largest collection of stained glass in Singapore and it’s commonly referred to as the Crown Jewel of the church.”

Professor (Dr) Boss has been involved with the church for more than 50 years and is passionate about the building. He says the decision to restore the glass was made in 2012 when he started to notice wear and tear and that many of the images were fading. “It was bound to happen. The glasses were over 100 years old,” he says. Restoration work began

that year and a team of about 15 attempted to salvage every piece of glass.

Most of the stained glass panels came from Belgium, while those at the baptismal front came from Milan, Italy. Some were donated by Eurasians, including Francis H Lennard, LJ Shepherdson, Josefina Shepherdson, WF Mosbergen, Harriet A Mosbergen and Suzan Rodrigues. Some of their descendants attended the inauguration ceremony.

The amazing artistry has already caught the eyes of many visitors, from regular worshippers to tourists. Professor (Dr) Boss says: “Our Facebook page is flooded with congratulatory messages! It is indeed a proud moment for everyone involved in the restoration project.”

The Road to Equality

Tessensohn Road, which runs parallel to Serangoon Road, featured recently on TV's *My Grandfather's Road* and is named after John Edwin Tessensohn, an enlightened thinker who campaigned for a better quality of life for the local population under colonial rule and helped to establish the Eurasian Association. His great granddaughters, Denyse Tessensohn and Francesca Eber, talk to *The NewEurasian* about his proud legacy

John Edwin Tessensohn, better known as Edwin Tessensohn, was born in Malacca. His first language was Kristang, the language commonly spoken by a people of mixed Portuguese and Asian ancestry. At a young age, he moved to Singapore with his mother and joined St Joseph's Institution, from which he graduated in 1872. In 1874, he joined the Singapore Volunteer Corp, eager to contribute to society. His exemplary community service earned wide respect and eventually led to one of his most outstanding achievements: his appointment as the first Eurasian on the first Legislative Councillor in the Straits Settlements.

Denyse Tessensohn says that under colonial rule, there were different standards for the locals and the British with a firm colour bar in place. She says: "My great-grandfather was among those who realised that only British people or those of 'pure European descent' could hope for employment at all or beyond a certain level. There was definitely

a bar against Eurasians, Chinese, Malays and Indians."

The fight for equality had begun. Denyse says: "A group of Eurasian men gathered to ask the colonial government if they could establish a small pavilion at the opposite end of the Padang from the Singapore Cricket Club (which Eurasians could not enter)." The Eurasian group succeeded and the place is now called The Singapore Recreation Club. Edwin led the SRC as its president for 25 years.

Apart from the SRC, Edwin initiated the Eurasian Literary Association. Denyse says: "In those days, there were not many cultural opportunities for the local people. Suddenly, the women had a place to share information and be a part of the community. They engaged in creative activities such as playing music and even dancing. It was there where Eurasians started lending a helping hand to each other". The Eurasian Association was born of this initiative.



Francesca Eber (second from right) with other descendants of Edwin Tessensohn

Denyse Tessensohn

“In colonial times, only British people or those of pure European descent could hope for employment at all or beyond a certain level”

EA management committee member Francesca Eber says it was her great grandfather's example that inspired her to volunteer at the EA. Her cousin, Kenneth Eber was president of the association at the time and she began volunteering in the Education Committee.

She says: "Volunteering has always been a part of my life." She joined the EA's Family Support Services more than a decade ago and chairs the committee.



The unveiling of the restoration plaque: (from left to right) Director of Preservation of Sites and Monuments, Ms Jean Wee; CEO of National Heritage Board, Mrs Rosa Daniel; Dr James Boss; Minister for Culture Community and Youth Lawrence Wong; parish priest Fr Ignatius Yeo and Monsignor Philip Heng, SJ

To find out more about St Joseph's Church, copies of James Newton Boss's book, *The Portuguese Mission* can be purchased at EA, priced \$20.

Sharing the Eurasian Culture

EA members travelled around the island to share their talents and traditions with Singapore's other races



The EA's youth dancers at Joo Chiat Community Centre

Eurasians took to the road recently to spread the word about their culture. The initiative, spearheaded by the EA Heritage Sub-Committee, included setting up a number of booths throughout the island to create awareness about Eurasian traditions and heritage.

