

STANDING

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TIME



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF THE  
EURASIAN ASSOCIATION, SINGAPORE



Standing *the* Test of Time

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# STANDING *the* TEST *of* TIME

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CELEBRATING 100 YEARS  
OF THE EURASIAN ASSOCIATION,  
SINGAPORE



Straits Times Press



## MESSAGE



**Mr S. Iswaran**  
**Minister for Transport,**  
**Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations, and**  
**Minister representing Eurasians in the Cabinet**

Picture: Courtesy of Ministry of Transport

The story of Singapore's Eurasian community is the story of Singapore — an island where immigrants of different origins and cultures converged to build a better life and a sovereign nation. Our Eurasian community is quintessentially Singaporean, the embodiment of a diverse heritage that is integral to the vibrant tapestry of our society.

Though small in number, Eurasians have left an indelible mark on many aspects of Singapore life. So it is fitting that as we commemorated Singapore's bicentennial, we also recognised the significant contributions of the Eurasian community to the growth and development of Singapore.

In 1916, Edwin Tessensohn served as the Municipal Commissioner, and he was the first Eurasian nominated to the Legislative Council. Many Eurasians have distinguished themselves in the government, the civil service, the arts, culture, sports and medicine. Dr Benjamin Sheares, Edmund Barker, Stanley Stewart, George Bogaars, Alice Pennefather, Lloyd Valberg, Professor Ernest Monteiro, Jeremy Monteiro, Rex Shelley and Joseph Schooling are part of that illustrious tradition.

Over the years, the Eurasian Association, Singapore (EA) has played a central role in preserving the community's history and traditions. The revamp of the Eurasian Heritage Gallery, formerly the Eurasian Heritage Centre, is one such effort. The EA has also endeavoured to reach out to the youth and the wider community to preserve the rich history, memories and culture of the community, through many cultural festivals, language classes, exhibitions and literary pursuits inspired by Eurasian traditions.

In February 2017, I had the privilege of launching the expanded edition of the book, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*, which recorded the history of the EA since it became a self-help group in 1994. It epitomises the resilient spirit of the community, uplifting its members through efforts such as the EA's Family Support Services, welfare programmes and educational schemes, which have supported many needy families, single parents, youth and elderly people.

We live in extraordinary times with unprecedented challenges and opportunities. Be it globalisation, the rapid advancement of digital technology, or a global pandemic — these and other forces have profoundly affected — and will continue to affect — the way we live, work and play as a society.

Our shared past, common destiny and abiding values will help us navigate these vicissitudes of the present and the future. I am confident that with diverse talent and deep cultural roots, Eurasians will continue to thrive in this future. I look forward to the contributions of our Eurasian community as we write the next chapter of the Singapore Story together.

## FOREWORD



**Mr Herman R. Hochstadt**  
Patron,  
The Eurasian Association, Singapore

Picture: Eurasian Association

In 2019, the Eurasian Association, Singapore (EA) celebrated its 100th year. It is significant that the EA came to be in 1919, soon after World War I (1914–1918). In its aftermath, the Eurasian of Singapore had seriously begun to question who he was and his rightful place in British colonial Singapore. Hence the EA came into being: to claim a rightful place for Eurasians as Eurasians in the Singapore of that time.

The quest for identity continued even while the Singapore Eurasian took to enthusiastically volunteering for and in a Eurasian contingent of the Singapore Volunteer Corps, whose members did see active service in the defence of British colonial Singapore against the Japanese imperial army during World War II (1939–1945). Many were taken as prisoners of war and after a spell at Changi Prison, were sent to work on the Siam–Burma Death Railway, where a number perished.

Malaya's independence from the British colonial yoke in 1957, followed in 1959 by the establishment of the State of Singapore with a fully elected legislature and internal self-government, led to the Singapore Eurasian's renewed questioning of his identity and rightful place in the new state. The EA did nothing to quell those fears, which fuelled significant migration of Singapore Eurasians, mainly to Australia.

But the government of the State of Singapore, which became a constituent state of Malaysia in 1963, and that of the sovereign Republic of Singapore post 1965 gave the Singapore Eurasian an assurance of his identity and rightful place in Singapore. English, which most Singapore Eurasians considered to be their home and working language, was proclaimed the official working language of Singapore and gave the Singapore Eurasian much comfort.

Furthermore, in 1990, a place for the Singapore Eurasian in the larger Singapore community was officially assured, with the inclusion of 'Eurasian' as an official classification amongst the 'Chinese', 'Malay', 'Indian' categories, rather than the subsuming of 'Eurasian' under 'Others', as had hitherto been the case.

The EA came of age in 1994, when it was endowed with a government-sponsored role as a self-help group for Singapore Eurasians, joining the likes of the Chinese Development Assistance Council for the Chinese, Yayasan MENDAKI for the Malays, and the Singapore Indian Development Association for the Indians.

At the same time, the EA continued performing its traditional role as an association, primarily for the promotion of cultural and social activities for the Singapore Eurasian by the Singapore Eurasian.

Now, in the dawn of the new century in its life, the EA is taking on an additional new role in and for the wider community of Singapore — the "promotion of and participation in activities with youth of different racial, religious, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds getting together to embark on initiatives to bridge communities and foster greater understanding to bring about a spirit of oneness". In this, the Singapore Eurasian could make a unique and significant contribution. For within the DNA of the Eurasian community lie elements of almost every race and religion in the wider Singapore community, rendering the Singapore Eurasian well placed to be the most effective and at the fore in that role.

## PREFACE



**Mr Benett Theseira**  
Chairman,  
EA Centennial Book Committee, and  
President (2012–2018),  
The Eurasian Association, Singapore

Picture: Courtesy of Benett Theseira

*Standing the Test of Time: Celebrating 100 years of The Eurasian Association, Singapore* concludes a series of events and initiatives to celebrate the Eurasian Association, Singapore's (EA's) centenary in 2019. It also commemorates the efforts of many community leaders, volunteers and donors who have helped to sustain and grow the EA over the years.

The book provides an insight into the history of the EA, which was established in July 1919 to serve the social, education and welfare needs of Eurasians in Singapore as well as to provide a voice for the community. The EA successfully advocated for representation on the Straits Settlements Legislative Council, with the appointment of Mr Edwin Tessensohn (EA pro-temp President 1919), and on the Municipal Commission, which oversaw urban affairs in Singapore. The EA also called on Eurasians to join the 'D' Company of the Singapore Volunteer Corps, which contributed to Singapore's internal security and defence. This tradition of national service resulted in many Eurasians playing a significant role in Singapore's transition to independence, helming prominent positions in the government, civil service, armed forces and police in the 1960s and 1970s.

The notion of community self-help, particularly in the areas of welfare and education, has been a central tenet of the EA from its inception. During the Great Depression of the 1930s and even World War II, the EA provided education assistance for children and support for needy Eurasians. Since the late 1980s, initiatives in Education, Family Support Services and Community Development have expanded substantially. The EA's long-term future and ability to drive community support programmes were significantly boosted by the revitalisation of EA, driven by the Spirit of '89 team led by Mr Victor Olsen (EA President 1989–1991), and its landmark appointment as the Self-Help Group for Eurasians in 1994. This major milestone, together with the launch of the Eurasian Community Fund (ECF) in 1995, was the culmination of efforts led by Mr Timothy de Souza (EA President 1991–2000) and his team, with the support of Mr E. W. Barker (former Cabinet Minister and EA Patron 1992–2001), and Mr George Yeo, the Minister representing Eurasians in the Cabinet (1992–2011).

The roles of the EA in supporting and representing the Eurasian community continue 100 years on. Today, it supports numerous youth with its Education programmes and many elderly and disadvantaged members of the community with its Family Support programmes. Its Community Development initiatives help to strengthen community ties, promote inter-racial and inter-religious harmony, foster collaboration with other community organisations, and provide for Eurasian participation in various national forums and programmes. By actively contributing to the broader Singapore society, the EA has also been the beneficiary of support from various public agencies and the government.

Congratulations to the EA for reaching its centennial. Sustaining a volunteer-led organisation for over 100 years is no easy task. The EA has come a long way thanks to the commitment, passion and hard work of the very many who have served in the Management Committee and other EA units, volunteered in various programmes and projects, and supported the EA with donations and in many other ways. The EA will need to continue evolving to meet the needs of and remain relevant to the Eurasian community and Singapore as a whole. I hope the EA's journey and the contributions of many Eurasians over the last 100 years will inspire all of us to come together to help steer the EA successfully to the next centenary.



## INTRODUCTION

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The Eurasian Association, Singapore (EA) celebrated 100 years of service to the community in 2019. Its centennial fell in the same year as Singapore's bicentennial commemoration. It is a fortuitous and timely opportunity to look back and reflect on the EA's role as one of the island's early community organisations, and the footprints the EA has left in the sands of Singapore's history, having journeyed with the 200-year-old Eurasian community for a century.

As Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noted in his speech at the launch of the Singapore Bicentennial in January 2019, much of early Singapore was carved by the hands of the nation's forefathers who replaced jungles with nutmeg, gambier, and rubber plantations, slaved at the quayside, and dived into import and export businesses. In the hope of a brighter future for their children, they strove to improve their lives, forming communities and organising themselves to help one another. They also went on to build schools, hospitals and places of worship.

The EA, for instance, was set up in July 1919 by pioneer Eurasians who, while working to support themselves and their families, also desired to build a brighter future for their children. The organisation's objectives, enunciated in its first constitution, included the promotion of Eurasians' political, economic, social, moral, physical and intellectual advancement; promoting an active interest in the affairs of Malaya; and looking after the interest of all Eurasian-British subjects.

The EA was one of many ethnic associations, such as the dialect-based Chinese clans, which were established in Singapore to provide mutual support and community leadership at a time when such a system was lacking.

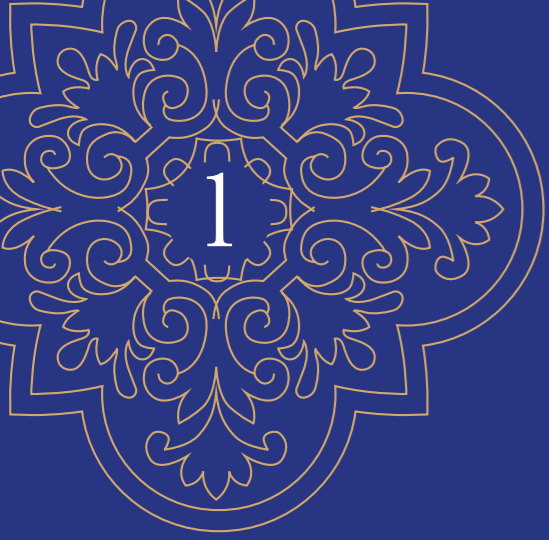
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There were also welfare bodies to take care of the poor and underprivileged. Among them were the Sree Narayana Mission and the Catholic Welfare Services. Also formed in early Singapore were the Angkatan Sasterawan '50, and Nam Hwa Opera — cultural groups which keep alive the heritage of ancient civilisations.

In his January 2019 speech, PM Lee noted that many of these institutions, like the EA, did good work, grew in prestige and standing, and became rallying points and sources of strength for the community.

The EA has evolved from an advocacy group, which among other things, pressed the colonial authorities for more recognition, to a full-fledged welfare organisation during World War II. Sometime after 1965, its objectives were revised to promote an active interest in Singapore's affairs. This took place again in 1994 after the association was invited to be part of the Singapore Government's Self-Help Group system, allowing it to act on behalf of the Eurasian community in Singapore. At the same time, the EA was awarded the Institution of Public Character status. Over the decades, the EA has also worked to retain Eurasian culture and promote its heritage for community development.

The EA is a true blue Singaporean organisation in its constant striving to always do better and surpass itself. As the glue of Singapore's Eurasians, it fosters a true sense of community, where bonds are strengthened over shared values and common beliefs. In the course of 100 years, the association has survived difficult times but has returned stronger and with a clearer vision and purpose. This book examines the journey the organisation took to get there and the inroads it has made.



.....  
*The First*

**70** Years

Eurasians are people who have both European and Asian ancestry. In the Singapore Census of Population 2010, there were 15,581 Eurasian residents. Most of Singapore's Eurasians are the hybrid product of European migration and colonisation of Asia which started in the 15th century. Europeans were drawn to Asia for trade, transforming Southeast Asia into one of the major crossroads of the world. As Dr Myrna Braga-Blake wrote in *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*: "The story of the origins of Eurasians... embraces the saga of European interests in all of Asia, the history of movement from one Asian country to another and changes in social norms over several centuries. It is the stuff of novels."

For many Singaporean Eurasians, their paternal European lineage would be primarily Portuguese, Dutch and British, while their maternal Asian lineage would be largely Malay, Indian, and Chinese, as well as Thai, Burmese and Indonesian. These combinations of ancestries reflected the European strategy to establish and control ports across Asia from the 15th century onwards.

The Portuguese were among the earliest Europeans to arrive in Asia, making first

contact with India in 1498, and later establishing official Portuguese rule in 1505 around Cochin. Goa served as the Portuguese's colonial headquarters in 1510. The Portuguese then expanded into Southeast Asia, making contact with Malacca (in present-day Malaysia) in 1509. The Portuguese could also be found in Timor and Macau. At these ports, Portuguese men were encouraged to marry local women to establish Portuguese communities, as Dr Antonio L. Rappa noted in the book, *Saudade: The Culture and Security of Eurasian Communities in Southeast Asia*. Conversion to Roman Catholicism was also encouraged. The offspring from these unions were known as Luso-Asians — the first Eurasians. They adopted Portuguese surnames such as de Souza, Gomes, Monteiro, Nunes, and Oliveiro, among others.

The Dutch followed, arriving in Asia the following century, where they settled in Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), Malacca and the East Indies. Their goal was to venture into the lucrative spice trade. Dutch men married women from these communities and their children — sometimes called *burghers* — carried Dutch surnames such as Klass, de Wind, Koek, Spykerman and van Huizen.

The British came to Asia in the 17th century, with the British East India Company (EIC) serving as the central means for trade in India, Southeast Asia and China. The British presence spread across the East Indies, Borneo (split between Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei), Malaya (Malaysia), Singapore, Burma (Myanmar) and Hong Kong, and lasted for two centuries. The British married local women and the children of these unions were known by various terms, including Anglo-Indians, Anglo-Chinese and Anglo-Burmese.

By the time the British set up its base in Singapore in 1819, many Eurasians from other parts of Asia had begun to migrate here. In 1821, records show that there were 12 Catholics of Malaccan-Portuguese origin in Singapore, as cited in Wong Lai Sim's *Eurasian Population of Singapore, 1819 to 1959*. Also among the first Eurasian emigrants to Singapore were those from Bencoolen. They included the Angus, Leicester and Nicholson families. These emigrants were employed by the EIC. With this influx and through further intermarriages, the Eurasian population in Singapore grew.

Other Europeans also came to Asia, including Singapore. For instance, the French landed in India in the 17th century and would go on to colonise Indochina two centuries later. Meanwhile, the Spaniards ruled the Philippines from 1565

until 1898 when they were supplanted by the Americans. Intermarriage continued to take place. During the 18th and 19th centuries, Europeans such as Germans, Italians and Scandinavians came to Asia for work and business, marrying local women. Some of them later moved from other parts of Asia to Singapore. The list of surnames grew to include Consigliere, Hansen, Marini, Meyer and Papineau.

The 1931 census of Singapore listed 6,900 Eurasians living in Singapore. By 1940, before the Japanese invasion of Malaya, population records placed the number of Eurasians and Europeans at more than 50,000. The Eurasian population in Singapore continued to grow after World War II, but never comprised more than 2.2 per cent of the island's population.

The community's population size has since stabilised to an estimated 17,000 Eurasian citizens and permanent residents in 2019, following a period of decline from the 1960s to 1980s. Many Eurasians have lineages that can be traced back to Singapore's early Eurasians, while others are descendants of first-generation European-Asian intermarriages.

The Eurasian Association, Singapore (EA) was formed in July 1919. Why was there a need to form an ethnic association? More importantly, why and how has this association endured to reach its centennial milestone in 2019?

To understand the drivers that led to the formation of the EA, the social and economic structure of colonial Singapore has to be understood.

### EURASIANS IN COLONIAL SINGAPORE

British colonial policy in Singapore, especially its “ethnic division of labour,” had a significant impact on Eurasians.

Across the empire, the British ran their territories along racial lines with Europeans at the top of the ladder. They segmented society by linguistic, cultural and physical differences. What was behind such an approach?

The British colonial experience was about “delivering civilisation to the non-white masses so that they too could, almost be civilised but never quite like the English”, said Dr Rappa, in *Surviving the Politics of Late Modernity: The Eurasian Fringe Community of Singapore*.

In Singapore, the British assigned Malays to work in the police force, Chinese from Guangzhou and Fujian provinces to work as coolies, those from Hainan Island to be cooks and chefs for the colonial administration, and Indians to be construction and plantation workers. The Jews, Chinese-Malay Peranakans (Nonya-Baba) and Indian-Malay (Chitty) Peranakans found their own niche as traders, dealing with their home countries.

The Eurasians, as a race, were identified by the British to fill mid-tier and lower-tier positions within the colonial administration. This was similar to the arrangement in Penang, Hong Kong and other cities in India. The majority of these Eurasians were well educated, and were conversant in English. Hiring Eurasians for these positions would be cheaper than having to send in Britons, noted Dr Alexius A. Pereira in *Singapore Chronicles: Eurasians*. Towards this end, the British encouraged Eurasians to move to Singapore, and the largest group came from Malacca, the colony geographically closest to Singapore.

Outside of the civil service, Eurasians also held white-collar jobs. They worked as trading house clerks, bank tellers, teachers and nurses, and in media outfits. Records show that in 1931, as many as 43 per cent of men were working as clerks — a fairly prestigious occupation at the time.

Their children attended Singapore’s early schools where they were advantageously educated in the language of the colonial powers, which in turn gave them the requisite qualifications for employment in the colonial administration. For this reason, the community occupied a rather privileged economic niche within the settlement.

In the early years of colonial Singapore, Eurasians were generally welcomed by Europeans into their social circles, because



A portrait of a Eurasian family, taken between 1910 and 1925.  
Picture: Lee Brothers Studio Collection, courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore

they shared traits such as a good command of the English language, a Western style of dressing and the practice of the Christian faith. During this period, in addition to some Europeans marrying local Asian women, Europeans and Eurasians also intermarried, boosting the overall population of Eurasians in Singapore.

The 1860 census noted that there were approximately 8,000 Eurasians and Europeans living in Singapore out of a total population of 81,000. The emergent Singapore Eurasian community further gravitated towards middle-class British culture in terms of dress, religion, recreation and social practices and soon became ensconced in this way of life. For instance, British practices, such as tea

dances, musical soirees and theatrical productions, as well as sporting activities such as cricket, rugby, hockey and horse racing, were adopted by the Eurasians, regardless of whether they were of Portuguese or Dutch ancestry.

This situation changed with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and Europeans began to distance themselves from Eurasians. The Suez Canal made travel much faster to the East by steamship leading to a greater presence of Europeans in Singapore. On the one hand, the argument that Eurasians were cheaper to hire no longer applied, and many more European men were sent to Singapore to work in the British colonial office. Also, many more European women travelled to



A steamship at the Singapore waterfront, photographed in the 1890s.  
Picture: National Archives of Singapore

and started living in Singapore. As a result, socialisation and intermarriage with local women were viewed less favourably.

With more Europeans here in Singapore, being “white” soon became an even more important marker of social class and Europeans began institutionalising “racial rules” to keep Asians and Eurasians at arm’s length. For example, in the latter part of the 19th century, non-whites and coloured people were banned from certain clubs, dining places, dance halls and hotels. This led to a strained relationship between Eurasians and the British. Dr Rappa noted that Eurasians, regarded as “good enough to work for the colonial government” but “not

good enough to join the club”, were both beneficiaries and victims of colonial policy. Furthermore, the colonial administrators, in seeking to advance their own careers and bolster their resumes, had been denying capable and diligent Eurasians promotions and progress to prominent positions.

Economically, Eurasians were also severely affected by the post-Suez Canal situation. Where once Eurasians were considered for employment in the colonial office, in 1910, “the Colonial Office changed the criteria to have pure European descent on both sides”, Dr Braga-Blake wrote.

This period of escalating anti-Asian sentiments among Europeans after the

1870s marked one of the turning points for the Eurasian community in Singapore, when local communities realised that the British, with their prejudices and skewed policies, would not be fending for them. The racially divided society also meant that cross-ethnic understanding and cooperation were uncommon among the diverse Asian groups of Singapore. For instance, although some Asian communities recognised the Eurasian community’s function as a bridge to the British authorities, they were lukewarm towards its members because of their European roots and entrenched roles within the British administration.

Eventually, the lack of a state welfare system for the people of the island led to communities looking inwards to form their own support networks. These circumstances gave rise to a system of community-based mutual support and leadership.

Some of the communal groups formed after 1880 included the Straits Chinese Recreation Club (1885) and the Jews’ Myrtle Club (early 1900s). The Indian Association, the Sikh Cricket Club (now the Singapore Khalsa Association) and the Lanka Union (now the Ceylon Sports Club) were formed in the 1920s.

The Eurasian clubs that emerged included the committee of St. George’s Singapore Catholic Young Men’s Society, which was set up in 1866. Some Eurasians

even put together publications to represent the interests of Eurasians. These included *The Straits Intelligence* in the early 1870s, the *Singapore Eurasian Advocate* in 1887, and at least five other publications. Mr T.C. Archer also produced a monthly periodical in 1919 called *Our Magazine*. It was one of the first indications and representations of the community’s desire to assert and advocate for itself in the Crown Colony of Singapore.

Some Eurasians set up the Singapore Recreation Club (SRC) in June 1883. (This did not admit women at the time, leading to the formation of the Girls’ Sports Club in 1929.) The SRC was located at the north end of the Padang, across the Europeans-only Cricket Club. It was quite evident that one very important purpose of the SRC — in addition to serving the social and sporting needs of the Eurasian community — was to pit the Eurasians against the Europeans.

Just three months after it was set up, the SRC arranged for a cricket match against the British Royal Artillery. More tournaments were rolled out and soon after, the SRC, equipped for a range of team sports such as hockey, grew into a hub of social activity for the community. Three years later, the club began hosting what was to become an annual two-day sports event where the two communities battled it out on the field. This was disrupted by World War I but resumed after that in 1919, *The Straits Times* reported.

However, the SRC did not attract all Eurasians, noted Mr Rudy William Mosbergen in his book, *In the Grip of a Crisis: The Experiences of a Teenager during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, 1942–1945*.

Some Eurasians saw the SRC as a social and sports club, but not necessarily an organisation that could speak out for the needs of Eurasians, or uplift the community, he wrote. This was after all during an era when Eurasians felt discriminated against and forgotten by the colonial government.

To address these concerns, the SRC's president, Mr Edwin Tessensohn, set up the Eurasian Literary Association (ELA) in 1918 to give Eurasians "a voice", as Dr Rappa noted.

The ELA was one of the precursors to the formation of the EA; another was the Singapore Volunteer Corps.

### THE SINGAPORE VOLUNTEER CORPS

Although World War I (1914–1918) did not reach Singapore's shores, some Eurasian men, at great personal sacrifice, sailed to Britain in order to fight in the war. More than 1,000 Eurasian volunteers have been recorded as fighting for the British Empire, as retired librarian Mary Anne Jansen, retired engineer John Geno-Oehlers, and his wife, Ann Ebert Oehlers, noted in their book, *On Parade:*

*Straits Settlements Eurasian Men Who Volunteered to Defend the Empire, 1862–1957*. Despite the tensions between the British and the ethnic groups of early Singapore, the Eurasians had chosen to volunteer because they believed the future was at stake. Their decision to volunteer attests to their sense of duty, loyalty and a long-term commitment to home — the Straits Settlements and the Crown.

This was not a sudden development; Eurasians were loyal to the British Empire. Eurasians were the first non-Europeans to join the Singapore Volunteer Rifle Corps, which was formed in 1854 and became the Singapore Volunteer Corps in 1901. The corps helped to take care of internal security and defence, tackling issues such as the riots of May 1854, which were fought on the streets and countryside between the Hokkien and Teochew communities and resulted in the deaths of 500 people and the destruction of shops and more than 300 homes.

The earliest record of Eurasian volunteers in the corps dates back to 1862. By the 1870s, the corps comprised predominantly Eurasians and Europeans.

Mr Edwin Tessensohn, who had actively participated in the corps from 1874 until 1875, was one of several Eurasians who had proposed forming a Eurasian company. This attempt is another example of the assertion of Eurasian identity.