Among the events were a performance at the People's Association's One Community Fiesta, at which National Development Minister, Mr Khaw Boon Wan, was guest of honour and a talk about Eurasian history, traditions and the meaning of Christmas, together with a Eurasian dance performance on 27 December, as part of the 'Lighter Side of History' programme held at the National Museum.

Guard of Honour

Edmund Twohill combines his job in the military with a wide range of youth volunteer work



Edmund (left) prepares for ceremonial duties on SAF Day 2014

Edmund Twohill is a Guards officer in the Singapore Armed Forces. The 30-year-old joined the SAF in 2003, has been a commander and instructor, and is now a staff officer in the Army Plans Department. He is also part of the Honorary Aide De Camp (HADAC) Corp, which performs ceremonial duties and supports the events of the President of the Republic of Singapore. In addition, he is passionate about youth volunteer work. He serves as a SAF national education facilitator for Kranji Secondary School. He also regularly does volunteer work with the National Youth Council. He is currently on the Advisory Panel for the National Youth Council Academy and is part of the INSPIRIT group, a community of young adult leaders who advocate youth interests on national and community issues.

Edmund is married to Melissa and they have a one-year-old son, Nathaniel. Edmund tells *The New Eurasian* about his experiences on the various youth causes that he has championed.

Describe yourself in three words.

Loyal. Professional. Inquisitive.

Tell us more about the University Scholars Programme and its benefits?

While in NUS, I was proud to be a part of the University Scholars Programme. It is a multi-disciplinary programme for NUS students. It admits around 180 students each year and has an average of 800 students. The modules are incredibly interesting and intellectually stimulating. There was also plenty of opportunity to get involved in projects and travel.

Through USP, I helped to organise a forum for ASEAN University students and spent a month travelling to Hong Kong and Beijing. It was an opportunity to better understand the economic, political and social systems present in these two cities. I also had the chance to visit Harvard and be a delegate at the IMF-World Bank meetings held in Singapore in 2006.

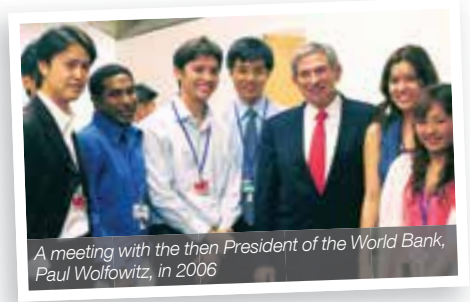
“Being involved in community projects helps young people to grow as an individual and become a better person.”

You were a co-founder of the United Nations Youth Association (Singapore). Tell us more about that.

It was an opportunity for me to work with my sister, Natalya, who is very passionate about humanitarian projects and community issues. It was also a splendid chance to better understand how the UN works and motivate other youth to get involved.

Tell us about the youth projects that you've been involved in?

My first youth project was a youth expedition project to India at the end of 2005. I was a part of a group of 10 young adults and we went to Calcutta to help a home that housed young girls who were previously abused or abandoned by their families. Most of them had no formal education as their families



A meeting with the then President of the World Bank, Paul Wolfowitz, in 2006



Edmund with Melissa and Nathaniel

were very poor or had married at a young age and were subsequently abandoned by their husbands.

As a part of the project, we helped to refurbish their computer room and taught the girls basic English and computer skills. The two weeks opened my eyes to the plight of young women and girls in this part of India. I liked that the project was sustainable from the onset as we did not have a one-off impact on the girls but groups were sent continuously to the same place to carry on from where the previous group had left off.

However, the most memorable project was the Go-Global Business Case Competition. It was a project I did with my team after we attended the National Youth Forum in 2006. It was an opportunity for secondary school students to work together with other youths from different educational backgrounds and cultures while getting all of them interested in entrepreneurship.

Why would you encourage other young people to play an active role in tackling global issues such as poverty and inequality?

It's not only about global issues. I also encourage them to take an active interest in the local community and national issues. Being involved in such projects will help them to grow as an individual and become a better person. Such community projects will keep young people grounded. Always be willing to sacrifice effort and time to make someone else a better person and the community a better place.