TOP: A sports carnival was held at the Singapore Recreation Club to celebrate City Day on 22 September 1951. Picture: SPH Media Limited

BOTTOM: Born in Malacca in 1855, Mr Edwin Tessensohn came to Singapore as a teenager. He was active in the British volunteer corps from 1874 to 1875, and later became the patron of the Eurasian Literary Association, the precursor of the Eurasian Association. Appointed to the key administrative post of municipal commissioner in 1916, he was the first Eurasian to be nominated to the Legislative Council. He died in 1926. Picture: National Archives of Singapore

The archives indicated that several applications for the establishment of the company were ignored. The authorities finally agreed to meet to discuss the issue on 4 July 1915. The 72 Eurasians who were present were told that the government wanted them to serve as clerks, storekeepers, telephonists, signallers and engineers. They were upset and rejected the offer.

Leading members of the community met to discuss the matter and a mass meeting was later held on 7 March 1918 where a resolution was passed to petition the governor.

The gathering, which took place prior to the EA's inception, marked a significant milestone in Eurasian history as 200 from the community — across socio-economic classes — had banded together for the first time “for the cause of raising its status”, which those present were on record as

saying. The Eurasian 'D' Company of the Corps was eventually established in 1918 with 100 initial members after three-and-a-half years of negotiation with the colonial government.

The difficulties that Eurasians faced in setting up the company became another reason for the community to gather together to better represent Eurasian interests.

#### THE FORMATION OF THE EURASIAN ASSOCIATION

On 5 June 1919, the centenary of the British arrival in Singapore, more than 100 Eurasians gathered at St Andrew's Hall. They believed the time was ripe to form a body to represent the Eurasian community, *The Singapore Free Press* reported. Deeply entrenched communal divisions necessitated the clustering together.

At the meeting, the proposal was to

independent nation's fledgling armed forces, noted Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean in a speech at the launch of the book, *On Parade: Straits Settlements Eurasian Men Who Volunteered To Defend The Empire, 1862-1957*, in November 2018. He noted that the nation-building contributions of these Eurasian men reflect an important core value of Singapore's Eurasian community — the spirit of service.

#### THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

The Singapore Volunteer Corps was the precursor of the post-independence People's Defence Force, which was involved in the training of part-time national servicemen when national service was introduced in 1967.

Eurasians went on to play an integral role in the People's Defence Force and a number of volunteers, including Eurasian men, were mobilised and would form the core of the

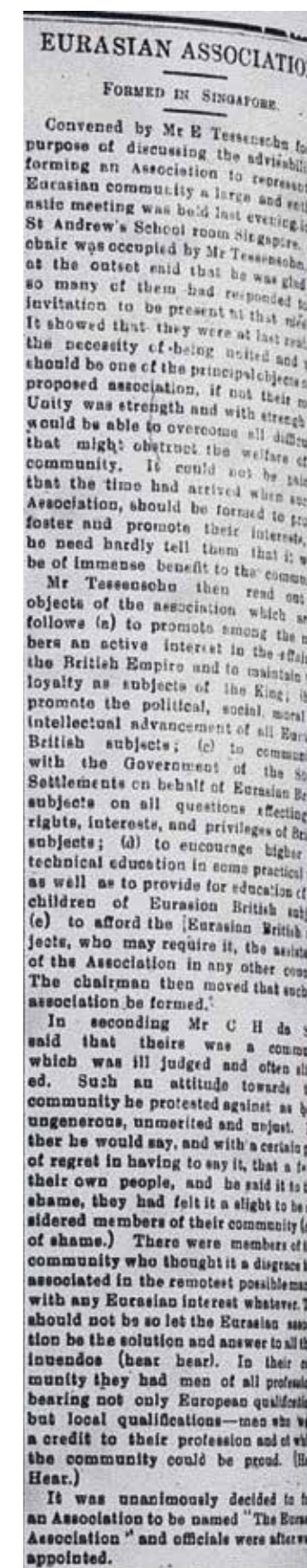
simply call the organisation the Eurasian Association — using the term, “Eurasian”, which the British had coined. Among those present was Mr T. C. Archer, who was quoted in the article as saying: “We have been slandered and the name Eurasian has been dragged in the mire. We are going to make the name Eurasian a respected name.”

Several other prominent Eurasians of the time spoke at the meeting, eager to set out their visions for the new body, laying the groundwork for its future.

Mr W. J. C. Le Cain was recorded as saying that the formation of the association for Eurasians would be a very substantial advance towards “securing the unity of purpose” for the community, which he said was lacking at present. He added: “I think an association of Eurasians would secure for them a standard of living which among the younger members of our community would be essential not only now, but even indispensable in a few years to come.”

Mr Claude Henry da Silva added that the idea of establishing the association had long existed in the minds of many Eurasians. Mr J. C. Pestana, who would later that evening be appointed the EA's pro tem vice-president, followed up by saying its inception was the dawn of a new era for the Eurasians of Singapore. He added that the EA's objectives should not be confined only to political purposes but should include social issues and concerns as well. It should serve as an organisation to explain the consolidated views of Eurasians to the government “in proper form”, representing the community that had been, to a certain extent, ignored “for a long time”.

Those present thus decided that the organisation would promote the political, economic, social, moral, physical and intellectual advancement of all Eurasian-British subjects and promote among its members an active interest in the affairs of Malaya. It would also look after the interests of all Eurasian-British subjects in the areas of communicating with the government of the Straits Settlements on behalf of Eurasian-British subjects on all questions affecting the rights, interests and privileges of Eurasian-British subjects; encourage higher and technical education in some practical way, as well as provide for the education of children of Eurasian-British subjects; and to afford to Eurasian-British



The Singapore Free Press reported on the formation of the Eurasian Association on 6 June 1919. Picture: SPH Media Limited

subjects, who might require it, the assistance of the association in any other country.

That same evening, Mr Edwin Tessensohn was charged with heading a team to formally set up the EA. In accepting the office of the EA's pro tem president, Mr Tessensohn said: "As you have given me the support of your votes, I will endeavour to discharge the duties connected with the office to the best of my ability."

His fellow pro tem office-holders included Mr A. H. Carlos, Mr G. M. Koenitz and Mr M. Pereira.

Commentators, in a piece in *The Straits Times* dated 9 June 1919, said that the EA's formation was a "healthy sign of the times" and a "sign of progress". The observers noted that the community was industrious, patient and well behaved but had up till that point, not made itself fully articulate.

The founding team met monthly at the homes of its members. The rules then concerning membership were patrilineal, spelling out explicitly that the Caucasian race of the father was essential for one to qualify as a member.

On 27 November the same year, the first annual general meeting of the EA was held. Mr Tessensohn reported that the EA had received good support since the meeting on 5 June 1919. Mr Newbold B. Westerhout, the head clerk of the law firm, Donaldson and Burkinshaw, was later elected as the association's president. The team formed that day included the vice-president, Dr N. L. Clarke, the honorary secretary, Mr A. H. Carlos, and the honorary treasurer, Mr T. W. Stubbs.

In a July 1926 report in *The Straits Times*, the EA reported a membership of 724, of whom 49 were life members.

### GROWING PAINS

In its first two decades of existence, the EA tackled both external and internal challenges, the few existing records showed.

For instance, its leaders believed that Eurasians had insufficient legitimate representation on the Straits Settlements' Legislative Council and resolved at its 1921 annual general meeting to take it upon itself, as a "young, lively and robust" body, "not to mumble but to talk", *The Malaya Tribune* reported. At that time, the composition of the Legislative Council was largely imbalanced despite the inclusion of a few Asians as non-official members.

The association argued that Eurasians "merely desired to be treated as equals and have satisfactory representation in the Government", as Mr H. R. S. Zehnder was reported by *The Malaya Tribune* as saying at the EA's 1921 annual general meeting. At one point in its early years, it submitted a memorandum to the select committee on the Legislative Council. The President of the EA was regarded as the best positioned Eurasian representative for the Legislative Council, compared to the heads of the other Eurasian clubs which represented sporting interests, such as the SRC and Girls' Sports Club, noted former journalist Gerald de Cruz, in his oral history interview with the National Archives of Singapore in 1981.

At the same meeting, the association celebrated its success in having won the right from the colonial authorities to nominate a representative to a separate body—the Municipal Commission—which had been responsible for urban affairs in Singapore since 1887. The association's president at the time, Dr Noel Leicester Clarke, gave the verdict that the association

## The association argued that Eurasians "merely desired to be treated as equals and have satisfactory representation in the Government"...

had made unquestionable progress, which he credited to the "small number of men" who formed the committee.

Elaborating on this success, the association's vice-president, Mr W. J. C. Le Cain, said this included the growing recognition of both the association and the Eurasian community, in the public eye. He said that the organisation was providing a voice for the community and a platform of expression of opinion to other communities. He further called upon its members to speak up if they saw discriminatory content or issues impacting Eurasians — even "a paragraph in any newspaper concerning Eurasians, or effecting their interests" was worth flagging, he noted.

While details are scant on the extent of its role in advocating for more representation on the Straits Settlement Legislative Council, reports indicated that the association had "recommended" Mr Edwin Tessensohn to it. The colonial authorities had invited the Malay, Indian and Eurasian communities each to nominate a representative to the council, in an attempt to be more reflective of the multi-ethnic society it was ruling. Mr Tessensohn, a well-respected community leader, became the first Eurasian to serve as a nominated member of this council. Eurasians throughout Malaya reportedly felt great pride when he took office in January 1923.

The association also had to tackle internal challenges. Among them was the struggle to instil a sense of ownership towards the organisation among some of its members. *The Malaya Tribune's* report on the EA's 1921 annual general meeting covered the leadership's dismay at some of its lackadaisical members. The leaders were reported as saying that it was "heartbreaking" to learn there was such a lack of interest.

The association believed that the community's future depended entirely upon itself. Its leadership urged its members to think and work together. This basic foundational principle of self-reliance and self-help has carried through till today.

It must be noted that the association was incredibly self-reflexive in the early years of its existence. Far from resting on their laurels, its leaders sensed that they were on the precipice or a turning point in the young organisation's journey and worked hard to stay the course to effect permanent change. They often contemplated and questioned if the recognition they had etched out so far for the association and the community was permanent or transitory. On several occasions, they seriously debated the possibility of merging with other organisations such as the Anglo-Indian Association and other Eurasian associations in Malaya. However, to ensure that the needs of Singaporean Eurasians were served, they chose to retain their



independence and forge their own way, even as the association's counterparts in the Straits Settlements were consolidating operations. Its leaders knew that their contributions were "not so much for themselves" but for which "posterity would be proud" and "always thankful to the Eurasian Association", as they elucidated at the EA's second annual general meeting in October 1921. One hundred years on, it can be said that many Eurasians, as well as Singaporeans at large, are grateful for their foresight and persistence.

The EA was practical in the assistance it rendered. The organisation, which kept its ear to the ground, worked to address unemployment among Eurasians. Like many other places in the world, Singapore was rocked by The Great Depression. At the EA's 13th annual general meeting in 1933, the association's president, Dr Noel Leicester Clarke, cautioned that the future could be a struggle, "in which only the fittest will survive". Noting that unemployment was rife, he made a plea to the Eurasian community to equip and ready themselves for the hard fight that lay before them. "Times are very hard," he noted as he encouraged those who could afford it to support and contribute to the settlement-wide Non-European Unemployment Relief Fund. Dr Clarke placed great stock in the qualities of loyalty, sincerity and discipline in daily tasks — underlining some of the key tenets of

being a Eurasian, which helped to shape early conversations on the community's identity.

Digging into the root cause of unemployment, the association focused its energies on education and disbursed educational scholarships. As *The Malaya Tribune* reported, the association, which made education one of its foremost missions, also encouraged students to vie for the prestigious Queen's Scholarship, which would give them access to: overseas university education; institutions of higher learning, such as the Medical College for the training of doctors, and the Raffles College where boys could qualify as trained teachers; or the Trade School and Government Technical night classes. The provision of educational assistance to needy Eurasian children, especially with regard to school fees and school books, occupied the time of the EA's management committee members, who recognised the need to emphasise the importance of education to parents with school-going children, wrote Mr Rudy Mosbergen in his book. His grandfather and father, William Fabian Mosbergen and William Herbert Mosbergen, had been actively involved in the establishment of the EA and also played an important role in equipping needy students with essential books. Among other things, the pair transformed part of their family home on Queen Street to serve as a book collection point.

Dr Clarke further urged the community to take a greater interest in public affairs and to speak up where necessary to bolster the public spirit of the Eurasian community for its advancement and progress, *The Straits Times* reported. "If every Eurasian pulls his weight, the future of the community should be a very happy one," he said.

The association also constantly drove home the point that Eurasians should be loyal to the Straits Settlements — their home ground. It issued calls for Eurasians to protect their home and encouraged Eurasians to join the Singapore Volunteer Corps, which took care of Singapore's internal security and defence, breaking up fights when rival groups clashed.

The association commemorated its 20th anniversary with a dinner and dance on 5 June 1939 at the Singapore Volunteer Drill Hall. At the anniversary, the EA's president, Mr Claude H. da Silva, noted that "the association had successfully fought its way and maintained its position for 20 years". Reaching this milestone in a resource-scarce era was indeed a commendable achievement. The association's early success had largely been fuelled by a passionate committee and supportive community.

That evening, Mr da Silva went on to cover the topic of youth renewal. He said: "We must keep our young people together. We must develop in them a sense of citizenship and communal responsibilities, which will help them make the name of Eurasians respected." In 1941, the Eurasian Youth Movement was made an associate section of the EA, following its launch in May 1939. At that point, the membership of this section stood at 190 boys and 160 girls. It organised meetings, concerts, games, outings and rallies.

The EA, in consistently building up the Eurasian identity and keeping its people during peacetime, was likely to have planted the seeds of a tight-knit community whose members would cling to one another for survival as they endured Singapore's worst episode in history — World War II (1939–1945).

**THE WAR YEARS**

The biggest challenge the EA would face came with the onset of the Second World War. On the eve of the Japanese invasion of Singapore, the EA's membership stood at 770.



The message to the Eurasian community from the president of the Eurasian Association, Dr Noel Leicester Clarke, was carried by *The Straits Times* on 22 February 1933. Picture: SPH Media Limited



The Eurasian Association announced the details of its 20th anniversary dinner and dance in *The Straits Times* on 25 May 1939. Picture: SPH Media Limited

Life for the Eurasian community and the EA changed completely after the Japanese took control of Singapore in 1942.

Like others living in Singapore at that time, most Eurasians assumed that the British would be able to comfortably fend off any attack. Nonetheless, local volunteers were ready to put up a fight if required. Among them were the many Eurasians who had volunteered with the 'D' Company of the Singapore Volunteer Corps. They had been mobilised in 1941 as war loomed. Unfortunately, as time would tell, troops in Singapore were simply unprepared and ill-equipped for war.

Singapore subsequently fell to the Japanese on 8 February 1942. The British officially surrendered Singapore to the invading troops a week later on 15 February. The people of Singapore had been let down by the colonial authorities.

For almost four years, Singapore became known as Syonan-to. There was bloodshed, misery and untold suffering. Many people were executed along the beaches of Punggol and Changi. People lived in fear of the Kempeitai or Japanese military police, and severely lacked resources, surviving on scraps of food. Many Eurasian women and children perished in their attempt to escape on ships that were targeted by Japanese bombers. Others were interned in camps in Singapore or Sumatra. Numerous Eurasian men serving in the corps died

defending Singapore. If they survived, they were sent to the Siam Death Railway where many perished.

The Japanese, who sought to subjugate Eurasians because of their European ties, ordered Eurasians to subject themselves to inspections. The community gathered at the Padang to be screened. Individuals, such as Rudy Mosbergen, then a young boy, witnessed English civilian men and women being marched by the Japanese from the Padang to Changi as prisoners of war, alongside the Governor of Singapore, Sir Shenton Thomas. There, they were ordered to cooperate with the Japanese and pledge their allegiance to the Emperor in Tokyo. The Eurasian community was divided by this order, and the EA as its representative body, was given the option of resisting or being conciliatory, according to the book, *Dr Paglar: Everyman's Hero*, by Rex Shelley with Chen Fen.

The most senior EA officer left in Singapore following the invasion was its treasurer, Mr W. H. Mosbergen — Rudy Mosbergen's father. The Japanese summoned him as well as three other Eurasians to a meeting. There, Mr W. H. Mosbergen was pressured to submit to the Japanese Occupation force's authority. He refused to cooperate, arguing that it would be demeaning to kowtow to the Japanese. The other members present pointed out that the Eurasian community would be at



Born in Malacca in 1894, Dr Charles Joseph Paglar treated the sick and war victims for free during the Japanese Occupation. The Japanese named him the leader of the Syonan Eurasian Welfare Association in 1942. When he died in 1954, tens of thousands paid their respects. Picture: Eurasian Association

risk if they did not cooperate. Following their failure to reach a consensus, Mr W. H. Mosbergen resigned from his EA post as he did not want his defiance to affect the community negatively.

The Japanese then stepped in to convert the EA into the Syonan Eurasian Welfare Association (SEWA). It was formed with the objective of cooperating with the Nippon government in all matters pertaining to the new order, and in the maintenance of peace and order in Malaya, noted the *Syonan Times* in a report on 1 November 1942.

A Japanese government official, Mr Mamoru Shinozaki, sought out surgeon Charlie J. Paglar to lead the SEWA. Mr Shinozaki, a controversial historical war

figure, had been appointed adviser of the Japanese Defence Headquarters at the start of the war. His motives were not always clear, but multiple accounts noted that he had looked out for locals during the Japanese Occupation. For instance, he was said to have distributed good citizen passes to Chinese and Eurasians in Singapore so they could avoid the cruelty of Japanese soldiers. In addition, he was said to have been involved in the issuance of protection cards to diplomats and other foreigners from neutral countries.

A number of historians and authors argued that Mr Shinozaki, who was also involved in the formation of the Overseas Chinese Association in March 1942,

selected Dr Paglar to head SEWA because he found the latter to be a compassionate person. Among other things, Dr Paglar was known for treating his patients for free.

Dr Paglar, who had set up one of the few private hospitals in Singapore during the 1930s, was pressured by the Japanese to take on the role. They threatened to force Eurasian women into prostitution and impose hard labour on Eurasian men if he refused their offer. With this hanging over him, Dr Paglar, who had been reluctant to lose his focus on his patients such as the war casualties needing treatment, agreed to take up the “poisoned chalice”, noted British educational consultant Fiona Hodgkins in her book, *From Syonan To Fuji-Go: The Story of the Catholic Settlement in Bahau in WWII Malaya*.

The SEWA committee was filled with other office holders: the vice-president, Mr E. H. Valberg, the chief secretary, Mr Roy Ferros, and the treasurer and town representative, Mr W. H. Mosbergen, as well as Mr A. J. Braga, who was the vice-president of the pre-war EA, Mr H. E. Woodford, Mr G. E. N. Oehlers, Mr E. S. Kitto, Mr S. E. B. Goodland and Mr C. S. Rozario.

Now in charge of the SEWA, Dr Paglar was tasked with the responsibility of caring for the welfare of Eurasians. He was instructed to handle their wartime job arrangements, and to sort out their food, clothing and healthcare, among other

things. He was also accountable for any offences committed by Eurasians. His family members recalled Japanese officers assaulting him physically when such misdemeanours happened. SEWA meetings were held at Dr Paglar’s dispensary on Coleman Street.

A major event the SEWA struggled to deal with was the forced relocation of thousands of Singapore Eurasians to an agricultural settlement in the town of Bahau in Negeri Sembilan, Malaya. Singapore had been suffering from food shortage problems and the Japanese authorities’ solution was to relocate some locals. In August 1943, the Japanese began establishing settlements outside of Singapore. The first one was in Endau in Johor where a group of Chinese was relocated to in September 1943. The option given to Eurasians was Bahau, which appeared sufficiently enticing to the unsuspecting. The community was promised freedom from Japanese surveillance and the opportunity to grow its own food. Dr Paglar fronted this Japanese proposition to the Eurasian community.

The success story of Endau was cited as a reason for Eurasians to take up the option. The Chinese community there had access to fresh water and land conditions were satisfactory for agriculture. Many Eurasians felt like they had little choice in this decision. If they stayed in Singapore, they could easily be rounded up by the



Mrs Alice van Cuylenberg created this oil painting of a typical hut in Bahau while living there with her husband, Dr J. B. van Cuylenberg, then the vice-president of Syonan Eurasian Welfare Association. Picture: F A C Oehlers Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Japanese and imprisoned or worse — be sent to work on the Burma-Thai Railway, noted Ms Hodgkins.

The first batch of 150 Eurasian settlers from Singapore thus left in late 1943 to the Catholic village of Bahau. The conditions of the site were a far cry from those of Endau, and its name — Fuji-Go or Beautiful Village in Japanese — was an outright misnomer. Water was limited and soil conditions were unsuitable for agriculture. Settlers suffered from a severe lack of nourishment. Dysentery and the whole gamut of tropical diseases plagued them as a result of the area’s primitive and harsh conditions. The place was also infested with mosquitoes carrying malaria and the community fell prey to the infectious disease. Some blamed SEWA and Dr Paglar for encouraging the move. According to

Ms Hodgkins and survivor accounts, Dr Paglar had tried to render aid and ease the people’s suffering. He prepared the anti-malarial concoction of quinine with the help of his two children, creating injections and mixtures to dispense to the infected. It was said that he drove regularly to medicate and treat the sickly. Records place the death toll of Eurasians at Bahau at approximately 500, despite his efforts. This was out of the 3,000 Eurasians who had resettled there.

In mainland Singapore, the SEWA was documented as having rendered relief measures to about 300 families in December 1942. There were also reports of members of SEWA providing entertainment to the patients of a military hospital by performing song and dance items. This had been led by Dr Paglar’s daughter, Miss Rene Paglar.

After the war, Dr Paglar faced charges of treason for working with the Japanese. He was, however, not convicted and went on to serve the community here in various capacities. For instance, he served in bodies such as the Boy Scouts Association, Singapore, and the St. John Ambulance Brigade. He also supported philanthropic causes and youth initiatives. Ms Hodgkins argued that although Dr Paglar had fallen out of favour at times with different segments of society, he was eventually held in high esteem by many people. For instance, an invitation extended to him to attend the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in London in 1953 was certainly testament to how he had been exonerated by the colonial authorities. During the inquiry against Dr Paglar in January 1946, Mr Leslie A. Woodford, an English teacher at St. Anthony's Boys' School who would later become Chief Commissioner of Boy Scouts Association, Singapore, said it was clear that Dr Paglar was forced to make these decisions in the interests of the Eurasian community.

The war finally concluded on 12 September 1945 when the Japanese surrendered in Singapore following numerous defeats in the region and attacks by the Allies, including the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

A month later, on 19 November, the EA held its first post-war general meeting at St

Joseph's Institution to elect a committee and handle other matters such as the applications for EA membership. Mr C. H. da Silva was elected its president, as per his pre-war designation, alongside office bearers such as its vice-president, Major H. R. S. Zehnder, its honorary secretary, Mr F. J. Shepherdson, and its honorary treasurer, W. F. Mosbergen. A tablet was also erected at the SRC the same month, in memory of the sacrifices of all Eurasians in World War II. A one-minute silence was observed and speeches were made by the EA president and SRC president.

After the war, the EA functioned as a conduit for financial relief and aid to the community, and among other things, distributed Red Cross supplies via its Relief Sub-Committee. The following year, on 5 January 1946, Mr C. H. da Silva summed up the EA's situation as such: "We need more help and goodwill than is forthcoming sometimes in our endeavours with the many difficulties which beset our community."

The Second World War had deeply affected the Eurasian community and the EA. Many Eurasians had died and suffered, and most of the EA's important records were destroyed during this period, among other things.

#### CLOUDS OF UNCERTAINTY

The war marked the beginning of the

end for British rule in Singapore. Their star had faded. Singapore's Eurasians, along with other local communities here, realised they could no longer rely on the colonial authorities for safety and economic stability. Many homes and businesses had been destroyed during the war and access to basic resources such as food and fresh water was lacking in post-war Singapore.

The failure of the British Empire was greatly traumatic to some elderly Eurasians because their impression of the British, their main reference group, was shattered. "People realised that these men were not superheroes," said Mr Burton Westerhout, who was elected EA treasurer in 1989, and later served in other roles including vice-president.

As early as October 1945, when the EA had its first meeting since 1941, attendee Gerald de Cruz gave a forceful speech that the community would have to abandon the old attitudes, values and hero-worship of the white man, which he said had been such a strong characteristic of the community. In his oral history interview, he said: "We had to see ourselves as Eurasians. We had to involve ourselves in our country's affairs as Eurasians and we would have to fight for independence."

Anti-colonial-nationalism sentiment spread rapidly during Singapore's post-war years. Weighing on the minds of many was the desire for independence. However, the EA, as an ethnic-body, remained focused on its immediate task of serving the community. The aftermath of WWII meant that concerns about basic needs — such as job security on the individual level — took precedence for most of the population of Singapore. For instance, Eurasians quickly got to work, filling senior posts in the civil service and working in their own work spheres to quietly facilitate the transition of governments. There was little time for the EA's management committee to take on any bigger role. It had very little capacity to even worry about its membership, much less develop relevant programmes for the community.

Nonetheless, against this tumultuous backdrop, the EA's management committee managed to keep the organisation running. It was able to rustle up enough financial aid for some needy Eurasians despite subsisting on nominal membership fees. A few education grants

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such as the Hochstadt Scholarship, its own Industrial Scholarship, and the Eurasian Association School Scholarship were disbursed. Although its resources were severely incapacitated by the war, the EA was relentless in providing some guiding light to the community struggling to recover after a dark period. In 1947, Mr Claude Henry da Silva, the president of the EA cautioned that too few Eurasians were taking up higher studies. He declared at its annual general meeting: "Colour bar or no colour bar, there is one golden key, and that is education."

As the EA faced survival issues, the larger Eurasian community was affected by the unravelling of communal relations and other socio-political challenges.

A critical incident was the Maria Hertogh Riots, which began in December 1950. Eurasians, viewed as pro-European, were targeted in this spate of racially charged clashes. In his oral history interview by the National Archives of Singapore, Mr Roland Schoon, who was then 22 years old, described the riots as a "very frightening experience". Among other things, he had witnessed a Eurasian being pulled down from a bus opposite Indian vegetarian restaurant Komala Vilas on Kerbau Road. The Eurasian was hit by a number of people and ended up in a drain. "It happened so quickly and got out of hand so easily," said Mr Schoon.

There was also the growing threat of communism as the British prepared to exit the region. The merger with and then separation from Malaysia sent further shock waves of instability across the nation. While their Chinese, Malay and Indian counterparts had home countries to identify with, Eurasians had only Singapore. Yet the community's future was as murky and unclear as that of the new nation it called home. Many Eurasians began to question how they fit into Singapore.

After 1965, the newly sovereign government worked to flatten class and colour barriers and dismantle economic niches. As education standards improved and other Singaporeans could better access English-language schools, Eurasians began to lose their cachet. This concerned the community as it meant the loss of long-held vocations, especially those in the civil service. Mr W. H. Mosbergen, on his election as president of the association in 1964, called upon Eurasians to learn local languages, to relinquish their expectations of white-collar jobs and to be prepared to "soil their hands".

Eurasians now had to compete on the same playing field with their fellow citizens based on the new nation's meritocratic laws and no longer had a special consideration by a British colonial patron, noted Dr Rappa.



Troops clearing burnt cars at the junction of North Bridge Road and Arab Street on 13 December 1950, when the three-day Maria Hertogh riots ended. Picture: SPH Media Limited

Other sweeping changes, in sync with the ruling regime's de-communalisation and ethnic equality policies, were also afoot. For one, the People's Action Party (PAP) sought to deliberately enforce integration among people of different ethnicities. For example, the SRC was asked to abandon its Eurasian-only policy and the former Eurasian stronghold was opened up to all Singaporeans.

The government also required individuals with other citizenships to relinquish them for Singapore citizenship.

The government's priority was social stability, essential for economic growth and national survival. It wanted to develop, among its people, allegiance to this newly formed nation, which had historically never been independent, having functioned only as part of an empire or a country.

The concept of Singaporean nationhood was new and the immigrant populace of Singapore was expected to shed their allegiance to their hometowns.

Some Eurasians took positively to these changes. For instance, they viewed the opening up of the SRC as a contribution and gift to the Singapore sports scene. They were largely optimistic about the future of Singapore as a nation and eager to embrace their new Singaporean identity in unison with the rest of the multiracial populace.

A number, however, despaired. Like many other outsiders and naysayers, they did not think the resource-deficient island of Singapore had much chance of survival. They did not take well to the slew of changes, and were uncomfortable with the rapid developments after the war. Underlying all this was a sense of displacement, which

culminated in an outflow of Eurasians who could afford to emigrate to distant shores in Commonwealth countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia. Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore noted in his speech, *Where Integration Comes Naturally*, that it was the great political changes of the 1950s and 1960s that caused many to emigrate. "They felt uncertain of the future, and insecure in the nationalistic fervour of new independent countries," he said.

The departures from Singapore came swiftly despite the EA's calls to stay with the country. Mr W. H. Mosbergen, who was at the association's helm from 1964 to 1969, affirmed that Eurasians were "part and parcel" of this country and that "we should give it the best we can".

As a result of the exodus, the EA's membership figures between the 1960s and 1970s hovered between 400 and 800 or so. Sometimes, annual general meetings were postponed because the association could not fill the quorum.

The situation continued to be dismal on the EA's membership front. The association was missing an entire generation of young Singaporeans — especially those born after 1950 who grew up in the post-colonial era and were beginning to think of themselves as Singaporeans first. They were less conscious of their ethnic roots than their Eurasian seniors, as pointed out by Dr

Braga-Blake in *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*.

Singapore's first cut of its multiracial policy and nation-building message appeared to be rather effective on much of the populace. In fact, the government's values of meritocracy and equality diminished the purpose of ethnic-based associations, which had been set up and designed to champion issues of injustice and racial discrimination in colonial times. Eurasians could generally eke out a decent living without having to identify themselves as Eurasian, so there was no longer any economic impetus or value in being Eurasian in post-independence Singapore, noted Dr Pereira in *Singapore Chronicles: Eurasians*.

This situation persisted into the mid-1980s. During this period, the EA's offerings of programmes and activities were limited.

Another wave of Eurasian migration, which occurred in the 1980s, compounded matters. The Eurasians who left during this period did not do so because of political uncertainty or communal violence like those who migrated earlier. Instead, some Singaporeans, including Eurasians, had grown uncomfortable with Singapore's increasingly hectic pace of life, noted journalist Sumiko Tan in a 1992 article in *The Straits Times* called "The Eurasian Re-Awakening".

Other "push" factors included the pressures of Singapore's education system. For instance, the second language policy, introduced right after independence, troubled some as their children, who spoke only English, faced difficulties in picking up other languages in school.

Another factor was being labelled "Others" as part of Singapore's racial classification system. For administrative convenience, the government worked around four racial categories: Chinese, Malays, Indians and Others. Due to their relatively small numbers, Eurasians were grouped under the last category of "Others". The unintended result was that Eurasians felt "invisible" and believed they were "forgotten" despite their pioneering contributions to Singapore.

Census data reflected these sentiments. The number of Eurasians in Singapore plunged sharply from 18,200 in 1970 to 10,172 in 1980.

Mr Ronald Hubert Barth remembered just 12 members in attendance at the EA's 1983 annual general meeting where he was elected as the association's president. He noted that the association mainly disbursed student bursaries during this period and that the other needs of underprivileged Eurasians were largely taken care of by churches.

By 1988, membership at the association stood at just 240. The EA was on shaky ground and few expected it to survive.

However, a few determined committee members, such as the association's former presidents, Mr Thomas W. Prins, Mr Trevor J. Hale, Mr Ronald H. Barth, and Mr Kenneth Eber, held it together. They saw it as their duty to keep the EA flag flying and worked hard to keep the 1919 entity running.

By and large the Eurasian community of Singapore was "invisible" for most of the 1980s. Interest in the Eurasian identity, history and culture was lacking or non-existent among those who had chosen to stay on in Singapore. As a result, the EA — as an association — struggled. It was only when new social forces in Singapore came into play alongside the intervention of a Lightning God that the destiny and trajectory of the Eurasian community and the EA changed unexpectedly.

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*The*  
**Awakening**



In 1980, Dr Catherine Lim published a collection of short stories in a volume entitled *Or Else, the Lightning God and Other Stories*. One of the stories, called “Kenneth Jerome Rozario”, portrayed Eurasian characters as being pleasure-loving, good-time Charlies.

The story went relatively unnoticed until 1988, when it was selected as a text for the O-Level literature examinations. Mr Victor Olsen (EA President 1989–1991) recalled that his son, Chad, had come home from school one day, saying that he was being taught in literature class that Singaporeans viewed Eurasians as “lazy, good-for-nothings”.

“Kenneth Jerome Rozario” would go on to become the lightning rod that revitalised both the Eurasian community and the Eurasian Association, Singapore (EA).

There were two important reasons for this, Dr Alexius Pereira noted in *Singapore Chronicles: Eurasians*. First, Eurasians were deeply unhappy that they had been stereotyped negatively in this story. They were also upset by the manner in which the text was being taught to students. From a literary standpoint, Dr Lim had created a fictional, dysfunctional Eurasian family to illustrate the pitfalls of stereotyping.

However, questions such as “How are Eurasians portrayed in the story?” resulted in some students regurgitating the stereotypes found in the story. Eurasian students taking these classes were uncomfortable with the situation, and the community was incensed.

Singapore in the 1980s was experiencing a resurgence of ethnic pride among the Chinese, Malay and Indian communities. The three communities were being encouraged by the government to learn more about their roots to counter the growing liberalism and Westernisation of Singaporean society. As the populace was now awakening to their ethnic heritage, Eurasians began to feel a pertinent sense of displacement, as if they had been left out.

The Eurasian community had an identity and image problem to contend with, observed journalist Ida Bachtiar in a 1990 article in *The Straits Times*. The community did not even have a consensus on the definition of Eurasian, and over the past 25 years, there had been little discourse, articulation and soul-searching on the subject of who they were. Realising they had been doing themselves an injustice and neglecting their unique ethnic identity, many Eurasians felt they needed a voice in society.

Notably, there was already an association that they could turn to: the EA.

In 1989, at the EA, a team of young Eurasians — among them Mr Victor Olsen and Mr Gerry de Silva — decided to approach the Ministry of Education about the story. As word got around in the Eurasian community that the EA was going to act, many young Eurasians turned up at the Phoenix Hotel Ballroom for the EA’s Annual General Meeting on March 1989. Records show that a total of 119 people were in attendance, which was significant as previous AGMs had struggled to meet the quorum of 50. Mr Olsen, then 36, became the youngest person to be elected as EA president. His aim was to launch “visible positive works” to re-establish Eurasians’ standing, and to help support a better future for Singapore. The team knew they had to work harder than the other larger ethnic groups in Singapore to be heard.

According to Mr Olsen’s account in *The New Eurasian (January–March 2019)*, his team, which came to be known as the Spirit of ’89 team, took up the matter of the book with the Ministry of Education “in a quiet fashion”. Some time after the team was elected, the ministry informed the EA that the book, *Or Else, the Lightning God and Other Stories*, would no longer be on its list of O-Level texts in 1991, because of a natural rotation of texts.

The book incident and what followed demonstrated to the Singaporean public

that the Eurasian community had a stake in Singaporean life and on the national level. Additionally, it reminded them that the Eurasian community, although small in size, was passionate enough to speak up for the greater good. The community’s renewed assertion and drive signalled to the government that the EA could play its part in the new self-help structure that was to come.

#### THE COMMUNITY’S AWAKENING

The association had reached a new frontier in 1989 and excitement was in the air. The Spirit of ’89 team knew the community had great untapped potential and wanted community members on board with it on this defining journey.

To achieve this, committee members and volunteers, such as Mr Burton Westerhout and Ms Evelyn Rodrigues, embarked on a membership drive. They fanned out across the Eurasian-dominated neighbourhoods of Katong and Middle Road to recruit members. They also hung back after weekend masses to speak to worshippers at the Eurasian-dominated parishes of St. Joseph’s Church on Victoria Street, Church of the Holy Family in Katong and Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in Siglap. Charisma on their side, with a large network of Eurasian neighbours, friends and family members, and aided by word-of-mouth, the recruiters were highly successful in their endeavours.



Many Eurasians came forward to join the EA. Mr Westerhout believed that “a lot of people were waiting for something like this to happen”. He added: “They were eager to climb on board, to be part of something bigger, to have a voice in the public space and to be part of a dedicated group. It was prime ground that was ready to be uplifted. The initiative took on a life of its own. We did not have a lot of convincing to do. All we had to do was get out there and speak to people with our message.”

Membership fees were maintained at the affordable rates of about \$50 to \$60 per year. New sub-committees were formed to develop programmes that would attract and retain members, in tandem with the association’s constitutional aims. The various sub-committees were communications, education, finance, recruitment, welfare, the association contingent, as well as social and youth.

One of the first few items on the agenda was to develop an active sports and social calendar. The activities had been organised to bring the community closer. This endeavour became the forerunner of the Community Development pillar of the EA.

The association’s youth and sports coordinator put together a series of regular activities. A signature event was Games Day held every Saturday at St. Patrick’s School on East Coast Road.

The association was strategic in this

programme list, inviting former national players to hold football clinics for children. Drawn to the sterling list of specialist athletes, the children came in droves. In their football kits, the children played on the school’s grassy field, sometimes until the sun dipped into the horizon.

The children were often accompanied by their parents. Some grabbed their picnic baskets, taking the opportunity to unwind and catch a breath after a week of work. Many a time, the picnic spread, which families shared, would include Eurasian treats and snacks such as *pang susi* — sweet potato buns stuffed with savoury meat.

Other families were catered to with a host of other activities, such as netball, badminton and tennis.

One event led to another, said Mr Westerhout, adding that Eurasians began to feel a sense of belonging to the larger Eurasian family. Older EA members and their families also participated in some of these activities.

Buoyed by the success of the Saturday activities, the association and its members began organising other gatherings. These included Christmas parties and the revival of the traditional New Year’s Eve Ball, which the association had been known for organising but had stopped doing so for a number of years. Without a venue or a community hall of its own as yet, the association, for the most part, held



The EA committee 1989 consisted of: (front row, from the left) Burton Westerhout, Gerald de Vries (Vice-President), Victor Olsen (President), Edmund Rodrigues, David Oehlers; (back row, from the left) Duncan Trollope, Charles Meyer, Myrna Braga-Blake, Gerard Pereira, Timothy de Souza and Gerry de Silva. Picture: Eurasian Association

its gatherings at its members’ homes. This bolstered ties between its multi-generational members. Lively newsletters also allowed members to keep in touch with activities.

Beyond sports and social efforts, the association’s sub-committee, filled with womenfolk with an ear to the ground, suggested developing educational schemes and solutions to address and respond to the problems that Eurasian children faced in school. The plan was to set up “tuition exchanges” with other ethnic groups. Under this scheme, Eurasian English tutors could trade hours with tutors who would teach students in their areas of expertise, including for instance, Malay, Chinese or mathematics. This could address the issue of the poor grades suffered by some Eurasian students in their second languages.

The needs of other segments of the Eurasian populace were tackled as well. Seeing the need for pro bono advice, the association formed a panel of doctors and lawyers to provide free help and advice to needy and aged Eurasians in 1989.

Fuelled by their desire to uplift the

organisation and the community, the committee members would have meetings at the Tanglin Club or Mr Olsen’s home, at times until 2am. The 1989 committee also comprised Mr Gerry de Vries, Mr Edmund Rodrigues, Mr Gerry de Silva, Mr Burton Westerhout, Ms Evelyn Rodrigues, Mr David Oehlers, Ms Myrna Blake, Mr Timothy de Souza, Mr Duncan Trollope, Mr Gerard Pereira, and later, Mr Robert Scully and Mr Colin Pereira.

“Time just flew by and then we would realise that we had to send our children to school at 7am,” Mr Olsen recalled.

The team succeeded in its membership drive. By the end of 1989, the EA’s membership stood at almost 800 members. By 1991, the membership rose to 1,245 members, the bulk of whom were from young Eurasian families.

Those involved in the EA’s revitalisation efforts are on record as saying that they joined the organisation to take part in social or sporting activities to feel a sense of belonging, to help Eurasians at the bottom of the economic ladder or, simply, to “show Singaporeans we are still around”.



President Wee Kim Wee (fifth from the left) and his wife, Ms Koh Sok Hiong (third from the left), arriving at the EA's 70th Anniversary Dinner at the Hilton International Grand Ballroom in 1989. They were accompanied by former Minister for Law E. W. Barker (second from the left), his wife, Mrs Gloria Barker (leftmost), Mr Victor Olsen (second from the right) and his wife, Ms Joy Aroozoo (rightmost). Picture: Istana Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

### A VOICE ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

The effort pumped in throughout the milestone year of 1989 culminated in the EA's 70th Anniversary Ball in November. President Wee Kim Wee agreed to be the guest-of-honour at the event. It was the first time the President of Singapore had graced any Eurasian event. The community was greatly encouraged by his presence, which they believed indicated renewed support for Eurasians and the association.

The EA did not stop at that. It sought to raise the community's profile on the national platform as an integral voice to be consulted and sought on national matters. It did so via several means.

Under the banner of the association, Eurasians participated in activities on the

national scale. This included the staging of a play on Eurasians for the nation's Heritage Week in October 1989, the formation of a Eurasian contingent for the National Day Parade in 1990, and the participation in the Unity Chain in May the same year to mark Community Week for Racial Harmony.

Singapore soon noticed that the Eurasians were buzzing. For instance, *The Straits Times* ran a feature called "The Eurasian Awakening" by Ida Bachtiar in 1990. In her piece, she documented the stirring community spirit and noted that the group was determined to sustain the revived interest in the body for the long term good of Singapore's Eurasians.

Invitations to participate in government forums and activities also started streaming in. For example, Mr Olsen was invited to



A Eurasian contingent took part in the National Day Parade on the Padang in 1990. Picture: National Archives of Singapore

be a panellist at a forum on a Singaporean Singapore. This was chaired by then-Second Deputy Prime Minister S. Rajaratnam at the National University of Singapore Society Guild House at Kent Ridge in June 1990. The EA was also invited to sit on the committee for the tribute dinner to Mr Lee Kuan Yew in 1991.

To address the lack of awareness of the Eurasian identity, the EA organised its first Eurasian Heritage Day at the National Museum in 1991 to share with both Eurasians and the Singaporean public what the culture was all about.

An article in *The Straits Times* in November 1991 quoted EA President Timothy de Souza as saying: "We want this Heritage Day to remind our own people of their rich heritage and to share this with other

Singaporeans, so they will know how we too contribute to making up this nation."

For the first time in decades, the Eurasians had a seat at the table. It was unprecedented and a respectable accomplishment for the association's team of young movers and shakers.

The concerted grassroots effort of raising the profile of the EA and the community led to then-First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong saying at the National Day reception at the Istana in 1990 that "Eurasians are free to assert their own identity, as long as they also retain Singaporean values". He added: "They have always felt that they didn't quite have a place. Now they can be classified as Eurasians instead of 'Others' in their NRICs [National Registration Identity Cards]."

Mr Olsen said it was a proud moment of distinction and a “beautiful feather in the cap” of the Spirit of ’89 team which had been “quietly pressing” the government on this subject. Like the Malays, Indians and Chinese in Singapore, Eurasians had contributed to the nation’s growth and were glad they were being noticed.

“This was a major recognition which was celebrated by all Singaporean Eurasians,” he added.

Mr Olsen encapsulated the team’s efforts as such: “Our clear mission was to offer more tangible and visible support for members of our community, create greater public awareness of Eurasians and place the community firmly back into the fabric of mainstream Singapore society. ...the Spirit of ’89 team drew the first series of charts to navigate a fresh 21st century course for the association’s revival journey. The powerful common vision and shared beliefs of this team of leaders, combined with the massive community support of many other Eurasians, became the bedrock which laid a solid foundation for the revitalisation.”

#### TRANSITION TO SELF-HELP GROUP

In the 1980s, concerned about widening inequality, the Singapore Government encouraged the main racial groups here to address educational underachievement within

their own communities. This approach was known as the Community Self-Help Group strategy which can trace its roots to 1982 when the Malay community mobilised itself to help the disadvantaged among them. This resulted in the establishment of the Council for the Development of Singapore Malay/Muslim Community or Yayasan MENDAKI, and the introduction of programmes to address the community’s needs. The Association of Muslim Professionals was also awarded Community Self-Help Group status in 1991.

By 1992, the Indians and Chinese, with government backing, also formed their own self-help groups. The Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) was formed in 1991 to address the issue of underachieving Indian students, and the Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC), formed in the following year, offered programmes and assistance schemes to help students, workers and families from lower income groups overcome their challenges.

The central thrust of the self-help groups strategy was to provide after-school tuition programmes at a heavily subsidised rate. The groups also ran family support services and offered career guidance and job retraining. Members of these self-help groups contributed to their own funds, which financed all the programmes. Under the self-help group structure, the

government matched these contributions, dollar for dollar.

The idea behind the self-help group scheme was to encourage Singaporeans to accept ethnic diversity and manage it so that it would become a source of strength for the country. At a National Day celebration in Bishan in 1993, Mr Wong Kan Seng, then-Minister for Foreign Affairs, noted: “It was not because we thought we are not all Singaporeans. But because we felt that each community knows best what its problems are and how best to tackle them.” It could also render aid without simply disbursing handouts.

Aware that the Eurasian community also included individuals who were disadvantaged economically and underperforming academically, the EA decided to work towards becoming a self-help group. Leading the EA in this quest was Mr Timothy de Souza, who became the EA’s president in 1991. Mr de Souza believed the time was ripe for the Eurasians to have their own self-help group with the purpose of mutual help while complementing the government’s efforts to enhance social mobility. He and his team believed it would be beneficial for the Eurasian community to ride on the wave of resurging ethnic pride.

In *Singapore Chronicles: Eurasians*, Dr Pereira wrote that state recognition was critical in rallying the community, and that the EA would be participating in the government’s programmes in exchange for greater recognition and representation of the Eurasian community in public life.

A monumental task lay ahead for the EA as it pursued this mutually beneficial relationship actively. Ms Amanda de Silva summed up some of its challenges in her thesis, *The Eurasian Association Singapore: From Social Club to Self-Help Group*.

Unlike the other three ethnic self-help entities which had been set up from scratch to function as welfare support groups for their respective ethnic communities, the EA, as a pre-existing social club, had to “alter its function so that it could serve its own ethnic community in the same way as other government-backed self-help groups”, Ms de Silva argued. It therefore had to get the consent and buy-in of its community.

Additionally, even if the EA had been successful in changing its scope, it was not guaranteed that the

Unlike the other three ethnic self-help entities which had been set up from scratch to function as welfare support groups for their respective ethnic communities, the EA, as a pre-existing social club, had to “alter its function so that it could serve its own ethnic community in the same way as other government-backed self-help groups”.

government would simply add it to the official circle of self-help groups and confer it the accreditation it sought, Ms de Silva pointed out.

Dr Alexis Pereira recalled that some government officials were shocked to hear that there were disadvantaged and underprivileged Eurasians, given that Eurasians had been prominent civil servants in the pre-independence period.

Nonetheless, Mr de Souza and his team worked hard at their endeavour to transform the EA from a social club to a self-help group. First, they expanded its original charter to include formally the rendering of aid to the community. The team also worked on developing programmes that could concretely and systematically improve the living standards of the wider community of Eurasians. Additionally, they sought to establish long-term funding sustenance to ensure the body's continued existence. The Eurasian community after all was small, with approximately 14,000 people in the 1990s.

Mr de Souza said they were motivated to develop official processes for the EA, further its purpose and direction, raise the profile of the Eurasian community to help boost the community's morale, as well as further cement its identity and promote unity. As part of this effort, the Eurasian Association Endowment Fund was established in 1991.

Mr de Souza also commissioned two studies of the Eurasian community to

determine the type of aid its people needed. Through her research, Dr Myrna Braga-Blake, a social work expert, uncovered more than 100 Eurasians who were in dire need of the government's assistance. They were living below Singapore's subsistence level in the early 1990s. This was a significant number for a small community, said Mr de Souza. Among them were casualties of the economic slump who had lost their jobs, and others who had found it challenging to adjust to changing circumstances over the years. Mr de Souza added: "Although the community was known historically for working in government agencies and with private companies, it was not quite true that all Eurasians were well off. With rapid changes in Singapore, some in the community had been left behind."

Meanwhile, Ms Ursula Snodgrass-Quah had been tasked to investigate the academic challenges faced by Eurasian students. The conclusion: students were doing well in English and were just behind the Chinese in mathematics and science. The main problem was in the second language department, where students, who historically had no Mother Tongue, were floundering and lagging behind. Since the second language was a determinant for university entry, this was a significant concern, said Mr de Souza. This was enough evidence for the association to officially launch its bid towards self-help group status.



(Centre, from the left) Minister for Trade and Industry George Yeo, President S. R. Nathan and his wife were welcomed by the Eurasian Dance Troupe during a visit to the Eurasian Association at 715 and 717 Mountbatten Road in September 1999. Picture: SPH Media Limited

The EA believed its bid could gain momentum if it had Eurasian representation in the government — just like the three main ethnic groups, which had Members of Parliament representing them and their interests. It hoped to participate in the policy and ideology behind this facet of Singapore's multiracialism, which could further boost the EA's profile in the society. The EA thus embarked on a search for representation in Parliament. In the early 1990s, there were no Eurasians in Parliament. The most recent was former Law Minister Mr E.W. Barker, who had retired from politics in 1988, and in 1992, had agreed to serve as Patron of the EA.