Bright and Early

Choosing a child’s pre-school is one of the most important decisions a parent has to make. Educationalist and entrepreneur Christopher Pereira has spent his career helping to get youngsters off to a flying start

Dr Christopher Pereira says that early childhood has become a prominent item on the government’s agenda and that policymakers have introduced a number of improvements to give toddlers a good start in life. These include hands-on, interactive workshops in which early childhood professionals can share their expertise and have discussions with parents; and the MOE has been developing its Nurturing Early Learners (NELS), a comprehensive tool kit for educators who are responsible for nurturing and developing children aged four to six years.

But he believes that it will need the community to get behind the idea that children’s earliest years are among the most important in their lives.

“A good early childhood education will prepare children not only for their primary years of academic life but transform them into successful citizens of the future and this cannot be achieved in isolation,” he says.

Dr Pereira should know. He has more than 20 years of experience in the education field, both in schools, universities and training consultancies, and is the founder and executive director of United World Preschool.



A welcoming environment in which to work and play



Dr Pereira with his daughter



Motor skills! Playing with cars teaches vital co-ordination skills

He believes that while parents should be given the freedom to make decisions about their child, he also feels a sense of responsibility to ensure that they are well informed about the needs of their child during the early years.

“During a child’s first five years the brain undergoes its most dramatic growth”

“The first five years create the foundation for the child to achieve key developmental advances in mind and body. It is during these years that the brain undergoes its most dramatic growth,” he says. In a pre-school setting, parents will be able to see their child’s language blossom, basic motor skills advance and social and emotional development that will enable their child to begin to understand their own feelings and those of others. Dr Pereira says: “Without the proper guidance at this young age, children can catch up to some extent, but hardly ever to the full extent.”

Before they enrol their toddlers for United World Preschool, Dr Pereira ensures that parents are provided with accurate advice on how to best prepare their child for the first days at his schools. He urges them to trust that the child will be treated with care and love and receive the best education. Equally important, he says, is to share this confidence with the child. If a parent is anxious about being separated from the child, the child will sense this and it could lead to him or her taking longer to adapt to the school routine. He adds that parents should advise the teacher of the child’s routines and habits to assist a smoother transition from home to school.

Parents often fret about not having sufficient communication with the teachers. Dr Pereira’s answer is to ensure that that regular feedback is provided through daily communication books, phone calls or simply casual meetings when dropping off or collecting the child.

Choosing a Pre-school



At this time of year, many parents will be thinking of choosing a school for their child. Here are some tips from Dr Pereira before enrolling your child into pre-school.

- Location – ensure that it’s convenient and easily accessible
- Research! Get referrals from other parents
- Visit the preschool with your child and observe his or her reactions
- Observe the classroom environment and experience the personalities of the teachers and their approaches
- It is important for you to love the preschool and feel accepted. If you lack confidence, the child might pick up on your concerns and feel apprehensive



Dr Christopher Pereira (wearing tie) with a group of Vietnamese teachers



NUS ALUMNI EURASIAN FESTIVAL

11 April 2015, 11am - 3pm

Venue: **Shaw Foundation Alumni House**

Address: **11 Kent Ridge Drive, Singapore 119244**



The NUS Alumni Eurasian Festival is a collaboration between the NUS Eurasian Alumni Group, The Eurasian Association and the NUS Office of Alumni Relations. It will be an afternoon of excitement and fun where **East meets West and the past meets the present.**

(Please note that this event is only open to NUS Eurasian alumni)



**BRING YOUR FAMILY AND JOIN US FOR THE
INAUGURAL GATHERING AT THE NUS ALUMNI EURASIAN FESTIVAL!**

HIGHLIGHTS

- Exhilarating music and dance performances by up and coming Eurasian talents.
- Find out more about our Eurasian culture and history by taking a tour of the Eurasian heritage and cultural exhibition.
- A delicious buffet including Eurasian cuisine and pastries complete with recipes.
- An intriguing talk about family roots and games created especially for children.
- Photo Corner - Take photographs with your family and embrace your Eurasian identity.

For more information or to register, please contact
Mr Kevin Shepherdson or Dr Leroy McCully at
eurasianfest@alummail.nus.edu.sg

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