Mr George Yeo, then-Minister for Health and Minister for Information and the Arts, was approached to officially represent Eurasians in the Cabinet. A letter was written to then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan

Yew for permission, which was subsequently granted. As detailed in the association's *Annual Report 1992/1993*, Mr Yeo said: "I will gladly assist the Eurasian Association in whatever way I can and help provide the association with a link to the government..."

The EA believed Mr Yeo could relate to the "particular psyche" of Eurasians. He was a former student of a Christian Brothers' school, like the majority of Eurasian boys who were sent to Catholic schools; he had ties with the Holy Family Catholic Church in Katong, which many Eurasians attended; and he lived in the East Coast area, where a large number of Eurasians resided. Mr Yeo had also officiated at the Eurasian Heritage Day at the National Museum in 1991. Minister for Communications and Information S. Iswaran assumed Mr Yeo's role in 2012, after the latter was no longer in Parliament.

Next, the EA set about convincing the wider community of Eurasians of its goal. Mr de Souza said it was a massive exercise in persuasion and gaining trust, and that the two studies it had commissioned were critical in highlighting the needs of Eurasians in Singapore. He shared that the Prime Minister's support, as well as the ministerial representative in the form of Mr Yeo, were invaluable in engendering trust among Eurasians. The stars were aligned and it was now up to the EA to persuade Eurasians. "We had to get them on our side. If the members of the community did not own this and were not convinced that this was necessary, they would opt out," he said.

As it aspired for self-help group status, the EA wanted to expand its reach beyond its members to the entire Eurasian community. To do this, a new fund needed to be set up.

Developing the fund was "effectively putting in place a long-term plan for maintaining continuous financial support to those in the Eurasian community who needed it", Ms de Silva noted in her thesis. Developing its own funding mechanics and growing its own finances were part of the EA's inaugural attempt at self-help for the Eurasian community, and also demonstrated to the authorities the community's sense of ownership over its problems.

In 1991, the EA officially announced its intention to set up a \$2 million endowment fund to finance educational

and welfare programmes for the Eurasian community. *The Straits Times* reported that the fund would provide scholarships, bursaries and educational assistance for Eurasians, and also finance grants for the elderly and the handicapped.

In May 1992, the government made an agreement in principle to grant the Institute of Public Character status to the EA Endowment Fund. This meant that all donations to the fund would be tax exempt. This agreement symbolised that the government was on board with the organisation as it kicked off its journey towards attaining self-help group status.

Soon after, in July 1992, 100 EA members voted unanimously during an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) in support of a resolution to set up the fund. The fund was targeted to reach \$2 million in five years.

Fundraising efforts went into full swing. The EA organised a charity ball in October where the EA Endowment Fund was officially launched. Tables for this event were priced at \$2,000 and \$2,500. The event was attended by then-Deputy Prime Minister Ong Teng Cheong, who said that the government would give a dollar-for-dollar matching grant of up to \$1 million, spread over five years. DPM Ong said: "Just as you care about those who need help in your community, the government also cares. The government will match what you raise."



Then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong speaking at the EA's 75th anniversary celebration dinner at Pan Pacific Hotel in 1994. Picture: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Now, with the support of the government, the EA was on a more level playing field, allowing it to achieve welfare targets which the other self-help groups in Singapore were already meeting through the same dollar-for-dollar matching grants. The Eurasian community was heartened that it was being "viewed as of equal importance as those of the Malays, Chinese and Indians in Singapore", wrote Ms de Silva. She added that it was a big achievement for the small minority group which had revitalised itself only three years before.

#### A WATERSHED MOMENT: BECOMING A SELF-HELP GROUP

Over 10 years, beginning in 1991, Mr de Souza and his team led the transition of the association from a social club to an official self-help group for Singapore's Eurasians.

The EA was officially granted this status in 1994, qualifying as a registered charity, as well as an Institution of Public Character. The team's hard work paid off in 1994 when this announcement was made by then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong at the EA's 75th anniversary celebrations on 10 July 1994.

In his speech, PM Goh noted the gaps the EA had identified and was working to address, and also explained why the government believed it should become a self-help group.

For instance, he noted that the two studies the EA had commissioned revealed that while Eurasian children did well in English, they lagged behind in mathematics, science and especially the second language; and that while the percentage of Eurasians in hardship was lower than that of the



Among the guests at the EA's 75th anniversary dinner at Pan Pacific Hotel on 10 July 1994 were: (front row, from the left) Mr Timothy de Souza, Mrs Patricia de Souza, Mrs Goh Chok Tong, PM Goh Chok Tong, Mrs Gloria Barker, Minister for Health and Minister for Information and the Arts George Yeo, former Minister for Law E. W. Barker; as well as (back row, from the second from the left) Mr Bill Jansen, Mr Benett Theseira and Mr Bryan Davenport, all three of whom later became President of the EA. Picture: Eurasian Association

general population, it was still an important group to render aid to. At that point, 31 students were enrolled in the EA's tuition programmes and 85 recipients were on its welfare assistance programmes.

PM Goh added: "Since the two studies were completed, you have moved quickly to help its less privileged members."

He highlighted that the EA had a special role. It was reaching out to Eurasians in the community "in a way other agencies cannot". He explained that the government's support for ethnic-based self-help groups stemmed from their ability to produce results. Each of the groups understood their respective community's customs, taboos and approach to life, and could build rapport, and in turn, develop targeted programmes, he noted.

He gave the example of MENDAKI's Weekend Tuition Scheme, which had started 12 years before and had as of 1994, more than 9,000 students. Tuition programmes conducted by grassroots organisations had never attracted so many Malay students. He said that SINDA's and the CDAC's tuition programmes had similarly been well received and "have helped a segment of the population which would otherwise not be helped".

PM Goh ended his speech that evening, saying: "The government fully supports your association and its self-help programme. The association has asked for a check-off system of monthly contributions through the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board similar to that for MENDAKI, SINDA and CDAC.

"The government has agreed to this request. And to increase the association's financial resources, the government will match dollar for dollar the funds raised by the Eurasian Association up to a maximum of \$150,000 per year. This cap can be reviewed after five years."

He added: "The Eurasian community is very much a part of Singapore. I have no doubt that Eurasians will continue to play an active and prominent role in our nation's affairs."

PM Goh's announcement was a watershed moment for the EA. Apart from its inception, this was the most significant milestone in the EA's journey to date. The Eurasian community was now officially one of the four components of Singapore's "CMIO", and the EA had become one of the nation's four official ethnic self-help groups.

The EA would now go full steam ahead to provide customised assistance schemes, run engagement and community activities to share Eurasian cultural practices, ensure the socio-cultural advancement of its community, and serve as key drivers of racial harmony at the grassroots level.

Mr de Souza said: "The community finally had that sense of arrival and recognition after decades of feeling displaced. The Prime Minister of Singapore declaring it in 1994 had made it even more momentous for the community — especially for the

younger Eurasians, who could now see for themselves where they stood in society. The road to self-help group status was the route to equalising and restoring the status of the Eurasian community to its rightful place alongside the Chinese, Indians and Malays. It was a badge of honour with wide implications which were celebrated."

Over time, ethnic-based groups have appreciated in value in Singapore and society has evolved to depend on self-help groups as one of the means by which mutual understanding and tolerance are promoted across different religious-racial groups, noted *Dialectic.sg*.

#### THE EURASIAN COMMUNITY FUND

To fund its expanded welfare and education plans, the association, prior to gaining self-help group status, had decided to develop a regular, community-wide donations scheme to supplement the EA Endowment Fund.

This was referenced in PM Goh's announcement in 1994, when he said the government had agreed to its request for a monthly CPF check-off system, in a manner similar to that of the other self-help groups.

The EA believed it was only appropriate for Eurasians to collect money from their own community instead of soliciting from outside it.

As the treasurer of the EA's management committee, Mr Bennett Theseira was tasked with deciding how the new Eurasian Community Fund — to be launched as part of the new self-help group structure — was to be divided across the association's education and welfare programmes, its family service centres, and its social activities and programmes.

The bulk of the funds would be dedicated to the educational needs of lower-income Eurasians. His predecessors had hoped to develop a holistic support framework for Eurasian students, describing education as the "golden key". Now, Mr Theseira could bring this vision to life, under the structure of a self-help group. He said he was aware of the gravity of this "daunting task".

He also needed to help develop processes for the association as it made its transition into a full-fledged charity. This included introducing accounting software and writing policies and rules regarding the use of funds.

Mr Theseira engaged in discussions with the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Community Development (now the Ministry of Social and Family Development and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth) on this subject, and did the sums to work out the amount of contributions required to support the planned self-help programme. He proposed a contribution range of between \$1 and \$10 for each of the

6,000 working Eurasians of Singapore. "We were concerned about how receptive the community would be and did not want a backlash," he said. After all, the association was asking them to contribute on a long-term basis via their CPF accounts in an arrangement where the CPF Board would forward the deductions to the EA's Eurasian Community Fund.

To engage and educate the community, letters, newsletter pieces, brochures and articles in the press were written to raise awareness of the ongoing transformation of the organisation.

The EA also conducted community outreach programmes to explain to Eurasians the issues the needy among them faced.

It even established a hotline for Eurasians to call in and clarify what this meant for them individually. They could share their feedback as well. "Some of the difficult calls were referred to me. I did my best to get the callers to understand where we were coming from," said Mr Theseira.

He said most in the community had a great interest in helping the youth and investing in the future. "Some who were initially wary about the changes even came forward to volunteer," he said.

The eventual participation rate was healthy and after the first year, the EA had the highest participation rate of contributors among all the self-help

groups. Mr Theseira said it was "very fulfilling" to have played the role in getting people on board. It was the start of inculcating a culture of self-help among the Eurasians of Singapore, noted observers.

Eurasians started making monthly donations from their wages to the association's Eurasian Community Fund after its launch on 1 April 1995 by then-Deputy Prime Minister Ong Teng Cheong. Since 1995, the Ministry of Finance has been supporting the association with an annual matching grant. The Eurasian Community Fund serves as the EA's primary source of revenue.

Establishing the fund was the last step in the EA's transition into a self-help group. Now, Eurasians and the organisation were on equal standing as the other main races of Singapore and were part of the Republic's unique Community Self-Help Group strategy.

In a speech during an EA charity ball in October 1992, DPM Ong Teng Cheong shared the government's perspective, saying that Eurasians were not second-class citizens. "The statisticians may not think your numbers are significant, but the government certainly does. You are not mere statistics. You are an essential part of Singapore. You are full-fledged, full-blooded Singaporeans."

#### REDEFINING EURASIAN

While things at the national level were proceeding fruitfully, the EA also paid close attention to the concerns and issues faced by the Eurasian community. One of its priorities was to grow the membership of the EA itself not only by encouraging fellow Eurasians to join the association, but also by expanding the definition of what it meant to be a Eurasian.

The EA Constitution had, up until that point, defined a Eurasian as "a person whose father, or any of whose male progenitors in the male line, is or was of European descent, and whose name is etymologically European". This meant that previously, only children with European or Eurasian fathers could be members — a criterion that many argued was too limiting.

There had been attempts to relook it, such as in 1990 when diplomat Barry Desker raised the idea of changing the definition, but no consensus had been reached.

"The statisticians may not think your numbers are significant, but the government certainly does. You are not mere statistics. You are an essential part of Singapore. You are full-fledged, full-blooded Singaporeans."

At the 1993 EA AGM, the matter of redefinition of Eurasian for the EA was raised by former EA president Victor Olsen. At the meeting, it was decided that a committee would be set up to draw up a new definition. Mr Olsen suggested the updated definition should fall along the lines of “anyone whose identity card described him as one who had at least one Eurasian parent or is the offspring of a Caucasian and an Asian”.

A respected elder of the community, Mr Boris Theseira, was tasked to head this study, and a 17-member review sub-committee was formed. The taskforce organised community meetings and ground-sensing focus group interviews. The committee’s standpoint was that the existing definition for membership was outdated.

Mr Theseira said in a 1994 article in *The Straits Times*: “If you followed only the father’s race, then there would never have been any Eurasians. Because when, say, an Englishman married an Asian woman, the child would then have been English. The term Eurasian must have come about when these children were not accepted as purely European or Asian. They were unique. They were Eurasians.”

Each member of the committee was tapped to produce his or her own proposed definitions. These were collected and compiled by Mr Theseira. *The Straits Times* reported that after five meetings, the committee drafted its definition, which was also based on what the members had found in the Hobson and Jobson dictionary, a lexicon of Anglo-Indian terms. The proposed definition read: “A Eurasian is a person of mixed European and Asian ancestry who has shown a desire to be

identified as a Eurasian, i.e. a Eurasian is a person whose family has been accepted as Eurasian by custom and tradition, and has shown a desire to be identified as a Eurasian.”

The first clause on mixed European and Asian ancestry, removed the rule that only those with European or Eurasian paternity could be deemed Eurasian. Now, those with European or Eurasian mothers could be considered Eurasian, if they so desired.

The latter clause — which was to show a desire to be identified as a Eurasian — arose because some Eurasians were unable to produce documentary proof that they had at least one European ancestor. This applied to a good number of Eurasians who had immigrated to Singapore from places such as Malacca, Goa or Batavia where birth records were no longer available. These families, however, might have identified themselves as Eurasians for the past few centuries.

At the time, this proposed new definition was crafted for the purpose of allowing more people to join the EA. The intention was not to amend how the government categorised Eurasians in their NRICs.

The committee had worked hard to come up with a definition that would unite the community, to demonstrate that there was a larger definition of Eurasian than the British had earlier defined. Mr Theseira said: “People should no longer say they are Dutch-Eurasian, Portuguese-Eurasian or whatever. A Eurasian is a Eurasian.”

Eventually, the special committee published a report called *Survey for the Review Sub-Committee To Examine the Criteria for the Ordinary Membership in the EA, Singapore*, drafted by Dr Alexius Pereira.

## Welcoming first-generation Eurasians... into the local Eurasian community could help boost its numbers and ensure its longevity.

On 29 March 1994, the EA held its AGM at the People’s Association auditorium in Kallang. More than two-thirds of the votes cast by the members of the 1,400-strong association endorsed the new definition as spelt out in the report.

Now, anyone married, adopted or related by blood to Eurasians could join the association as life and ordinary members. This was to ensure that non-Eurasian spouses and the children of non-Eurasian fathers could be actively involved in the community.

Surveys conducted showed that many Eurasians, including those in the younger generation, agreed with the redefinition. Enshrined in this new definition was inclusivity.

Ms Amanda de Silva noted that the successful change in definition reflected evolving attitudes since pre-independence times — when the community had placed more weightage on their Europeanness as a unique characteristic. The new emphasis on the community’s Asianness and hybrid nature was perhaps an unconscious move for Eurasians to gain greater acceptance into mainstream Singapore society, she said.

The updating of the EA’s membership rules paved the way for more changes.

In 2009, MP Christopher de Souza for Holland-Bukit Timah GRC, having discussed the issue with the EA earlier that year, raised in Parliament the question

of whether the Education Ministry would consider allowing children of European-Asian marriages to be classified as Eurasians for Primary One registration, and whether the race of these children could be recorded as Eurasian and not Others.

Mr de Souza’s rationale, which he presented in Parliament, was to give the Eurasians a chance to feel that they belonged in Singapore and to welcome more individuals into the community’s folds. Welcoming first-generation Eurasians — those whose fathers were Caucasian and mothers were Asian — into the local Eurasian community could help boost its numbers and ensure its longevity.

Mr de Souza was quoted in an article in *The New Paper* as saying: “What we want to do is to inject vibrancy and longevity. Communities need to re-invent themselves. The Eurasian community has a very rich history of being loyal to Singapore. And we want to build on this by including Eurasians of different cultures into the community.”

Replying to Mr de Souza’s question, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry and Education, Mr S. Iswaran, said the current practice was that a child’s race would generally follow his father’s. Where one parent was Caucasian and the other Asian, the child’s race would by default be recorded according to the father’s race. However, he added that the race of the child could also be recorded as Eurasian



if both parents wanted it that way. He said schools could still entertain these requests for a change of race at important stages of a child's schooling life, such as the Primary One school admission exercises when parents would be asked to verify their child's particulars, including race. Both parents would need to agree on the change and show the required documents. The education institutions would then update its records and inform the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA).

A year after this parliamentary exchange, parents were given more flexibility to indicate the race for their children at birth. The change was introduced by the ICA to allow a child with mixed parentage to take on either parent's race, instead of following the father's race by default.

If parents could not decide the child's race when they registered the birth, the child would take on the father's race until the age of 15 – at which point, it would be officially recorded during the application for an identity card. Until then, parents could choose to change the race of their child for free.

The ICA said it would only follow the race recorded on the NRICs of either parent, or a mixed race if a child's parents were of different races.

The change came at a time when the number of Singaporeans marrying outside their race had been steadily rising. In 2007,

16.4 per cent of about 24,000 marriages had a bride or groom from a different ethnic group, compared to 8.9 per cent a decade earlier, working out to almost one in six of all marriages.

These changes were seen as beneficial in allowing the EA to widen its net to reach children who were not previously classified as Eurasian. The following year, the ICA also introduced double-barrelled race classifications.

The EA, in successfully steering through controversial changes to its constitution, effectively reversed the steady decline in Eurasian numbers.

During this period, membership of the EA doubled from 240 to 500 in the 1980s, and then to 1,000 around 1989. It grew to 3,026 in 2006, and as of 2019, stood at 2,572.

#### FINDING A PERMANENT HOME

Along with its new status as a self-help group, the EA's management committee hoped to gift the Eurasian community a permanent place they could call home.

It had not had a proper headquarters, having conducted its affairs in the homes of members, in rented function halls and in the premises of other community groups throughout its existence.

A new home would allow the EA the space to host its education, welfare, as well as cultural and heritage programmes.



The Eurasian Community House, photographed in November 2002, was officially opened by Singapore President S. R. Nathan on 5 July 2003. Picture: SPH Media Limited

The bid to find a permanent home, in terms of planning for the new space and raising funds, started in 1995.

In 1999, the government offered the EA land on Ceylon Road.

There were hiccups along the way. Space was tight in the east and the plot was odd-shaped. The EA initially found it challenging to pick a design that would maximise the plot ratio while meeting building requirements. There was also the complication of its first contractor going bust and the EA having to find another to complete the work.

Nonetheless, the journey towards owning its own place was enriching for this rekindled a wider spirit of self-help among Eurasians, noted Mr Bryan Davenport in an interview with the now-defunct daily *Streets* in 2003, when he was EA president.

By the end of 2002, the EA and

Eurasian community finally had a place to call their own. The aptly named Eurasian Community House, a \$6.2 million, four-storey complex, was the culmination of the community's long journey of triumphs and challenges over the decades.

Of the total building cost, 10 per cent had been raised by the association with the aid of Eurasians and other Singaporean donors. The government underwrote the remaining expenses.

It was arguably, a physical testament of the country's endorsement of the ethnic body and a reaffirmation of its support for the small community. It was also the cherry on top of the cake that capped yet another important milestone for the EA as a self-help group.

Its location in the East, on Ceylon Road, was also appropriate — Singapore's early Eurasians had settled in the area of Katong.



President S. R. Nathan (front row, second from the left) watching a Portuguese dance at the opening ceremony of the Eurasian Community House on Ceylon Road on 5 July 2003. With him were Minister for Trade and Industry George Yeo (second row, fourth from the left) and EA president Bryan Davenport (front row, leftmost). Picture: SPH Media Limited

A warm and homey design was selected for the Eurasian Community House — in homage to Eurasians' love for family and their hospitality. It comprised a restaurant, classrooms, training rooms, a museum space and a multi-purpose hall.

The Eurasian Community House has gone on to serve as a venue for educational and tuition programmes, family counselling sessions, music and other performances, and classes on sewing and baking, among others.

From 2019, it has also hosted the

Eurasian Heritage Gallery, consolidated and expanded from three earlier small galleries.

Central to the team leading this project were Mr Randall Snodgrass, as well as Mr Edward D'Silva, who later became EA President.

The Eurasian Community House was officially opened by Singapore President S. R. Nathan on 5 July 2003. There, he unveiled the building's commemorative plaque.

The building had been blessed

earlier by Archbishop Nicholas Chia on 5 April 2003.

The official opening was also attended by government officials and politicians, such as Minister for Trade and Industry George Yeo, Speaker of Parliament Abdullah Tarmugi, Minister for Community Development and Sports Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister of State for Community Development and Sports Chan Soo Sen, Mayor of Central Singapore Community Development Council Heng Chee How and Mayor of South East Community Development Council Othman Haron Eusofe.

Then-EA President Bryan Davenport said: "This is testimony indeed of the high esteem the EA enjoys in the eyes of our political leaders."

Guests were taken through the EA's new heritage gallery and treated to song and dance performances.

Mr Burton Westerhout described it as a big achievement. "We were always in borrowed premises. Seeing the completed building for the first time was a fantastic moment. I felt absolute pride. It was a tangible representation of the fruits of our labour. Now, the community had a gathering place of its own."

In the EA newsletter of September 2003, Mr Davenport said the Eurasian Community House marked the beginning of new and exciting adventures for

Eurasians. At the opening, he said: "This is a story of how one of the smallest minority communities in Singapore persevered with single-minded vision and unwavering determination to seek an identity of our own and yet being very much part of a mosaic of a larger Singapore community."

The Eurasian Community House symbolised the "return" of the Eurasian community in Singapore's public consciousness, after a period when Eurasians reported feeling "invisible", "forgotten" and unsure about their place in the country, wrote Dr Alexius Pereira in a chapter on the EA in the book, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*.

In his speech at the opening ceremony in 2003, Mr George Yeo, then the Minister representing Eurasians in the Cabinet, said: "It is tasteful, cosy and comfortable, in the Eurasian tradition."

He remarked that the association had grown from strength to strength, especially in the last 10 years when it became a self-help group supported by the government.

#### A REMARKABLE TURNAROUND

The EA's transformation into a self-help group has given the organisation the means, resources and financial capability to expand its functions and put it in better stead to help disadvantaged Eurasians.

Today, the costs of the EA's day-to-day operations are fully borne by the organisation. Its Eurasian Community Fund finances its education and welfare programmes. Other donations are channelled towards its other programmes.

The EA is distinct from the other four self-help groups here, because it also takes care of the community's development, maintains and promotes Eurasian culture, and represents Eurasians on the national level.

The EA has punched above its weight and its contributions have been considerable and noticeable since it achieved its self-help group status in 1994.

In 2006, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noted in his speech at the opening of the World War II gallery at the Eurasian Community House that a new generation of Eurasians is now making its mark within the community and on the national stage despite the group's small numbers.

He said he sensed the "revival of the Eurasian spirit" in recent years — a sea change from the post-independence years when many in the community emigrated to Australia.

He congratulated the EA for revitalising the community and leading it forward with renewed purpose and direction. He also applauded its efforts to uplift the community through education, noting that there have been positive results.

The EA's role as the community's spokesperson and its role in civic society have not only been reclaimed but have grown by leaps and bounds. The EA serves as an important conduit for Eurasians to articulate and contribute to conversations on the national platform.

The EA's input is valued across different segments of Singaporean life, with its management committee members and management staff representing the body on various working committees — a number of which are permanent positions. Indeed, the Singapore Government has shown increased recognition of Eurasians as Singapore's fourth ethnic community. Since 1990, the government has been actively inviting EA representatives to participate in national feedback sessions. The Eurasian view, via the EA, is now sought as a standard practice for matters on national policy.

Since 2018, the EA has been involved in: the Board of Directors for Self Help Groups Student Care, Community and Parents in Support of Schools (COMPASS), the Management Committee of OnePeople.sg which promotes racial harmony, the National Integration Council, the Compulsory Education Board with the Ministry of Education, the English Programme Advisory Committee with the Info-Communications Media Development Authority of Singapore, the

Racial and Religious Harmony Board with the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, the National Committee on Prevention, Rehabilitation and Recidivism, the National Youth Council, Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry @ Home (REACH), as well as other community groups.

The sense of isolation once felt by many Eurasians has dissipated as the advantage of being a recognised community of Singapore has boosted their psyche. There is no longer a keen competition between the two identities of Singaporean-ness and Eurasian-ness. They are Singaporean and Eurasian all at once.

The government has been supportive of the EA's work and progress in uplifting the community as a whole. For instance, it has formally recognised Eurasian culture, the community, and also changed the law for Eurasians such as in the racial classification system.

In the area of politics, in 2004, the government invited Eurasians to step forward as Nominated Members of Parliament (NMPs), and also said it was making extra effort to search for Eurasians to serve as MPs. The EA suggested individuals to step forward. Among them: Miss Eunice Olsen, who served as an NMP, and Member of Parliament, Mr Christopher de Souza.

More recently, in 2016, the EA was among a total of 19 groups and individuals invited by the Constitutional Commission to give its views on the proposed changes to the elected presidency at public hearings.

The EA serves as an essential, national-level body to foster and support racial harmony, contributing to the ethos of Singapore's multiracial system. It works hand in hand with the other self-help groups, with their own distinctive communities, to develop the Singapore story by building a cohesive Singapore family on the common ground of shared values, vision and purpose.

New tools, features and policies were put in place by the EA's management committees of the 1980s till the early 2000s to ensure the organisation's longevity. It is hoped that the management committees of the future, who take over the mantle, will embrace and embody the same spirit and ambition as their predecessors, and build on their contributions so that the EA will endure.

There is no longer a keen competition between the two identities of Singaporean-ness and Eurasian-ness. They are Singaporean and Eurasian all at once.

## TIMELINE OF OFFICES

1919–1989

For many decades, the Singapore Recreation Club had served as the Eurasian Association, Singapore's (EA's) main meeting venue. The EA also operated out of members' homes.

1993

The People's Association rented out a room at the Old Kallang Airport to the EA. It was occupied by two EA staff. There was just enough room to store its materials. Monthly management meetings were held there.

1994

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong announced at the EA's 75th anniversary ball that the government was going to spend \$1.2 million to refurbish two houses for the EA to use as its own premises.

1996–2001

The government allocated two freshly refurbished bungalows at 715 and 717 Mountbatten Road to the EA, as it was in need of greater space. The authorities renovated the houses for more than \$1.2 million before handing them over, and also subsidised the rent. One of the houses was turned into an office. The other served as a multi-purpose facility. At its opening, then-Minister for Information and the Arts George Yeo said the community house was symbolic of the government's support for the community. During this period, the EA decided to make plans to purchase its own building.

1999

A plot of land was leased out to the Eurasian Association at 139 Ceylon Road. The association went on to design and build a community house.

2002–Present

The four-storey Eurasian Community House was completed and operations commenced in September.



In its first 70 years or so, the EA used the Singapore Recreation Club as its main meeting venue. The old building — photographed in September 1994 — was demolished at the end of that year and replaced by the current building. Picture: SPH Media Limited



The EA rented an office from the People's Association, which used the Old Kallang Airport — photographed in August 2003 — as its headquarters, from 1993 to 1996. Picture: SPH Media Limited



The EA then rented two refurbished bungalows on Mountbatten Road — photographed in July 1996, when the EA moved there — from the government. Picture: Eurasian Association



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Providing  
*the Tools*  
*for Success*

At the Eurasian Association, Singapore (EA), the educational advancement of the Eurasian community has always been highly prioritised, even in the early years. This was because in Singapore, education is, perhaps, the single-most important means of accessing a better life. However, as with all societies, financial hardships may limit the educational opportunities of those less well off. Towards this end, the EA has gone the extra mile to ensure that no Eurasian students are denied the opportunity to do well in school and improve their situation in the future.

#### EDUCATION DURING COLONIAL TIMES

The EA's education mission has been evident ever since it was founded in 1919. Prior to 1919, the educational opportunities for the general population were generally rare and often only accessible to those who were economically advantaged.

However, the Eurasians, as a community, were somewhat fortunate as many got into schools in Singapore between the years 1834 and 1879 because of their close connection with the church, explained Dr Myrna Braga-Blake in the book, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*.

Therefore, Eurasian families who were less well off were not necessarily denied education. Some schools back then, especially those established by missionaries, were receptive in accepting less privileged Eurasians because they were Christians.

By 1882, in one mission school, for instance, 114 out of 147 boys were Eurasians or European. In 1875, results of the Government Scholarships Exam showed that out of 35 boys who sat for the examination in schools in the Straits Settlements, 32 were Eurasians.

This led to a situation where the Eurasian community was fairly well educated, allowing talented Eurasians to access good jobs in colonial Singapore. Eurasians were also among the early winners of a scheme of Higher Scholarships, the precursor of the Queen's Scholarships. From 1885 to 1910, 24 out of 45 scholarships were awarded to Eurasians, according to Dr Braga-Blake.

Some Eurasians did well enough to go abroad to study. When they graduated and came back to Singapore, they were among the first Asian lawyers, doctors and engineers in Singapore and Malaya. Some examples included the Baumgarten, Rodyk and Velge families, who were linked to the legal profession in the mid-19th century.

After the EA was formed in 1919, its members felt very strongly that they should, as a community, continue to help less fortunate Eurasians gain access to education, which in turn, would allow these individuals to access better jobs. Unfortunately, owing to World War II, much of the records of the EA were lost or destroyed, and no information survived on the programmes that were spoken of.

After the war, in 1947, the EA administered the Hochstadt Scholarship, which was introduced by the trustees of the estate of John Hochstadt, one of the founders of the Singapore Casket Company. At \$300 per annum, tenable for three years, these awards were for marine engineering, motor engineering, plumbing, carpentry, dressmaking, linotyping and nursing.

In addition to this were the Eurasian Industrial Scholarship and the EA School Scholarship for those in the eighth standard (Secondary 2 in the current system). In 1948, a Eurasian Voluntary Industrial Scholarship was started to apprentice boys in trades. In 1971, EA president Thomas Wilfred Prins launched a drive to start a \$100,000 scholarship fund.

Annual grants were also awarded to deserving students throughout the post-war years. In 1984, for instance, 14 grants worth over \$5,000 were given out. Notably, these scholarships were funded entirely by the members within the Eurasian community.

Prior to 1994, there was no governmental financial support for education.

#### FROM SOCIAL CLUB TO SELF-HELP GROUP

In the 1980s, there were growing concerns about the less well-off in Singapore. The government encouraged the main racial groups in Singapore to address educational underachievement, which was the main reason that people got left behind and formed the social underclass. Eventually, this government strategy became known as the Self-Help Group strategy, wrote Dr Alexius Pereira in the book, *Singapore Chronicles: Eurasians*.

The strategy aimed to get the respective ethnic communities to help the lower-income individuals within their own community through educational programmes, social services and worker training assistance. The key component of the strategy was a monthly contribution of a proportion of a working adult's salary to his or her ethnic group's fund, administered through the government's CPF scheme. The government then matches these contributions via financial grants to these organisations to run programmes.

By 1992, the three larger ethnic groups in Singapore had their own respective self-help groups to actively promote educational and socio-economic progress within their own communities. Yayasan MENDAKI, SINDA and the CDAC had all been formed with government backing and support. In 1994,

the EA was formally recognised as a Self-Help Group, and a year later, the EA set up the Eurasian Community Fund (ECF).

In 2019, around 7,000 full-time employed Eurasians, which was around half the total number of Eurasians in Singapore, contributed a portion of their monthly salary – ranging from \$2 to \$20 – to the ECF. The government then matches these contributions. In 2014, the government doubled the cap on its dollar-for-dollar matching grants for the EA from \$200,000 to \$400,000. In 2018, according to the EA’s Annual Report, the ECF contribution for the year was \$764,702, which was then matched with the maximum value possible at \$400,000.

According to the Constitution of the EA, last updated in 2016, the ECF monies can be used only for the purposes of education and family support services. The following section focuses on educational programmes, and family support will be discussed in the next chapter.

### EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

In the early 1990s, the EA received feedback from the community regarding how Eurasian students were performing in the second language in school. English was not a problem for Eurasians. English – the main medium of education in Singapore – was also their native language.

However, with the post-independence government’s focus on multiculturalism, a

second language became a key component in the nation’s education system. As part of this system, all students had to study English plus a second language. For the Chinese, it was the Chinese language. For the Malays and Indians, it was Malay and Tamil respectively. For Eurasians, they had the option of choosing any of the second languages offered in their particular school.

Mr Edmund Rodrigues, who served on the EA Education Committee for more than 10 years, said that in those days, most Eurasians opted to learn Malay, in part because older Eurasians had learnt Malay as a second language living in Singapore, which had been under Malaya for a short time. Later, with China’s emergence as a major economy, more Eurasian students began to take on the Chinese language.

In 1992, Ms Ursula Snodgrass-Quah, the EA’s chair of the education sub-committee, undertook a study to ascertain the achievement levels of Eurasian students. It found that indeed there was a problem with the second language. The recommendations from the study were that the EA had to intervene to improve the second language performance for Eurasian students, and to have motivational talks to Eurasian parents on the vital importance of the subject.

Those that had the means often hired a private tutor. For lower-income Eurasian students, the EA was on hand to assist. The EA organised remedial tuition classes

in both Malay and Mandarin. The fees paid by the low-income students ranged from nothing to \$2 a month in the 1990s. The EA also partnered with MENDAKI and the CDAC to provide low-cost tuition for the Malay and Chinese languages respectively.

In a speech to the EA in 2000, Minister for Trade and Industry George Yeo said: “All of us understand the importance of a good education. In the New Economy, our ability and willingness to learn new skills are especially important. A good education enables us to acquire new knowledge and adapt to the rapidly changing requirements of the job market.

“I applaud the Eurasian Association for giving top priority to the advancement of education. The success of our efforts can be clearly seen in the academic performance of Eurasian students in national examinations at various levels. At PSLE, the proportion of Eurasians qualifying for secondary school has increased in line with the general cohort. As a group, Eurasian students rank second after the Chinese, ahead of the Indians and Malays. At N-Levels, O-Levels and A-Levels, Eurasian students perform just as well and are ranked second or better among the races in most subjects. Eurasians are ranked first in English at all levels and in the percentage of students who clear A-levels with at least 2 ‘A’ and 2 ‘AO’ passes. However, Eurasian students underperform in the Mother Tongue, consistently ranking 4th or last at every level. This is primarily because what the Mother Tongue is for Chinese, Malays and Indians is, in fact, a second language for Eurasians.”

By 2000, Eurasian students, as a whole, had dramatically improved their performance in the second language. Mr Yeo noted at the time: “The trends in recent years do show improvement. At O-levels, we have moved from a 50 per cent pass rate in 1996 to a 62 per cent pass rate in 1999, which is a major achievement especially when compared to the 5-point average improvement for the national cohort during the same time period. We have also made similar improvements at PSLE. But we are still behind the other races and must work harder on the second language.”

By the 2010s, the demand for these second language remedial classes had fallen. The EA saw this as a positive step; it meant there were real improvements in an area where

“Eurasians are ranked first in English at all levels and in the percentage of students who clear A-Levels with at least 2 ‘A’ and 2 ‘AO’ passes. However, Eurasian students underperform in the Mother Tongue, consistently ranking 4th or last at every level. This is primarily because what the Mother Tongue is for Chinese, Malays and Indians is, in fact, a second language for Eurasians.”



The EA has also organised tuition schemes, such as this mathematics tuition session held in December 2017. Picture: Eurasian Association

Eurasian students had previously struggled. Some even excelled in the second language.

Five-year-old Ryan Koenig, for instance, managed to clinch the top prize for the preschool category at a Mandarin speech contest in 2017. Ryan, whose mother is a Singaporean Chinese and whose father is of German descent, spoke in Mandarin in front of 100 people at the 11th YMCA Mandarin Speaking Awards, which drew 277 participants from 76 schools.

Over the years, the EA has organised other classes, programmes and tuition schemes for a range of other subjects. In the 1990s, the EA worked with SINDA, which was headed by Mr S. Iswaran at the time, to allow Eurasian students to take classes in mathematics and science subjects in SINDA centres if these were closer to their homes.

The EA is part of the Collaborative Tuition Programme, where all four self-

groups hold common tuition classes in some 60 centres across Singapore. Again, for low-income Eurasian students, the fees payable are heavily subsidised by the EA. For example, primary school pupils pay \$8 per subject per month for weekly English, mathematics or science classroom tuition. For secondary school students, the fee is \$12 per subject per month. The collaborative tuition programme, especially for subjects such as mathematics and science, was a major boost for low-income Eurasian students.

"We did not have the critical mass needed to do our own tuition programmes for mathematics and science, because of various factors. One was location," said Mr Geoffrey da Silva, who chaired the EA's education committee from 2003 to 2015. Unlike in the past when many Eurasians lived in the Katong and Serangoon area, now the community is more spread out



Collaborative Tuition Programme students who received the Joint Tuition Awards with Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister for Home Affairs and Trade and Industry S. Iswaran in 2015. Picture: Eurasian Association

and some find travelling to the Eurasian Community House on Ceylon Road an inconvenience. Therefore, the easy availability of joint centres with the other self-help groups proved helpful.

More recently, the EA has organised non-academic educational programmes. The most popular are Information and Communications Technology (ICT) programmes. The EA is aware that children from lower-income families are more likely to miss out on being exposed to computers because of the costs. Yet, ICT familiarity and expertise are critical as Singapore is very much in the digital economy.

For this reason, the EA has collaborated with various agencies and corporations to interest low-income students in the field of computing. For example, since 2016, the EA, in tandem with the other self-help groups, are part of Google's "Code in the

Community". Targeted for students aged between 8 and 15 years old, the programme involves 10 weekend sessions (2 hours each) where Google programmers teach coding. One participant was Secondary 1 student Danial Alexander DiDonato, who after 10 weeks, coded a word-based computer game.

#### BURSARIES AND SCHOLARSHIPS

The EA has always awarded scholarships to less fortunate Eurasian students, even when it functioned without government support before 1994.

With the ECF, the EA had greater resources to help less fortunate Eurasian students. To be eligible for these bursaries, the qualifying criteria in 2019 was that the gross household income should be no more than \$3,000 or the per capita income should be no more than \$800.



## EDWARD D' SILVA SCHOLARSHIP

When Mr Edward D'Silva served as the EA President (2008–2010), he met many promising Eurasian students who had difficulties proceeding to higher levels of education without financial assistance. "Many of these young Eurasians could have the potential to be community and national leaders. They just needed the opportunity," said Mr D'Silva, who became an EA Trustee in 2016.

So in 2012, he set up a scholarship to help them. The scholarship, administered by the EA, provides \$2,000 per year for an ITE student, and \$4,000 per year for a polytechnic student. In 2012, two ITE scholarships were given, followed in 2013 by three ITE and two polytechnic scholarships.

The Edward D' Silva Scholarship for polytechnic students has helped Ms Shannon Ezrela Siew fulfil her childhood ambition of studying psychology. That would allow her to become a special education teacher so she could teach children like her younger brother, aged 18, who has autism and is studying in Pathlight School. She desired to give special needs children the best start in life and help them maximise their potential.

Her family was facing various challenges that could have derailed her education and career plans. Her mother, who had become a housewife so as to care for her brother, was diagnosed with cancer in 2013. Her family relied on the single income of her father, who is in the sales industry. Ms Siew was hospitalised and had to undergo surgery to take out a big cyst in her ovary in 2018.

So it was with much relief and gratitude that she managed to secure the scholarship. "If I didn't have that scholarship, I would have been so much more stressed trying to find sideline work like giving tuition to help support myself through school as I didn't want to overly tax my parents," said Ms Siew, aged 21.

Under the scholarship, she received \$3,600 a year to help with tuition fees, transport and book expenses for her first two years at Temasek Polytechnic. Her brother has also received education bursaries from the EA in the past.

Ms Siew has enrolled in a "diploma+" programme, which would give her a certificate in transcultural studies on top of her diploma in psychology. "I chose to take up cultural studies because I am inspired by the EA. Learning about culture helps me better understand my identity as a Eurasian and reach out more effectively to students from other cultures whom I may teach next time," said Ms Siew, who is also participating in the EA's youth mentorship programme where



Ms Shannon Siew with Mr Edward D' Silva, who started a scholarship for polytechnic students, which is administered by the EA and funded her studies for two years. Picture: Eurasian Association

she is paired up with an external mentor, a special needs teacher, in her case.

She was a recipient in the EA's scholarship and various programmes, and Ms Siew continues to give back to the EA and society in other ways. Over the last two years, she has been helping the EA man its booths and sell heritage books at various heritage festivals. She also pitches in to serve lunch to needy beneficiaries at Christmas lunches organised by the EA's Family Support Services. Beyond the EA, she volunteers as a teacher assistant at AWARE Singapore's student care centre for special needs children.

So far, the support from the scholarship has placed Ms Siew in good stead. She has an above average GPA of 3.6 out of a total possible score of 4 in her polytechnic course. She said: "I am grateful to EA and its educational support because it gives me the opportunity to advance my studies even up to the tertiary level."

In 1996, the EA organised its first ECF Education Awards ceremony, where around 200 students were given bursaries. The quantum awarded for these bursaries ranged between \$100 and \$300.

In 2009, the EA started a new bursary scheme to enable Eurasian students from needy families who do well academically and in other areas to pursue post-secondary education. It launched the Merit Bursary Awards Scheme to grant full scholarships and stipends to deserving students wishing to enrol in polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education (ITE).

The impetus for this bursary scheme came after a teenage girl approached Mr Geoffrey da Silva for financial help to enrol in Ngee Ann Polytechnic, after completing her studies at the ITE. However, her father was a dispatch rider and the family did not have enough money to put her through further studies.

Mr da Silva then asked her for her results at the ITE and learnt that she had a perfect score of 4.0. Not wanting this deserving student to miss out on any chance of furthering her education, he appealed to the polytechnic for help. In the end, bursaries from the EA and the polytechnic supported her through school.

"That was when we saw a need for financial support for the tertiary level and went out to the community to seek donations. People were willing to give but

they told us to be careful to give to only those that need and deserve it, so that's why we created both a bursary and merit component, where they have to show evidence of progress, to the award," said Mr da Silva, 66.

A year later, a separate scholarship scheme — known as the EA University Scholarship — for students wishing to study at universities was introduced. For these, the EA paid for up to \$10,000 per year towards the school fees of local universities.

The monies for such scholarships were from sources other than the ECF. One major donor was Mr Lawrence Da Silva, who donated \$100,000 to set up the Oscar George da Silva University Scholarship, which has the same terms and conditions as the EA University Scholarship. This generous donation doubled the number of scholarships that the EA could give to needy students who had done well enough to get to university. In more recent years, the EA used funds from the government's Care and Share scheme for the university scholarships.

Similarly, from 2010, polytechnic students wishing to further their studies at a university could benefit from financial assistance via the EA University Scholarship for Polytechnic Graduates. The idea for this came from then-President S. R. Nathan, who himself hailed from a humble background.



Nicholas Nelson Oliveiro (second from the right) and his family and Viaano Mikhael Spruyt (rightmost). Picture: Eurasian Association

### HOMEWORK SUPERVISION PROGRAMME

Nicholas Nelson Oliveiro used to have sleepless nights because he found the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O-Level) mathematics confusing and was afraid of disappointing his teachers should he fail the tests.

But the then 16-year-old had a patient and encouraging mentor — Viaano Mikhael Spruyt, then 19 — who motivated him to push beyond his own perceived limits. “He never sounded impatient while giving me guidance and that made me comfortable to ask him questions. He found different ways to help me understand the problems I raised and gave me time to learn from my mistakes,” said Nicholas. “All the little gestures encouraged me to want to do better and persevere and not give up,” he added.

Both of them were paired under the Homework Supervision Programme (HSP) that was launched in 2015 with the aim of recruiting Eurasian tertiary level students to act as mentors to younger pupils. These students face financial and other problems and therefore also need help with their homework. The older students volunteer their time, not as teachers but as role models who can help develop the mentee’s confidence and motivation in both academic and non-academic areas. Viaano would meet Nicholas for the coaching once a week, often staying beyond the designated 90-minute session.

The bond between the two was so tight that Nicholas immediately texted Viaano on the day that he received his O-level results. He had done well, especially for Additional Mathematics where he achieved a B3 grade. Viaano said: “It was a heart-warming moment when I saw his text. He was over the moon and I felt that he had developed a lot as a young man and he achieved the wonderful results because of his positive attitude, determination and commitment to learn.”

Nicholas eventually enrolled in Nanyang Polytechnic, studying aerospace management. He said: “It’s rare to know what path you wish to take even before the examinations and no right or wrong path. Viaano encouraged me to follow my heart and go for my dream.”

Viaano’s involvement with the EA began early on. As a child, Viaano had joined the EA football team and he had also received the Edward D’Silva Polytechnic Scholarship in 2016 from the association. So volunteering regularly for EA events and programmes was a natural progression for him. “I have always had a special connection with the EA and wanted to give back to the Eurasian community,” said Viaano. Later, he completed a diploma in Social Sciences at Nanyang Polytechnic, which gave him an interest in working with young people, and the HSP programme was the ideal opportunity to put this into practice. “As someone who has gone through the same system, I understand the hardships that he is going through. I can advise him how to make decisions to cope with the challenges,” said Viaano.

Nicholas’ mother, Ms Chong Siok Ling, 43, said Nicholas might not have done as well in his studies if he did not meet Viaano or join the HSP programme. “My son looks up to Viaano as he has talked to Nicholas about his own personal struggles. After each session, Nicholas is more confident and determined to resolve his academic issues. Viaano also paid us a visit after Chinese New Year and talked about his ambitions, which was a sincere effort and further motivated my three sons,” said Ms Chong.

Viaano hopes the young students who had been mentored will pay it forward and in turn, guide others. He said: “Being a mentor allows us to use our own stories to ensure that our mentees do not make the same mistakes as we did. We also gain a sense of accomplishment and make a positive difference to another person’s life.”

Other donors have tasked the EA to manage its scholarship and bursary funds especially for underprivileged Eurasian students. Some bursaries cover the school fees, as well as the costs of books, uniforms and transportation of needy students from secondary schools, the ITE and polytechnics.

“In this manner, the Eurasian community is directly helping the next generation of Eurasians to develop and do well in life,” said Dr Alexius Pereira, the president of the EA. It is his wish that the recipients of these awards will remember that, and one day, when they are able to, contribute back to the Eurasian community.

In terms of impact created, Dr Pereira noted that at an average of 300 students each year, over the 20 years since the ECF was introduced, the EA would have assisted at least 3,000 unique Eurasian students (as some students might be assisted for several years that they were in school).

Paying it forward, several recipients of the awards have returned to volunteer at the EA. For instance, older students come back to mentor the younger ones.

In 2015, the EA rolled out its Homework Supervision Programme to assist students who are going through financial and other hardships affecting their school work. The Homework Supervision Programme is not a tuition programme; its objective is for students at tertiary levels to mentor younger students in primary and secondary

levels. Around eight scholarship and bursary recipients befriended younger Eurasian students in the programme in 2016. The older students meet the younger ones for 90 minutes a week and guide them if they need help with their homework or other issues.

### AWARDS

As part of the ECF Awards Ceremony from 2002 onwards, the EA Management Committee decided to recognise Eurasian students who had done well at the major national examinations, such as the PSLE, O-Levels and A-Levels at the same ceremony where low-income students were receiving their bursaries. The thinking behind this was that it was necessary for the community to recognise and celebrate with Eurasian students who had excelled in school. These awards would not be tagged to income and were entirely based on merit.

The EA Management Committee also took this as an opportunity to get the community involved. It created “named” awards for each major national examination. Here, donors could name the award for a donation that would eventually be given to the student. Given that the main reason for having these awards was to recognise top Eurasian students and not to provide financial support, the quantum for these awards were relatively small (ranging from \$100–\$300).

## CORAL DE CRUZ MEMORIAL FUND

As a tribute to their mother, Justice Judith Prakash and her brother, Ambassador Simon Tensing de Cruz, set up the Coral de Cruz Memorial Fund through the EA in 2010 to support the education of underprivileged primary and secondary school children.

Born in Penang with 16 other siblings, Mrs Coral Alma de Cruz had been keen on studying law but could not afford to go to university.

Instead, she had to find work, and eventually served as the confidential secretary for lawyer David Marshall, who later became Singapore's Chief Minister.

"She did not have a chance to fulfil her educational aspirations despite being a very intelligent woman so my brother and I wanted to set up a memorial fund to honour her memory," said Justice Prakash, who then also fulfilled her mother's dream on her behalf by going on to be Singapore's first female and only Judge of Appeal, and second female judge appointed to the Supreme Court.

Justice Prakash and Mr de Cruz have been donating an average of \$8,000 a year to the EA and over the last nine years, 42 students have received bursaries under the memorial fund. Each student receives \$1,200 for an academic year. Recipients must be secondary school students in families with gross household incomes of \$3,000 or below, or per capita income of \$800 or less.

Mrs Coral de Cruz died in 1965 when Ms Prakash was 13 and Mr de Cruz was 11. Their parents understood the importance of education and gave them a strong educational foundation. This was a key driver behind the motivation to set up the fund.

Mr de Cruz would later spend 35 years in the foreign service as a diplomat and he is currently Singapore's non-resident ambassador to Ukraine.

"We have done well and we also want to help others maximise their chances in life through educational opportunities so that in turn, they can pay it forward," he said.

Justice Prakash agreed. "We want them to be able to stay in school because that, in turn, exposes them to other opportunities that their families may not be able to give them, things like concerts, plays or other arts," she said.

ITE student Chloe Renee Roberts, 18, received the bursary under the memorial fund when she was in secondary school.

"The bursary helped my parents save extra money as they did not have to worry about my daily allowances, along with my sister's," she said. "I think it is a kind and pleasant practice for the community to contribute and help those who are in need."



Justice Judith Prakash and her younger brother, Mr Simon Tensing de Cruz, set up a fund in memory of their mother. Pictures: SPH Media Limited



Azalea Oliveiro receiving the Temasek Cares Education Bursary in a presentation ceremony from the guest of honour, Justice Judith Prakash, in March 2016. Picture: Eurasian Association

## TEMASEK CARES EDUCATION BURSARY

Back in 2010, the EA noticed that some families could do with more financial help, especially when it came to education for their children.

At that time, the MOE's criteria for its Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) was about \$625 per capita income. Some families, such as the Oliverios, narrowly missed the criteria by about \$80 to \$100.

"We applied for MOE FAS but was unsuccessful. I think their criteria was strict because there were many families who were applying for it," said Mrs Maslina Oliverio, 45, an assistant development partner at a statutory board. She is the sole breadwinner in their family of four. Her husband used to maintain train tracks but has been unemployed for the last decade.

To ensure that low-income families do not fall through the cracks, the EA worked with Temasek Cares to start a new bursary in 2010 called the Temasek Cares Education Bursary. Criteria for this new bursary was fixed at an income level slightly above that for the FAS, at about \$800 per capita income. It was an income level that the EA felt families still needed an extra leg up.

The Temasek Cares Education Bursary was disbursed from 2010 to 2016. A total of \$151,313 was given to 108 primary and secondary students.

Mrs Oliveiro's daughter, Azalea, received the Temasek Cares Education Bursary in 2016, on top of the usual bursary she got under the EA's Eurasian Community Fund Education Awards.

The Temasek Cares Education Bursary entailed a \$450 payout, which defrayed Azalea's school-related expenses such as the costs of school books and uniforms. She was in Primary 4 then.

Azalea also has an older sister who was studying at the ITE. Almost every year, both sisters received some form of educational bursary from the EA. They are also part of the EA's Eurasian dance troupe and have represented the association to perform in major events such as Chingay and President's Star Charity.

"The added financial support did help a bit but what was more important was Azalea feeling excited about going up on stage and getting the bursary," said Mrs Oliverio. "She felt appreciated and that boosted her morale and encouraged her to study harder."

## A SELECTION OF EA'S EDUCATION AWARDS

Individuals and families have generously come forward to donate monies towards assisting or recognising Eurasian students.

Here is a listing of some recent awards and scholarships administered by the EA.

Bursary/Educational Financial Assistance Awards	Donor
Beryl Lucy Phillips-Hochstadt Special Award	Mr Herman R. Hochstadt
Coral de Cruz Memorial Fund	Justice Judith Prakash and Ambassador Simon de Cruz
Irene Joseph Memorial Award	The Joseph Family
Mads A. Lange & Pansy Theseira-Lange Education Bursary	Mr Christopher Monteiro and Mrs Gloria Lange-Monteiro
Mr Allen Reynold Patrick and Mrs Beryl Constance O'Hara Award	Mr Christopher and Ms Sharon de Souza
Mr Carlisle E.W. and Mrs Helena Josephine de Souza Award	Mr Christopher and Ms Sharon de Souza
P.K.P. Nair Memorial Award	Mr Richard Joseph & Ms Michelle Penney
Project Ray of Hope	Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth
Herbert Schoon Progress Award	Ms Schoon Hananeel Marie

Excellence Awards	Donor
Peter H. Fernandez Award (Top PSLE)	Mrs Elsie da Silva
Colonel R. J. Minjoot Award (Top N (Academic)-Level, N (Technical)-Level and Outstanding ITE)	Mr Gerald Minjoot
Evelyn Rodrigues Award (Top O-Level)	Mrs Evelyn Rodrigues
Peggy Wai Chee Leong-Hochstadt Award (Top A-Level)	Mr Herman R. Hochstadt
Lawrence Henry da Silva Award (Outstanding Polytechnic)	Mrs Elsie da Silva
Henry David Hochstadt Award (Outstanding University)	Mr Herman R. Hochstadt
Minnie Leicester-D'Rozario Award (for Literature students)	Mrs Evelyn Rodrigues

Scholarships	Donor
Edward D'Silva Scholarship	Mr Edward D'Silva
Oscar George da Silva University Scholarship	Mr Lawrence da Silva
The EA University Scholarship	President's Challenge Fund
The EA Merit Bursary Award (for Polytechnic and ITE)	President's Challenge Fund

General Education Support/Recognition	Donor
C O Donough Sports Scholarship	Ms Gerardine Donough-Tan
Joseph Schooling Sports Grant	Mr Colin and Mrs May Schooling
Fredric Fox Award (Meritorious Sports)	Mr Oscar Joseph Oliveiro
Harry Elias Award (Outstanding Sports)	Mr Harry Elias

In 2002, seven such named awards were added to the usual bursaries. These awards were sponsored by Eurasian individuals in the community and some were named after them or their family members. These include the Colonel R. J. Minjoot award, sponsored by Mr Gerald Minjoot, for the top student in the General Certificate of Education Normal Level (GCE N-level) examinations, and the Evelyn Rodrigues Award, sponsored by Mrs Evelyn Rodrigues, for the top GCE O-level student.

In addition, the EA administers the education bursary given by non-profit philanthropic organisation Temasek Cares to needy primary, secondary and junior college students. On average, a total of \$230,000 is disbursed in education awards annually. The money goes to some 360 beneficiaries.

Besides study and bursary awards for academic achievements, there are also awards that seek to empower Eurasians in other ways, such as in sports, an area where many Eurasians thrive.

In 2015, one of the new awards that was presented at the ECF Award ceremony was the Rudolph Mosbergen Sports Bursary. The award is named after the late Rudy Mosbergen, a national coach and principal, to inspire young Eurasians to excel in sports. The first recipient of the award was Travis Joshua Woodford who pursued a Diploma in Sport Coaching at Republic Polytechnic.

The Schooling family also invested in

the Joseph Schooling Sports Grant. The EA decided to set up the grant after Joseph Schooling won Singapore's first Olympic gold medal at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, to recognise his achievements, and to inspire young Eurasians to strive for sporting excellence. The cash award of \$5,000 is meant to defray training and equipment costs that a Eurasian athlete might incur in pursuit of high standards of achievement in the chosen sport, while at the same time, balancing full-time studies.

The first Joseph Schooling Sports Grant recipient was Tia Rozario, a hurdler who had represented Singapore at the SEA Youth Athletics Championships, and had won several national competitions. In addition, Tia had done very well in school to qualify to be accepted into Princeton University in the United States to study bio-sciences from 2019.

### OTHER EA EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

The EA also has a partnership with the other self-help groups and the Ministry of Education to run 30 school-based student care centres for students of all races by 2020. The EA introduced three programmes — art, percussion and communication skills — to support the holistic development of the students.

A new learning centre — called Vibrance @ Yishun — was set up in 2018 by all the



Then-Minister for Education Ong Ye Kung (second from the right), talking to residents during his visit to the Vibrance @ Yishun centre on 5 August 2018, accompanied by MENDAKI CEO Rahayu Buang (second from the left) and SINDA Acting CEO Anbarasu Rajendran (fourth from the left). Picture: SPH Media Limited

self-help groups to offer educational programmes, workshops and multicultural events for students and their families.

The K2-One Bridging Programme was a collaboration between the self-help groups from 2008 to 2012, and the main objective was to prepare K2 students for Primary 1. The EA organises Project Ray of Hope at the end of each year, to disburse vouchers from shoe retailer Bata and bookstore Popular to help students purchase school items such as books, stationery and shoes, to prepare for the next school year.

#### FUTURE PLANS

Dr Alexius Pereira said a study to review the educational needs of Eurasian students should be done to help in the forecasting of relevant services in future.

“The other self-help groups are strong in offering tuition programmes and so there is no need for us to duplicate that. We have to develop other niche programmes that would be helpful in equipping our students for the future, in aspects such as creative thinking or problem solving,” he said.

Mr Derek Scully, who has been in the EA’s education committee since 2003, said one need that the committee plans to address in the near future is supporting families with special needs children, either through monetary support or subsidising the costs of assessment and special intervention programmes.

“When you have a special needs child, usually one out of two parents will have to stop working and there is less income. Some parents also don’t send their children to be



Eurasian students at the 2009 graduation ceremony of the K2-One Bridging Programme, organised by the four self-help groups to assist lower-income students who were not yet ready to attend primary school. Picture: Eurasian Association

assessed and diagnosed for developmental disorders because the waiting list at public hospitals is long while it is expensive to do so at private hospitals,” said Mr Scully, 58, who himself has a son with dyslexia. He also urged Eurasians to make full use of the range of bursaries and study awards available to the community. “Some people don’t come forward because they don’t like to ask for help or they are not aware of the various educational support schemes,” he said.

Another area that Mr Geoffrey da Silva hopes the current education committee will look into is the support for adult learners. “Some of them start work after graduating from polytechnic but later see the value of furthering their studies at private universities,” he said. “Our difficulty has always been about how to

ascertain the quality of certain private schools and courses. In future, perhaps options from established universities like Singapore University of Social Sciences can be considered and we can support them with lifelong learning,” he added.

Mr da Silva said he sees two groups of young people now at the EA. Those in one group come from humble backgrounds and had to work hard to make their way through the education system and to progress in society. Those from the other group come from relatively privileged backgrounds and the smarter ones often study at prestigious universities abroad. “My dream is for these two groups of young professionals to get to know each other and work together to form the next generation of leaders for the Eurasian community.”



Helping  
*the Less*  
Fortunate

The welfare arm of the Eurasian Association, Singapore (EA) — the Family Support Services (FSS) — provides assistance and guidance to Eurasians from underprivileged backgrounds, especially the elderly and families at risk. Through its various programmes and funds, FSS helps the Eurasian community to manage the hardships of life's unforeseen circumstances, build self-confidence and become self-reliant.

The FSS financial assistance scheme provides families in need with supplementary financial aid for between one and twelve months. Beneficiaries include families who have elderly at risk, single-parent families and those that are going through difficult transition periods or whose breadwinner has been struck by a significant catastrophic event. The EA's FSS, along with education services, is funded by the Eurasian Community Fund (ECF).

In this regard, the EA is slightly different from the other three self-help groups because they focus solely on educational upliftment.

Today, the EA's FSS employs one full-time case worker, and has around 30 volunteers. According to the EA's audited Annual Report for the year 2018, its

expenditure on the FSS was \$302,720, much higher than that in the early days.

#### HISTORY

Although the EA's FSS has been formally in place for about 25 years, welfare has been a central focus of the association for nearly all of its 100 years. Indeed, as noted by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his speech at the launch of the Singapore Bicentennial in January 2019, the EA was formed in 1919 to assist disadvantaged Eurasians in almost the same manner as the Chinese clan associations and the many religious welfare organisations at around the same time.

The EA might not have had a "welfare department" or even social workers in the early years, but anecdotal reports indicate that the EA had handed out financial assistance to needy Eurasians. The amounts might not have been large, mainly because these were entirely donations made by EA members themselves, but these would have certainly helped Eurasians. This would be especially so in an era where state welfare was almost non-existent, thanks to the British colonial administration's laissez-faire organisation of society. When the Japanese Military Administration took over Singapore in 1942, the EA was renamed

the Syonan Eurasian Welfare Association — indicating that the EA had focused primarily on welfare.

In 1989, when the EA was being revitalised, the person who led EA's welfare efforts was Dr Myrna Braga-Blake. Then a lecturer at the National University of Singapore's Department of Social Work, she was well placed to administer welfare help to needy Eurasians. Dr Braga-Blake had a small team of volunteers, some of whom were from within the Eurasian community while others were her (non-Eurasian) university students who regularly visited needy Eurasians. Many of these were single or widowed elderly Eurasians, who had either no other family members in Singapore, or whose family members were unable to assist them. These volunteers performed simple but important tasks, such as assisting the FSS recipients in going for their periodic medical check-ups, delivering basic food rations such as rice or tinned food, and providing companionship.

However, perhaps the most important action that Dr Braga-Blake initiated was the first study of the needs of underprivileged Eurasians in 1993. This study found that there was an urgent need for welfare assistance among the aged in the community and so one recommendation, which was implemented in 1994, was to hire a full-time professional social worker with the expertise needed to handle an increasing

number of welfare cases. In order to achieve this, the EA opted to include "welfare services" as one of the areas requiring financial support when it set up the ECF.

Around the same time, in 1991, Mr Bryan Davenport was co-opted into the EA's Management Committee after he indicated that he was willing to lead a team to deal with underprivileged Eurasians. He personally kick-started the Welfare Task Force by donating \$25,000 of his own money to help the needy, and bringing in eight other Eurasians. Mr Davenport, who later became EA president in 2000, also went about sourcing for donors and additional volunteers. When the EA achieved Self-Help Group and IPC status in 1994, the Welfare Task Force was renamed Family Support Services.

During the late 1990s, with the downturn in Singapore's economy due to the Asian Financial Crisis, the EA's FSS even set up job counselling and placement services, initially for Eurasians, but soon extended these to people of all races. An office in Toa Payoh — known as the Central Joint Social Services Centre — was set up by the EA for this purpose. The EA was then approached by the Ministry of Manpower to collaborate in Careerlink, where several job assistance agencies would share a job bank, and exchange information about job vacancies. Eventually, this section was absorbed into Central Community Development Council,



Mr Marshall Garnell (second from the left) with his wife, Carmelita, on their wedding day in 2017, flanked by his late friend's son who runs Quentin's Eurasian Restaurant, Mr Quentin Pereira, and Mr Pereira's mother, Mrs Freda Pereira. Picture: Eurasian Association

### LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Shortly after his wife passed away 30 years ago, Mr Marshall Garnell found his eyesight rapidly deteriorating. It became so bad that he experienced double and triple vision. In 2013, Mr Garnell was diagnosed with macular degeneration in the right eye. "I didn't know what that was and asked the doctors if it was the name of an animal," he said with a slight laugh. The condition, in which the central portion of the light-sensing retina degenerates, is one of the leading causes of severe, irreversible vision loss in people over the age of 60.

Mr Garnell went for monthly injections for four months but his condition did not improve. He later discovered that the disease had begun affecting his left eye as well. So he went through another round of injections, but his condition did not get better. Each injection cost about \$400.

For decades, he had been a safety supervisor and coordinator in a construction firm, and later a security guard. But when his eyesight became so bad that he could not even see the car registration plate number in 2016, he knew he had to stop working as a security guard. Back then, he had been living in a dormitory above a shophouse on Changi Road but was not able to pay his monthly

rent due to unemployment. To make ends meet, he declared himself bankrupt, and his CPF funds were used to pay off his rent and living expenses.

In 2017, a friend urged him to go to the EA for help. The EA immediately linked him up with the Social Service Office (SSO) where he began receiving financial assistance. The FSS supplemented this additional financial support. In 2018, the EA helped to source for a job for him and he began working as a kitchen helper at Quentin's Eurasian Restaurant, which is located on the ground floor of the Eurasian Community House. Even though he has regular income now, the EA is still supporting him financially.

Challenges persist but he is grateful for the support he gets from the EA. His eyesight has become so bad that most of his frontal vision is gone, leaving only partial side vision. Using a magnifying glass, he takes one hour to make out just one sentence in the newspaper.

"The EA has done a lot for me and I really appreciate its support. I hope people realise that the EA is doing a lot for underprivileged Eurasians," said Mr Garnell, 79. "My wish is for others to join in to help sponsor or volunteer in one way or another."



In the inaugural Family Support Services Family Day in 2018, some 100 clients enjoyed Eurasian dishes, games and trivia quizzes at Quentin's Restaurant in the Eurasian Community House. Picture: Eurasian Association

which offered one-stop job counselling and placement services for everyone.

In 2002, the EA's FSS took its next step forward. Thanks to a donation from the Hong Leong Foundation, the EA acquired a mini-van. This mini-van allowed the EA's FSS social worker and volunteers to widen its reach to assist needy Eurasians, especially for the delivery of food rations for those who were less mobile.

### HELPING THE ELDERLY, THE POOR AND THEIR FAMILIES

The EA's FSS found that the majority of those who needed its help were single or widowed, over 60 years of age, usually with no income, no family support, and often with medical issues.

"The common problem facing most of our clients is poverty — not just in the material sense but also in the sense of well-being and quality of life," said Ms Francesca Eber, who had been involved in the FSS for close to a decade. "The majority of them

are above 60 years old and are sick and lonely. Their families also face challenges."

For instance, one of Ms Eber's cases had involved a diabetic woman in her 60s who could not move as her leg had been amputated and her only child was not in Singapore. She had very few visitors, and her social isolation worsened her health and eroded the quality of her life, Ms Eber noted. In addition to providing the woman with financial assistance and food rations, the EA supported her by driving her in the mini-van to her medical check-ups, as well as by paying for her medical bills and medication.

The FSS also helps single-parent families with employment and education assistance. Ms Eber said one of the most challenging cases she had seen involved a parent who was stricken with cancer and was unable to work. Fortunately, the child was doing well in school and the FSS approached the education committee to request that she continue to receive monetary assistance for tertiary education.





LEFT: (From the left) Ms Francesca Eber, EA President Benett Theseira and Ms Christine Pereira at a Christmas lunch organised by the EA's FSS in December 2012. RIGHT: Befriender Leonard D'Souza visiting a cancer patient and the patient's caregiver, Ms Pamela Choo, at Tan Tock Seng Hospital in 2019. Pictures: Eurasian Association

The FSS seeks to keep in touch with each individual or family on a monthly basis, either through home visits by its case worker or volunteers who befriend them. Being the eyes and ears on the ground, they update or alert the EA if there are any changes to the circumstances or well-being of the beneficiaries.

Ms Carol Shepherdson, 58, an FSS volunteer, has been making deliveries and befriending EA beneficiaries in Ang Mo Kio for the last 16 years. Back in the early 2000s, the homemaker would pack seven or eight bags of food rations in her car and deliver them to the recipients' doorsteps using a trolley on a weekday. If they were not in, she would arrange to meet them on another day.

She no longer has to use a trolley now that only vouchers are distributed but she continues to interact and have a chat with those she visits. Sometimes, she would bring her daughters and son along.

"Many of the beneficiaries are old and live alone and at least I can be a 'middlewoman' to talk to them and if they need help, I can refer them to the case worker," she added.

Sometimes, her visits can last longer than an hour, especially if the residents are open and chatty.

"I have not stopped doing this because I still can do it. As long as I have two hands, two legs and I have the time and transport, why not?" said Ms Shepherdson.

The members of the community have also responded to calls for donations for food rations, whether it was rice, sugar or cooking oil.

In 2006, the head of the FSS then, Ms Ann Ebert-Oehlers, was moved when she saw an 83-year-old man, Gordon Klassen, coming to do his part. "The image of Gordon alighting from a small lorry will always stay in my memory. His eyesight was poor, his step faltering but his resolve unfaltering," she recalled. He had shopped at a supermarket in Sengkang and bought the last of the sugar packs on the shelves to donate to the FSS. In his excitement to do so, he forgot to bring his walking stick and had to walk slowly.

By 2015, the FSS had expanded its scope to include several new programmes. These included Active Ageing, which sought to



Mr James Joseph Michael with his family at home during Christmas in 2018. Picture: Courtesy of Mr James Joseph Michael

### SUPPORT KEPT HIM GOING

Mr James Joseph Michael has cerebral palsy. When he was just six months old, his parents gave him up to the Singapore Red Cross Children Home as they were unable to care for him.

Yet, such setbacks did not deter him from setting up his own courier business in 2000.

The enterprising man, who walks with a limp because his lower limbs are partially deformed, would take public transport to make his deliveries.

When the number of delivery assignments increased, he asked the EA's FSS in 2013 for a loan of \$1,800 to purchase a second-hand motorcycle with a sidecar. The loan was approved and the motorcycle was customised to suit his usage. He thought he would be able to save some money and time with this new mode of transportation.

Unfortunately, he got into a few accidents while on the motorcycle and sustained head injuries. Each time he met with an accident, he would take a few months to recover and so, his customers

went elsewhere and eventually his business folded.

After that, he worked as an operations coordinator at a maritime firm but the position became unavailable later. He was unemployed from 2012 to 2018. "As a disabled person, I find it hard to get a job," said Mr Michael, 52.

During that time, the FSS supported him with financial assistance of \$500 a month for over a year. "They helped me when I really needed it, when I was really down and that kept me going," said Mr Michael, who has two sons aged seven and eight. His wife works as a manager in a convenience store and the family lives in a two-room rental flat in Ghim Moh.

The EA also donated a sofa and dining table to the family. When Christmas comes around, the family receives food rations and attends the EA's Christmas party.

Mr Michael now does data entry and food delivery on a motorised wheelchair for online grocery service Honestbee. "Whether the EA helps in a big or small way, I am thankful."



A 2018 Family Support Services Christmas lunch at the EA multi-purpose hall. Picture: Eurasian Association

keep elderly Eurasians active and engaged, and schemes to provide financial aid for education and transport.

A signature event of Active Ageing is “CommuniTea” (previously “Tea with Neighbours”), which is a series of weekend tea-time talks organised regularly for seniors to learn new things, be cognisant of current affairs and enhance their well-being. For instance, the EA worked with other agencies in 2017 to hold two discussions on ElderShield and SG Secure initiatives. The FSS has also worked closely with other senior-oriented organisations, such as the Council of the Third Age (C3A) and RSVP Singapore – The Organisation of Senior Volunteers, to organise senior-oriented activities.

The FSS has also collaborated with external charitable organisations such as Temasek Cares, organising PROJECT SPARK (Successful Parents and Resilient Kids). This project – which the EA runs together with the other three self-

help groups – has assisted single parents to become independent and effective parents while helping their children to become more resilient, well-adjusted and successful.

A scheme has been set up to provide financial assistance to schoolgoing children to continue with their education when a significant catastrophic event strikes the family, rendering the breadwinner unable to provide sufficient financial support. Another new scheme gives transport subsidies to FSS recipients, generally to support their transportation costs for visits to polyclinics or hospitals. Both of these schemes were supported by additional financial support from external donors.

The FSS team and volunteers also annually throw a Christmas party for the recipients, and have started organising an annual Easter luncheon as well. These events keep the FSS recipients engaged, giving them a chance to meet fellow Eurasians and have a good time.



Members of the 2019 Family Support Services Committee include: (standing) Mr Vincent Schoon, Mr Robert Scully, Mr Paul Rodrigues, Mr Mark de Souza, Mr J. Ramakrishnan, Mr Quentin Pereira, (sitting) Ms Christine Pereira, Mr Edmund Rodrigues, Ms Evelyn Rodrigues and Ms Patricia Rodrigues. Picture: Eurasian Association

### FSS TODAY

As of 2018, monthly assistance was being rendered to about 160 individuals in 75 households. The FSS follows the Ministry of Social and Family Development’s guidelines that the household must have at least one Singaporean and beneficiaries should have a household income not exceeding \$1,900 or per capita income of not more than \$650.

The FSS also administers the Special Emergency Fund which was set up in 2018. Its aim is to help beneficiaries with sudden and expensive emergencies such as a broken water pipe, transport allowances for work, medical assistance and immediate daily expenses. The fund also covers unforeseen circumstances that require urgent and immediate assistance. Separately, there is a Beyond Financial Assistance fund meant for clients to settle one-off payments.

Pro bono life-coaching sessions are available for those who require assistance in managing their limited financial resources.

Counselling is offered through help clinics.

Food rations used to be packed and delivered to various homes every month, either through the EA van or the volunteers’ own vehicles. To reduce wastage and give beneficiaries the flexibility to choose their own food items, the EA now gives them grocery vouchers instead.

The 18-member FSS Sub-Committee meets bi-monthly and its Case Review Team meets on the second Tuesday of the month to review and approve the applications for financial assistance upon recommendation of the FSS case worker, Mr J. Ramakrishnan, who joined the EA in 2008. The sub-committee also provides information and referral services to clients, connecting them with social welfare agencies and schemes that provide assistance with employment and training.

Depending on the needs of the beneficiaries, each case is reviewed after three, six, nine or twelve months. However, a number of clients have been on record

with the FSS for many years as they are unable to work because of illness, disability or age.

Over the decade, the EA has put in place proper systems to better serve the beneficiaries — be it in terms of having more accountable documentation and means testing or having monthly handouts in the form of cashless interbank Giro transfers to avoid the risk of handling and storing too much cash.

In 2017, a review of the EA's FSS services was done to assess if its various programmes and funds were effective as well as to identify how the services could be improved. A fieldworker was hired, and she surveyed 30 FSS clients who had been helped between September and December 2017. In addition, she also had in-depth interviews with the EA social worker and volunteers to understand their challenges.

Among the findings from the final report: although FSS beneficiaries highly valued the programmes and services provided by the EA, they still had some concerns. Despite the plethora of national aid schemes, some respondents felt that these did not provide sufficient support because of a number of reasons: government aid might have stringent criteria; aid was given on a very short-term basis; application for the aid was onerous, requiring many documents; and lastly, the amount of assistance given was too little.

The EA President, Dr Alexius Pereira,

who led the 2017 FSS Review, agreed that the vulnerable in the Eurasian community often find it stressful or daunting when it comes to applying for national assistance schemes. "There is still a role for ethnic or self-help groups to reach out to the needy, beyond national schemes. Whether because of language issues or otherwise, many of them feel more comfortable liaising with the EA and therefore, there is still room for us to value-add in this space," he said.

The survey respondents highlighted possible areas of improvement. The majority of the recipients of dry rations, which had previously been the main form of material assistance over the past decade, said they preferred to get vouchers instead. This gives them more flexibility in buying what they need and reduces wastage of items that do not suit them.

In response to this feedback, the FSS replaced dry rations with supermarket vouchers in 2018. On average, recipients get \$70 to \$150 in vouchers, on top of their monthly financial assistance of between \$100 and \$300.

The report also gave details on the profile of the FSS recipients, based on the sample size used in the study: 77 per cent of them had a household income of less than \$1,000 a month, 60 per cent lived in one-room and two-room flats, and 66 per cent were 55 years old and above.

Most — 80 per cent — of the clients



Participants discussing the ElderShield scheme at a Tea with Neighbours session. Picture: Eurasian Association

received assistance in the form of cash and dry rations, and 70 per cent of them had been on financial assistance for fewer than five years. About half of them were also receiving help from other organisations apart from the EA, such as the Social Service Offices, Family Service Centres, churches, schools and soup kitchens. The main reason for additional financial assistance was the need to pay for treatment of medical conditions, which afflicted 77 per cent of all recipients. About 63 per cent of the beneficiaries were referred to the FSS by family and friends, meaning that a number of Eurasians may not be aware that they can approach the EA for help when needed.

Perhaps one of the most common pieces of feedback from the 2017 review was that the beneficiaries also wanted to be connected to the community. They were worried about social isolation, and hoped that EA befrienders would come see them more often. Also, they hoped that the EA would organise even more sessions of "Tea with Neighbours" (now "CommuniTea") so

that they could come experience the warm camaraderie of the Eurasian community. Lastly, they gave feedback that they really enjoyed the annual Easter FSS Lunch as well as the FSS Christmas Party.

The FSS team took note of the feedback and embarked upon a drive to recruit new befrienders. Also, to prepare for this growth in befriender numbers, the FSS team is planning for training sessions, so that befrienders are properly equipped to help beneficiaries. In addition, the FSS team developed a "protocol" so as to engage with beneficiaries safely and appropriately.

#### **FUTURE CHALLENGES AND PLANS**

The FSS would have to start planning for new types of services as social needs will evolve and become more complex, said Dr Alexius Pereira. "A large proportion of our beneficiaries now are elderly singles or widows who have no family or income and they will be gone in one generation," he said.

So, depending on national trends, Dr Pereira said the next vulnerable groups

that the FSS needs to focus on may be the broken, dysfunctional families, single parents, the divorced, the incarcerated, or those with mental health issues.

One new area that he hopes that the FSS will collaborate with the Education team is in providing some form of childcare support for needy families, such as subsidising fees for childcare centres, and accompanying these children to such centres if their working parents are unable to send them there.

“Some families can’t get out of the poverty cycle because they can’t afford childcare and so some of them have to remain at home and cannot work to get an income. So we hope to support these families,” said Dr Pereira.

Mr Ramakrishnan said that the FSS intends to introduce a new scheme for low-income families. Needy families who do not have any of these three basic electronic items — television, refrigerator or washing machine — will be able to receive them from the EA.

The three items were picked for various reasons. The television is meant as an educational tool and to encourage family time, the fridge is to help families store food to ensure their proper nutrition and the washing machine will help them cut down on the laborious aspects of manually washing clothes.

Said Mr Ramakrishnan: “We hope these will enhance the quality of lives of the families, on a basic level.”

Others who believe in this project have chipped in. For instance, then-Ambassador of Portugal to Singapore, Mr Luis Lervao, donated a fridge to a beneficiary in April 2019.

Other areas where more help from the EA might be useful: financial aid for the lower middle-class and the elderly with neglectful children, and counselling for the needy.

One key challenge is finding appropriate schemes and financial support for the struggling middle class to tap. “They need help but fall through the cracks. They are not rich but also not poor and so, they just miss the criteria for help schemes,” Mr Ramakrishnan explained.

Another challenge he faces is in persuading the children of some elderly to support their parents financially. Sometimes, the children can be neglectful but the parents do not want to get the children into trouble or burn bridges between them by reporting the children to the authorities for parental maintenance.

Some of the beneficiaries that come to the EA for help could also benefit from more counselling and coaching, he said. “Their immediate problem is financial and so, they can’t find the time and commitment to come for counselling or coaching. However, that is key because that allows them to look at their problems in a different way and partner us in coming up with their own solutions,” said Mr Ramakrishnan.

His sentiments echoed those of FSS chairman Edmund Rodrigues, who said in his speech at the 2018 FSS Christmas Party for beneficiaries: “You have to focus on your children’s education. You have to work. If you work, you have to focus on upgrading your skills. The EA is here to help you for all these, but the most important thing is that you must take the initiative to improve your situation. Our goal is to help you no longer need our services.”

## PROVIDING THE HUMAN TOUCH

Ms Martha Fernandez volunteers with the EA’s FSS. Once a month for the last seven years, she has been distributing food rations to low-income Eurasian households in the Bukit Merah area.

It is clear for Ms Fernandez that these are not just tasks to be done. Rather, she takes time to get to know the residents so as to foster relationships and build trust.

For instance, once she found out that a woman that she had been delivering rations to had cancer and was in a hospice, Ms Fernandez went to visit the beneficiary. From her bed, the woman pleaded with Ms Fernandez to help her daughter. Ms Fernandez reassured the woman that she would do so, thinking that it was a matter of continuing the rations to the daughter.

But after contacting the daughter, Ms Fernandez realised that the daughter was facing severe financial issues.

Ms Fernandez linked her up with the EA’s case worker and accompanied her for the assessment interview after knocking off from work. Ms Fernandez, 62, is working as a human resource professional.

Having the human touch and going the extra mile matters, said Ms Fernandez.

Last year, the EA’s beneficiaries began getting supermarket vouchers instead of food rations after giving feedback that they preferred the flexibility of being able to choose items that they need.

“The FSS volunteers could have mailed the vouchers to their homes, now that rice or canned food no longer need to be delivered. But we still go down to pass them the vouchers because we want to keep in touch with them and continue to be updated about their needs and situation,” said Ms Fernandez.

Last year, she started a working group so as to iron out the kinks in getting a formal befriending programme launched. They hope to have the befrienders get the relevant training before mobilising them to befriend the recipients of the EA’s grocery vouchers.

“Besides spending more time to get to know the residents, being a befriender is about casting an investigative eye to be observant about the family situation, such as whether items in the house need any repair,” said Ms Fernandez.

Her volunteering journey with the FSS started when she saw how it handled its welfare cases.



Ms Martha Fernandez delivering Boys Brigade’s gift to an FSS client, Mrs Julie Ess, in 2019. Picture: Courtesy of Ms Martha Fernandez

She referred an extended family member to the FSS for aid and she was touched by the response.

“The case worker and committee members were so spontaneous and sincere during the assessment interview and in making recommendations for the family’s children. One of them even took money from his own pocket so that the lady could go home in a taxi after the interview,” said Ms Fernandez.

Moved by their kindness, she decided to be an FSS volunteer. Prior to that, she had helped to organise the annual Christmas children’s party.

Being part of the EA’s FSS led her to volunteer as a letter writer at the Meet-the-People Session in Tampines as well.

“Meeting the beneficiaries and seeing how a few words of encouragement can make a difference touched me,” said Ms Fernandez. “I will continue to volunteer as long as I see that I can help add value to their lives.”



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Keeping  
Heritage  
*and* Culture  
Alive

The Eurasian Association, Singapore (EA) serves as the cultural and heritage custodian for Eurasians. It is both an important and challenging task which it is committed to. After all, understanding and embracing one's culture and history is integral to fostering a Singaporean-Eurasian identity, which is a key pillar of the nation's multiracial and multi-ethnic fabric.

This chapter outlines the EA's role and mission in preserving and showcasing the many facets of Eurasian culture, including Eurasian dance, food and language. The chapter also discusses how the EA chronicles Eurasian history and illustrates how the community has contributed to nation building during colonial and post-independent times.

The importance of keeping Eurasian heritage alive was encapsulated in a speech by then-Minister of Trade and Industry S. Iswaran at the launch of the second edition of the book, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*, in February 2017.

Mr Iswaran, who represents Eurasians in Cabinet, said: "As society modernises, it is our responsibility to ensure that these stories and traditions stand the test of time and are not forgotten. They enable

the community, especially the younger generation, to appreciate and take pride in their cultural heritage, as well as anchor a deep sense of identity."

In April in the same year, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong gave special mention to the EA at the Eurasian festival that it organised. He noted that the self-help group was making a special effort to preserve Eurasian traditions and culture not just for younger Eurasians, but for all Singaporeans.

#### SINGAPORE EURASIAN CULTURE

Eurasian culture is an elusive creature. At face value, Eurasian culture refers to blended practices with European and Asian origins created through creolisation. Well-known creole cultures across the globe include the one found in Jamaica, where, for example, Jamaican Patois — a mix of English and West African languages — is spoken alongside English; another is the creole culture found in Louisiana in the United States of America, where, for example, the popular creole foods such as jambalaya and gumbo feature both French and African influences.

Asia is home to several Eurasian creole cultures, which include the Dutch-

Indonesian "Javaindo" or "Indo" in short in Batavia or Jakarta in Indonesia, and the Portuguese-Chinese/Cantonese creole culture known as Macanese in Macau, Hong Kong. There is also a Portuguese-Malay creole known as Kristang used by the Eurasian community in Malacca, Malaysia.

Singapore's Eurasian culture is a bit more complicated since no single or distinct European-Asian creole has emerged.

There are several reasons for this lack of creolisation: firstly, unlike the other European colonies in Asia, Singapore, since the 1800s, has always been home to Europeans and Asians from varying homelands.

Secondly, most Eurasians, regardless of their cities of origin, adopted what can be best described as British "middle-class culture" after migrating here in the 1800s. Among other things, they organised "high tea", donned Western attire, spoke primarily in English, and adhered to the Christian religion.

At the same time, some Eurasians, especially those whose families migrated to Singapore from Malacca, brought the Kristang culture with them. Kristang is a term that originally referred to the Portuguese Eurasians of Malacca; it is believed that the term was used by the Malays to refer to the Christians, meaning the Portuguese and their descendants.

Later, Kristang also referred to the

creole language that emerged in Malacca, which is a blend of the Portuguese and Malay languages. The term, Kristang, also refers to other aspects of the Portuguese Eurasians of Malacca, including some of their cuisine.

The EA views both the colonial Singapore Eurasian culture — the one heavily influenced by British middle-class practices — as well as Kristang culture, as being part of the Eurasian community's cultural heritage. For this reason, the EA is keen to preserve and promote both aspects for the future generations of Eurasians, and also for the rest of Singapore to appreciate.

Soon after the EA was revitalised in the late 1980s, heritage promotion became an urgent task. Many older Eurasians were concerned that their lifestyle and practices would disappear following the rapid modernisation and globalisation of Singapore. The first major event organised by the EA to address this concern was the 1991 Eurasian Heritage Day at the National Museum.

#### EURASIAN DANCE

One important aspect of cultural heritage that the EA is committed to preserve and promote is Eurasian dance.

In the late 1990s, the EA set up a Eurasian dance troupe to achieve this.

The troupe has represented the Eurasian community at many national events,

including the National Day Parade and Chingay. In addition, the troupe is regularly invited to perform when foreign dignitaries visit or at municipal showcases and other high-profile events. One highlight from its showreel is its performance at the President's Star Charity show in 2017. EA dancers performed alongside acapella group MICappella, which gave a modern twist to the song, "Jingkli Nona". The performance was vibrant, cheerful and uplifting. Many Singaporeans were able to experience Eurasian culture from their television sets.

Before 1990, there was no such dance troupe. When the EA was invited to perform at the National Day Parade for the first time in 1990, the EA had to call for volunteers to put together a dance based on the *branyo*, a Portuguese-Eurasian dance.

Following their appearance on the national stage, demand for their performances soared. This led the EA to set up its Performing Arts Chapter. The team has been led by Mrs Valerie Scully, Ms Lanette Stuart and her husband, Mr Humphrey Conceicao, and more recently, Ms Jacqueline Peeris. The troupe also regularly engages external choreographers, depending on the requirements of the performance. The most notable is Ms Sylvia McCully, who worked with troupe members of the very first Eurasian contingent at the National Day Parade in 1990, and the EA's first performance at Chingay Parade in 2009.

More recently, the troupe has extended its repertoire. It not only performs *branyo* dances to a much wider variety of Kristang songs, it regularly performs "modern" versions of Eurasian dance, which includes hip-hop jams, among other things. These modern versions were first created in 2008 after local Eurasian musician John Klass remixed and recorded the traditional "Jingkli Nona" and called it "Jingkli Pop". In addition, the troupe has also experimented with adding "Dutch" and "English" dance steps, alongside traditional Indian, Malay and Chinese moves to their set pieces, depending on the requirements of the performance.

The troupe has more than 25 male and female dancers as of 2019. All of them are volunteers, and the oldest is 36 years old.

Ms Veron Ann Lincoln, a nurse, has performed with the troupe on multiple occasions, including its showcase at the the President's Star Charity event in 2017. She said: "Despite being a registered nurse and having a busy schedule, I am proud of my race and I want to tell everybody we are not merely the 'others'. That's why I want to keep the dance troupe alive with our Eurasian spirit." She added: "The troupe has taught me about my culture and because of my involvement with it, I started to get in touch with my roots, which can be traced back to Malacca."

Some of the dancers in the troupe have invited their non-Eurasian friends to join in, and many have chosen to become



TOP: Local vocal group MICappella and dancers from the EA perform the Eurasian folk song, "Jingkli Nona", at the President's Star Charity 2017. Picture: Eurasian Association

BOTTOM: Eurasian culture on display at its Heritage Day at the National Museum in 1991. Picture: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

regular performers. Most of them simply enjoy dancing and the company of their Eurasian friends.

In 2019, the People's Association invited the EA to once again participate in the Chingay Parade. The EA was given a solo slot in the parade and choreographer

Syarul Ezuan produced a high energy routine with a combination of Eurasian and modern dance moves. Some 20 dancers were involved. The Eurasian dance troupe was ultimately voted by the audience as the "Best in Contingent Display (Travelling Dance)".



A commemorative photograph of the 103-strong Eurasian contingent at a practice session at St Patrick's School for the 1990 National Day Parade. Picture: Courtesy of People's Association

### ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

Twenty-five years after Singapore became independent as a nation, the Eurasian contingent made its debut at the National Day Parade alongside 440 other Chinese, Malay and Indian performers.

However, unlike their counterparts, the Eurasians had no template dance to pull out of the bag for their big debut as part of the cultural showcase of multicultural Singapore. But they had one popular reference point — the cheery folk song, "Jingkli Nona" — a courtship dance between a male and female dancer.

Usually played during wedding parties, the Portuguese-Malaccan song and dance item was elevated for the national stage. The EA arranged for study trips to Malacca and Macau to learn new dance steps from Portuguese-Eurasian performers based there. The association also invited renowned Singaporean Eurasian ballet instructor Sylvia McCully, who ran a dance school, to adapt the traditional performance into a processional parade. The dance grew to incorporate some traditional Dutch dance steps alongside modern dance moves — a true reflection of the hybrid culture of the Eurasians. The music was arranged by Mr John de Souza from the

Ministry of Education's music department while a fashion studies educator, Ms Debra d'Cotta, designed the costumes, which were based on the dress style of a Portuguese dance troupe in Macau.

One of the organisers, Ms Valerie Scully, said many EA members leapt at the chance to be part of the big show. Members from as young as eight to over 60 years of age took time off their personal commitments for weekly practice sessions at St. Patrick's School. The final line-up consisted of 103 participants, 36 of whom were teenage boys and girls.

Ms Scully recalled being filled with a sense of pride when the national event was broadcasted. She said: "The onlookers were cheering for us as we marched as a contingent towards the Padang. The feedback we got after the event was that our Eurasian participation had taken many in the community by surprise. It made them very happy and someone mentioned that he got up to do the *branyo* in his living room."

The contingent was also involved in the parade's final act during the creative and cultural presentation segment. In unison with the other Chinese, Malay and Indian performers, they sang "One People, One Nation, One Singapore", for which the music was composed by Jeremy Monteiro.



EA dancers executing traditional Portuguese, Dutch and British dance steps to "Jingkli Nona", in front of the Portuguese carrack float at the Chingay Parade 2009. Picture: SPH Media Limited

### SHOW AND TELL

Although the Eurasian dance troupe has been invited to participate in multiple National Day Parades and Chingay Parades, the performance that Eurasians remember most fondly took place at the Chingay Parade on 30 January 2009.

It involved the fabrication of a Portuguese carrack (merchant ship) float and the training of 92 dancers in a performance choreographed by Ms McCully.

The contingent, which was led by Ms Lanette Stuart and her husband, Mr Humphrey Conceicao, joined more than 5,000 performers and volunteers, and about a dozen other floats at City Hall for two nights of show-stopping entertainment. They performed alongside dancers and artistes from China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand. Among the spectators were Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, cabinet ministers and a host of other VIPs.

The Eurasian contingent performed to "Jingkli Nona", which had been rearranged by Cultural Medallion winner Iskandar Ismail. Female dancers, in their large skirts, twirled and moved with the energy of Spanish performers in their large skirts while executing traditional

Portuguese, Dutch and British dance steps. From the deck of the large boat, representatives from the three main Eurasian lineages, waved to the cheering crowd and grinned at the cameras. The ship's eight "cannons" also spewed confetti into the crowd.

The organisers, Ms Stuart and Mr Conceicao, said their aim had been to present the story of their forefathers' travels from Europe to Asia via carracks, in an easy to digest, show-and-tell fashion enhanced by vibrant, vivacious dancers.

The contingent danced along a 1.5-kilometre route, which started from the Padang, went by the Singapore Cricket Club and the Singapore Recreation Club, and ended at the War Memorial.

The parade was telecast in Singapore and in 25 other countries. A day later, the performance was paraded through Nee Soon South, Yio Chu Kang, Kebun Baru, Teck Gee, Cheng San, Serangoon North and Anchorvale CC.

Today, the EA's dance troupe continues to dazzle at the Chingay Parade and other events, including the President's Star Charity and the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, among other venues and showcases.



## EURASIAN FOOD HERITAGE

The preservation, presentation and promotion of Eurasian food heritage is central to the EA's heritage mission. After moving into its current premises on Ceylon Road, the EA's strategy was to host a Eurasian restaurant or café that offered the community's cuisine. This was not for novelty's sake, but was designed to ensure Eurasian cuisine is proactively preserved.

The concept of Eurasian food is multifaceted. On the one hand, it refers to any sort of food that features a combination of European and Asian influences, which might range from the ingredients or spices involved to the manner in which these are prepared and cooked. On the other hand, Eurasian food can also refer to the types of food dishes which the Eurasian community cooks for itself and enjoys.

Known for its rich flavours, and shared portions, the cuisine can generally be characterised as home cooking that involves the use of spice and the harmonious fusing of both the East and the West on a plate. And given that the Eurasian community in Singapore might have descended from European colonies in Asian territories ranging from Goa, Ceylon, Malacca, Batavia, Macau, Hong Kong, and even East Timor, the range of Asian influences can be very wide. Seafood dishes are popular in Eurasian menus since most colonial settlements were coastal. Eurasian food is

typically served with a bowl of fluffy white rice.

One of the most famous Eurasian dishes is curry *debal* or curry devil. In essence, curry devil was originally a seasonal dish where leftover roast meats from a Christmas Day lunch — the European components of the dish — are made into a curry. The curry constitutes the Asian component. One unique aspect of this curry is that it includes vinegar as a key ingredient, perhaps to help preserve the leftover meats in the dish. The leftovers could include sausages, chicken or even turkey meat, beef chunks, bacon and ham. The idea was to reduce food wastage.

Many believe the word, devil, emerged because the concoction was so spicy. However, the word came from the Kristang word, *debal*, which means leftover, as used by the Portuguese Eurasians of Malacca.

*Sugee* cake is another item that is synonymous with Eurasian cuisine. It features *sugee* or semolina and almonds as the primary ingredients. As Francesca Eber notes in the book, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*, family recipes originating from Penang add lemon peel to the mix while those from Sri Lanka incorporate rose water. Other famous Eurasian food dishes include beef smore, a beef pot roast and prawn *bostador* (*bostador* means a slap in Kristang as its green chilli paste packs a punch).

Since the opening of the Eurasian Community House in 2002, the EA has invited a restaurateur to serve Eurasian



TOP: Curry *debal*, one of the most famous Eurasian dishes made from leftover meat, is served at Quentin's Eurasian Restaurant.

BOTTOM: *Sugee* cake is made with *sugee* or semolina, and almonds.

Pictures: Courtesy of Quentin's Eurasian Restaurant

food. In addition, the EA supports the restaurateur in hosting cooking demonstrations and lectures on Eurasian food. Currently, this responsibility has been given to chef Quentin Pereira. Mr Pereira brought his expertise in preparing Eurasian heritage food — handed down to him by his father, Robin — as well as his vision in creating new fusion European-

Asian dishes to the Eurasian Community House. Mr Pereira has, over the years, experimented with his own versions of *sugee* cupcake and spaghetti *laksa*.

The EA has also been engaging other Eurasian chefs to be involved in the preservation and showcasing of Eurasian food. The luminaries include Damian D'Silva, Mary Gomes and Kenneth Francisco.

## A PLATFORM FOR EURASIAN FOOD HERITAGE

Instead of putting up with his six children bickering and fighting at mealtimes over a single shared plate of fried, canned corned beef served separately with rice, Mr Robin Pereira came up with a nifty trick to ensure that each one of his offspring would have an equally distributed portion of meat. He decided to combine both the meat and rice by frying them together to create a tasty and heartwarming dish. As desired, peace reigned at his dinner table as each child tucked into the meal gratefully. No hostile words were exchanged and the siblings ceased to fight over who was scooping up a larger portion of the flavour-packed meat for themselves.

Mr Pereira's unique spin on fried rice has since been inducted into the Eurasian hall of fame. In a way, it represents the community's take on fried rice — joining those produced by other ethnic groups here. Some Chinese food outlets serve up Yangzhou fried rice, the Malays have their own take on the dish in what is known as *nasi goreng* while some Indian food stalls sell ketchup-red fried rice with cucumbers on the side. It is also an example of food the Eurasian community cooks for itself and enjoys.

Mr Pereira had more than 100 recipes under his belt. He had picked up Eurasian cuisine from his mother who had tasked him to cook while she worked to support the family. He was about 10 when he started cooking. Since 2006, Singaporeans have been able to feast on his special recipes at Quentin's Eurasian Restaurant after his son, Quentin, was invited by the EA to set up a restaurant to bring the experience of Eurasian cooking to the wider public. Participants of the EA's heritage tours are often taken to the restaurant to expose them to the cuisine and to give them a chance to tuck into a heartwarming spread of Eurasian household favourites.

The rare treat of easily accessible Eurasian food has won over many fans, including local and foreign politicians whom he has catered for via the EA's events. On weekends, the restaurant, located on the ground floor of the EA's premises on Ceylon Road, is packed with customers including Chinese, expatriate, and Eurasian families celebrating birthdays or having their usual weekend get-togethers. Like the flame that draws moths, the restaurant is a beacon for Singaporean foodies, drawing many people into the Eurasian Community House. Tables are laden with crowd favourites such as oxtail, curry *debal*, prawn *bostador* and *chuan chuan* (fish with sweet and sour sauce made with fermented beans). Mr Robin Pereira's corned beef fried rice was also added to the restaurant's repertoire because Mr Quentin Pereira believes in sharing comfort food from his childhood with others.



Mr Robin Pereira (right) and his son, Quentin, shown in June 2013. Picture: SPH Media Limited

Four times a week, guests can tuck into hearty Eurasian fare while a band of Eurasian musicians, known as The Music Men, plays past and present radio hits. Children busy themselves at the play space which the EA has parcelled out. The scene replicates a Eurasian home-dining experience, noted Mr Quentin Pereira, and exposes them to Eurasian culture in a very accessible fashion. Presenting Eurasian home culture in a public arena to Singaporeans was a strategic move on the part of the EA.

"The best place to have Eurasian food is in the home of a Eurasian. That's what we want to try and do, to introduce the cuisine and culture to a wider audience in a familial setting," he said.

Nothing can be more authentic than his own family's recipes, he added. For instance, he has tried and tested multiple curry *debal* recipes but still returns to what his father used to make. The Pereira family version features chicken, bacon bones and sausages. The dish was commonly enjoyed by the family during Christmas. "It brings back good memories of spending Christmas with my family because we couldn't afford to have it every day," said Mr Quentin Pereira.

Indeed, Francesca Eber notes in the book, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*, that most Eurasians would define their food in terms of individual personal experience.

Mr Quentin Pereira, like the EA and as one of its "ambassadors" or "champions" of Eurasian culture, believes in keeping Eurasians recipes alive. His restaurant, which serves about 60 types of dishes on average, is modelled to preserve the cuisine. He has written an operations manual to guide his 30-member strong staff along in his absence. As one of just a handful of Eurasian cuisine ambassadors around in Singapore, he said: "It is very important to keep this tradition alive. I don't want the restaurant to die when I do."

## THE REVIVAL OF KRISTANG

Kristang is a creole that originated from the Portuguese Eurasian community in Malacca. It was spoken as a family language among some Eurasians, especially those whose ancestors migrated to Singapore from Malacca. It was common to hear it spoken in Katong, Frankel Avenue and Joo Chiat. The lexicon of Kristang is mostly derived from the Portuguese language while its grammar is largely rooted in the Malay tongue. Kristang also evolved to incorporate dialects such as Hokkien, Hakka and Cantonese.

By the 1930s, the use of Kristang began to decline because of the economic dominance of English.

Recognising that Kristang was a heritage language among some Eurasians, the EA supported efforts to preserve and showcase Kristang. In the 1990s, a few Eurasians who were still fluent in Kristang, including Ms Valerie Scully, organised classes for those interested in picking it up. A 1994 issue of the EA newsletter noted that classes catered to 20 students. Students were also taught by Ms Ruth Carrol and Ms Ivy Bohn who shared their knowledge of Kristang as spoken by the older members of their households. They used practical, everyday scenarios to teach the language and tapped a book by Professor Alan Baxter, a linguist in Australia who studied Asian Creole Portuguese.

Ms Scully, together with Ms Catherine Zuzarte, went on to compile the first

English-Kristang dictionary, *The Eurasian Heritage Dictionary*, published in 2004. It had the support of both the EA and Eurasians, the EA's May 2003 newsletter noted.

In 2015, Mr Kevin Martens-Wong, a linguistics student at the time, took it upon himself to further boost the use of the language. He developed a curriculum and organised classes. The first round of lessons were held at the Eurasian Community House. His group, known as the Kodrah Kristang team, went on to develop a Kristang board game, a Kristang online dictionary, and a festival celebrating the Kristang culture. There have also been efforts to create modern words for Kristang. In addition, Mr Martens-Wong has put in place a five-phase, 30-year masterplan to revive the language.

Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, at the Kodrah Kristang's Kristang Language Festival gala dinner on May 2017, commended the community's effort to retain the historical link to the tongue. He said: "Such ground-up initiatives reflect the renewed interest among Singaporeans in our culture and heritage. I am glad that the Eurasian Association is working closely with the National Heritage Board and other communities to strengthen partnerships for multicultural activities in Singapore. These events help to foster closer bonds among Singaporeans of all races, and help build a more cohesive society."

### BRINGING EURASIAN HISTORY TO LIFE

The second important thrust of the EA's heritage efforts is to document and promote the history of the Eurasian community. This includes understanding the community's pre-1819 history, the colonial period, and the post-independence period. It is critical that both Eurasian and non-Eurasian Singaporeans know how the Eurasian community has contributed to nation building. The EA's history efforts are centred around the Eurasian Heritage Gallery, as well as the research and archiving of all things important to the Eurasian community.

The Eurasian Community House on Ceylon Road has served as the epicentre of Eurasian heritage since it opened in 2002. At the heart of its heritage activities are its history galleries, which were rolled out in three phases over the decades. The EA's objective for these galleries has centred around building up its culture, presenting the varying voices of the Eurasian community, drawing in young Eurasians, as well as educating the wider public on the community's history. The Community House therefore serves as a platform for Eurasians to display their culture to other Singaporeans, to share who they are and what they do.

The first gallery, called The Eurasian Showcase, was established in 2003 and opened by President S. R. Nathan. It focused on the three main European origins of the community — Portuguese, Dutch, and British. Developed in consultation with the National Museum of Singapore, it also featured exhibits related to Eurasians in the sporting arena, their religious beliefs and lifestyles, and their World War II experiences.

In addition, the contributions of Eurasian luminaries such as Singapore's second president Benjamin Sheares and one of Singapore's founding fathers, E. W. Barker, were highlighted. This was critical in demonstrating to



Benjamin Sheares, shown in 1978, was Singapore's second president and also its "father of modern obstetrics and gynaecology". Picture: SPH Media Limited



E. W. Barker, shown in 1978, drew up the separation documents that gave Singapore its independence. Picture: SPH Media Limited



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (rightmost) opening World War II — The Eurasian Story, with a WWII air raid siren — an unusual and creative way to launch the heritage gallery — in 2006. Looking on were EA President Gerald Minjoot (second from the right), and EA Vice-President Gerry de Silva (fourth from the right), who headed the project team for the gallery. Picture: Eurasian Association

gallery visitors young and old, that the community, while small, has contributed significantly in the Singapore story, having staffed much of the civil service during the colonial chapter shortly after Sir Stamford Raffles' arrival. Later, Eurasians would go on to provide critical administrative, bureaucratic and political support as Singapore transitioned to self-governance, and eventually independence. They also served in the army, police force and legal sector.

Throughout Singapore's modern history, Eurasians have made outstanding and significant contributions to build up the nation in their various vocations. For instance, Mr Sheares, known for being private, took up the post of presidency because of his patriotism. He held this office for a decade until his death in 1981. Additionally, he came to be recognised as Singapore's "father of modern obstetrics and gynaecology". Multiple sites and structures across Singapore are named after him today.

Meanwhile, Mr Barker drew up the separation documents and participated in talks with Malaysian leaders in Singapore's secession from Malaysia in 1965. The first-generation minister in Singapore's post-independence cabinet held various ministerial portfolios including law, national development, the environment, science and technology and home affairs. He even spearheaded the construction of the National Stadium in the 1970s.

The purpose of the EA highlighting these movers and shakers was to inspire young Eurasians to make their own positive mark on the nation and remind the public of the unbroken and continued Eurasian presence and legacy in Singapore life.

The second gallery — World War II — The Eurasian Story — was added in 2006. Opened by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, it highlighted the plight of the community, which faced malnutrition and diseases when they were relocated to the town of Bahau in Negri Sembilan during the Japanese Occupation.



Dr Barry Pereira (rightmost) showing PM Lee and Mrs Lee around the World War II — The Eurasian Story gallery in February 2006. Picture: Eurasian Association

Led by Dr Barry Pereira, the effort to research and document the facts about Eurasians' time in Bahau has enabled more in the community to better understand its impact. The gallery also demonstrated the efforts of the "D" Company of the Singapore Volunteer Corps whose members — Eurasian men — died in the defence of the colony. The gallery's curators used diaries and anecdotal accounts from war survivors to shed light on the community's World War II experience and encounters.

The third gallery, called The Roots of Our Community, was launched by Joo Chiat Member of Parliament Charles Chong in 2011 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Portuguese presence in Malacca. The history of the community's Dutch and British lineages was also included in 2012.

The EA customises tours of its Heritage Centre for tour agencies and school groups on requests. Sometimes, a performance by the EA dance troupe or a sharing session on Eurasian cuisine is arranged.

Melanie Rodrigues Smith became a volunteer docent there in 2016, inspired by guides Lucille Marcus and Euylyth Fernandez who continued the tours started by Kathleen Woodford.

As it entered its centenary, the EA launched a new permanent gallery on the fourth level of the Eurasian Community House. The new gallery is a consolidation of the three former ones. The new space features the diverse and evolving face of Eurasians. It also captures the community's way of life, contributions to nation-building, as well as security and defence efforts and hardships during the



Highlights of the Eurasian Heritage Gallery include a baby's christening robe made from the train of Ms Lydwina Fernandez's 1949 bridal gown and a photo of her and her bridegroom, Mr Maurice Alban Cordeiro, on loan from Cedric Pereira. Picture: SPH Media Limited

Japanese Occupation.

EA heritage committee chairman Julia D'Silva, who led the project, said that the aim is to show that while Eurasians are unique, they are also very Singaporean. She added: "We also want to show how Eurasians have continued to contribute to society and the nation today, in both traditional sectors and new sectors."

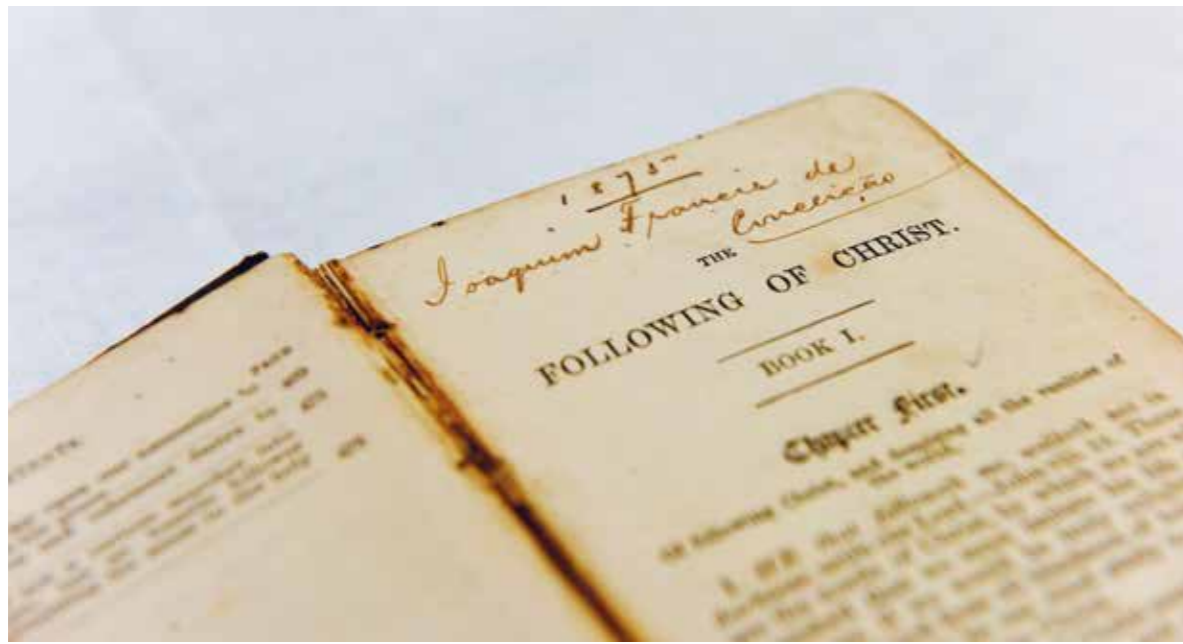
Like its old iterations, the new gallery seeks to cater to students, foreign visitors and dignitaries as well as first-generation Eurasians.

One interesting exhibit at the new gallery is a 1949 wedding gown that belonged to the late Lydwina Fernandez, a housewife. It is displayed alongside two christening robes made from the train and veil of the bridal attire. Eurasians traditionally have the robe sewn from the wedding veil or

train of the mother to symbolise continuity in the family.

Another item on display is a three-tier brass cake tray that is more than a century old. Such tableware was usually made in England and purchased from department stores such as Robinsons. Tarts, *sugee* cakes, scones and sambal sandwiches used to be served on these trays. Teatime used to be quite an elaborate ritual for Eurasian families, which inherited the practice of having tea in the evenings from the English. The beverage was served in elegant bone china cups and saucers on top of embroidered linen tablecloths and napkins.

Also on show are religious artefacts such as prayer books — symbols of the community's primarily Catholic roots, upbringing and deeply entrenched faith.



On loan from John Conceicao, a prayer book containing prayers in Latin, circa 1870. Picture: SPH Media Limited

## CHRONICLING EURASIAN HISTORY

Another way that the EA works to preserve the heritage of the community is through research and publications.

The EA's first commissioned book, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*, covered the social history of the Eurasians. Published in 1992 and co-edited by Myrna Braga-Blake and Ann Ebert-Oehlers, the seminal and comprehensive volume of essays and historical photographs covered Eurasian life before independence. It was the first such publication of its kind.

In 2005, the EA collaborated with local publisher Asiapac to produce an easy-to-read handbook on Eurasian culture titled *Gateway to Eurasian Culture*. The book covers topics such as history, language and names, religion, daily customs and practices, literature and the arts, food, and other aspects of Eurasian life.

These publications have been useful to young Eurasians curious to learn more about their past and present, as well as other

Singaporeans interested in understanding the community.

Generally, the EA supports the work of Eurasian wordsmiths where possible. For instance, it links writers up with publishers and promotes their books via its newsletter, gallery shop and website. It actively publicises these books where possible as they reflect the community's diversity, range of interests, and the myriad perspectives on the Eurasian experience living in Singapore.

In December 2015, the EA published a documentation of the community's significant artefacts in a photo book called *The Eurasian Collection*. It featured artefacts used at home, Eurasian jewellery and apparel, sports and music items, religious trinkets, wedding gear and World War II memorabilia.

The publication featured a foreword by then-Minister for National Development, and Culture, Community and Youth, Lawrence Wong. He noted that the book captures memories of objects that are slowly

disappearing in modern times, such as brass *breudher* (a type of Dutch cake) moulds and *sireh* (betel leaf) sets. He commended the EA and the Eurasian community for keeping and safeguarding these heritage items. He said: "They are an important part of the legacy that we leave behind for future generations, to help them understand where we came from, and the journey we have taken together as a nation."

In 2015, in conjunction with Singapore's 50th year of independence, the EA commissioned a book which featured 50 important Eurasians who have contributed to Singapore's nation building. Called *Our City, Our Home: Singapore Eurasians 1965-2015*, the book features Eurasians in the government, sports, education and the arts. It was produced with the support of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and the National Heritage Board.

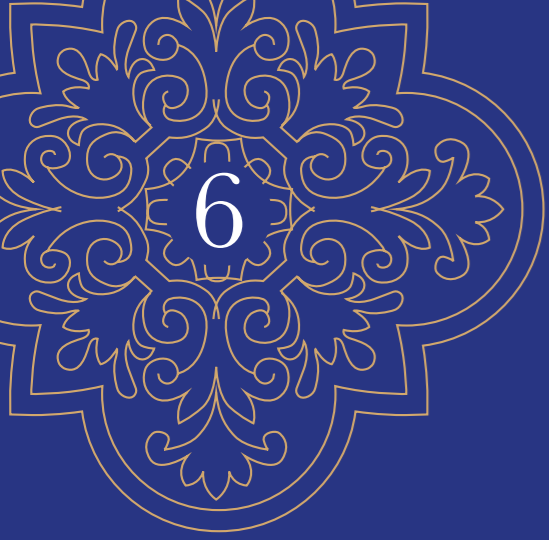
Mr S. Iswaran, then-Minister for Trade and Industry, who was the guest of honour at the book's launch, noted that Eurasians have played an important role in forging a strong sense of nationhood among Singaporeans while adding to the richness and diversity of Singapore's multiracial society.

The EA is also active in the archiving of oral histories, enlisting its volunteers to fan out to record the stories and memories of older Eurasians in Singapore. It was approached by the National Archives of

Singapore's (NAS) Oral History Centre alongside other ethnic community groups to form Oral History Committees. Since 2017, the EA has been working in partnership with the NAS, establishing the Eurasian Community Oral History Committee. Interviewees span Eurasians from the arts, music, political, and sports sectors, among others.

The varied personal perspectives, historical accounts, as well as anthropological analysis and studies that have emerged have greatly boosted literature on the community and bolstered understanding of Singapore's Eurasians.

Preserving and showcasing Eurasian cultural heritage and history is critical for the members of the community to know where they came from, what makes them Eurasian and how they have contributed to Singapore. The EA as the facilitator and promoter of Eurasian heritage relies on volunteers as well as cultural and heritage advocates, champions and practitioners to shine for the community. Working hand in hand with them has helped boost the Eurasian heritage profile — indeed, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As a consequence of its efforts over the past 30 years or so, the EA has become a repository of Eurasian culture. It will continue to strive to tell the Singaporean-Eurasian story, grow with the community's evolving identity, and keep Eurasians in touch with their roots.



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Bonding *the*  
Community

The central mission of the Eurasian Association, Singapore's (EA's) third core pillar — community development — is to build a strong sense of belonging to the Eurasian community and to the larger community of Singapore. Towards this end, the EA organises its activities around several important themes; these include community engagement, youth and sports. These are meant to promote stronger bonds and build synergy within the Eurasian community and to engage with the rest of the Singapore community by partnering other organisations to organise various projects and programmes.

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The programmes organised by the Eurasian Association have been and remain very heavily volunteer driven. Although the EA has full-time staff to run the programmes, these officers serve mainly to implement the ideas suggested by volunteers. This is most evident in the area of community engagement, where EA members volunteer their own time and efforts to plan for activities, events and even concerts.

The activities offered in 2019 included Read@EA, Craft@EA, and Games Day@EA.

Read@EA is essentially a book club, with regular meetings among EA members. It started in 2010 with the aim of promoting reading at the EA. The book club's members are led through a range of discussion points that are curated from a reading list. The members then present their own personal insights after reading classics such as John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and George Orwell's *Shooting an Elephant*. The National Library Board had supported this initiative by providing the EA with reading and promotional materials.

Craft@EA is an interest group that was started in 2012 by a group of women who wanted to share their talents and learn new ones. Its members come together to crochet, knit, do patchwork, dressmaking, glass painting or bead work, as well as engage in other forms of handicraft. Some sessions are educational in that more experienced members will impart the skills to other participants, while others are purely "social" in that the members just enjoy one another's company.

In addition to offering Craft@EA the space to operate, the EA also funds the purchase of the necessary materials. Occasionally, Craft@EA sells the finished handicrafts to raise funds for the EA



Minister for Community, Culture and Youth Grace Fu trying her hand at some crafts at the EA Booth during the One Community Fiesta at Kovan Hub. Picture: Eurasian Association



Members of Craft@EA conducting a craft workshop at Temasek Polytechnic in 2018. Picture: Eurasian Association

through the setting up of booths during community and heritage festivals.

Items made over the years include necklaces, bracelets, red and white rosettes for SG50 Sunday lunch, scarfs for an orphanage in Myanmar and T-shirts carrying Christmas motifs. Some of the items are displayed at the Eurasian Community House. Craft@EA has also made tokens of appreciation for the First Lady, Mrs Tony Tan, at the Istana Open House 2017, and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Eurasian Festival 2019.

Games Day@EA can take many different forms: these might include Quiz Night (Trivia) where members gather to test their general knowledge, or play more social games such as Scrabble, Carom, social mah-jong and *chikee* (a traditional card game). Again, these are organised by members for other members to enjoy.

Every year, events such as Red & White lunches to celebrate the nation's birthday, Christmas parties and New Year's Eve dinner and dance are a regular fixture in EA's social calendar for its members.

Given that the main purpose of community engagement is to bring Eurasians together, and it is known that Eurasians have a special talent and passion for music, the EA has been organising concerts at the multi-purpose hall since 2018.

Together with EA's 2nd Vice-President,

Mrs Yvonne Pereira, who oversees EA's community development events, country singer-songwriter Mel Ferdinands — who, with his brother, Joe, were key members of the band, Gypsy — has volunteered to "curate" such concerts, inviting different Eurasian musicians to perform each time.

Said Mr Ferdinands: "It is a nice little night out for family and friends who often get up to dance. The music includes rock, pop, the blues and country. It is very gratifying to see musicians and guests enjoying themselves."

#### EURASIAN FESTIVALS

These events help to raise awareness in the larger society that despite the small size of the Eurasian community, it has made significant beneficial impact on the nation's history through its own unique heritage and traditions.

On 9 April 2017, the EA, in partnership with the People's Association, organised The Eurasian Festival at Our Tampines Hub, with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong as the guest of honour.

Reminiscent of the first Eurasian Heritage Day held in 1991, it was a celebration of all things Eurasian, and showcased aspects of the community's life from its history, language and religion to its pastimes, dances, music and food. A goodie bag of Eurasian Easter specialities was given to the 1,500 visitors who streamed in throughout the day.



Participants waving the Singapore flag while singing songs to celebrate National Day at the EA's Red and White Lunch in 2013. Picture: Eurasian Association



Mrs Therese Stewart (right), aged 102, the wife of former Head of Civil Service Stanley Stewart, greeting PM Lee, whom she knew as a child, at the Eurasian Festival 2017, while her daughter, Olivia, hugged both of them. Picture: SPH Media Limited





MP Christopher de Souza (centre, in a red shirt) singing Christmas carols with the community at the Eurasian Festival at Ulu Pandan Community Club in December 2017. Picture: Eurasian Association



Minister S. Iswaran chatting with families as they made their Christmas ornaments to decorate the Christmas tree as a community, at the Eurasian Festival at West Coast Community Centre in November 2018. Picture: Eurasian Association



MP Joan Pereira (fourth from the left) holding a *sugee* cupcake after decorating it with icing, at the Eurasian Festival at Henderson Community Club in July 2018. Picture: Eurasian Association

In line with the Easter theme, PM Lee joined a group of Eurasian children on stage to assemble an Easter egg puzzle together.

In December 2017, more than 500 guests turned up at Ulu Pandan community club to learn how to celebrate Christmas the Eurasian way. Various musicians including Peter Diaz, the Lesslar family, and brothers Trevor and Jared Martens-Wong, and a special dance performance by the Diamond Drip Team entertained the crowd. Children went up on stage to sing along to Christmas carols, alongside the Regina Coeli Choir from the Church of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The children particularly enjoyed the craft tables where they made and coloured tiny reindeers, snowmen and gingerbread men, which they then hung on the Christmas tree as ornaments.

A year later in 2018, a similar festival was held at West Coast Community Club which featured a Eurasian dance performance. The troupe performed the traditional "Jingkli Nona", as well as two other Portuguese folk songs, "Patuscada" and "Malhao Malhao". The audience was also treated to a carolling sing-a-long session, led by the Craft @ EA group and Trevor Nerva.

In July 2018, a food-themed Eurasian Festival was held at Henderson Community Club, which enabled members of the public to get to know more about Eurasian cuisine. Children and families coloured postcards that showed *sugee* cakes and curry *debal* while others took part in a food trivia quiz about Eurasian dishes, where participants used their mobile phones to key in the answers in the Kahoot online app.

## EASTER AND CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Eurasians have a knack for turning occasions and gatherings into warm, familial affairs. Eurasian hospitality is a form of intangible cultural heritage, observed Gladrags in the book, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*.

The writer noted that Eurasian events are marked not only by visible features such as food, drink, music and dancing, but also intangible attributes such as the renewal of ties of kinship and friendship; giving and receiving emotional and moral support; the reaffirmation of a communal sense of identity; and the celebration of togetherness.

These events include birthdays, weddings, anniversaries as well as religious celebrations such as Easter and Christmas. Most Eurasians are Christians, of whom the majority are Catholic.

Typically, Catholic Eurasians usually fast and abstain from meat during Lent, a 40-day period of religious observance and self-reflection preceding Easter Sunday, which marks the resurrection of Jesus.

They begin Easter observances on Palm Sunday — the Sunday before Easter — when they receive a blessed palm from church, noted Gladrags. The palm is kept in the family altar, or placed over the doorway for protection against evil and harm.

On Maundy Thursday, they attend church and may eat a hot cross bun or two.

On Good Friday, families usually go to church for the Veneration of the Cross. At around six in the evening, they participate in a candlelight procession during which a ceremony known as the Stations of the Cross takes place.

On Easter morning, children receive Easter eggs. Some of these Eurasian Easter traditions, such as egg painting, are shared with the wider community at heritage events.

Meanwhile, Christmas festivities officially start with midnight mass on December 24. Eurasians put on their Sunday best to attend the

service. They usually return home for a post-midnight mass dinner which typically comprises mulligatawny — a rich, spiced chicken broth full of coconut milk served with rice — French bread, roast ham and *achar* (pickled vegetables).

On the actual day, it would not be unusual for the table to be heaving with succulent roast turkey and a leg of pineapple ham boiled in beer. Asian flavours feature too and the spread could include mouth-watering mutton curry.

Eurasians usually adopt an open house approach to their parties, and on Christmas, families typically entertain a stream of visitors, ranging from relatives to friends.

The community's famous curry *debal* is traditionally prepared on Boxing Day using leftover meats and served with salted fish and rice. Freshly made sugar treats include pudding, trifle, fruit cake, *sugee cake*, *sasargong* — a mixture of rice flour, grated coconut and salt — and the Dutch yeast cake known as *breuder*. This feast is usually washed down with fruit punch and brandy.

Recognising that not every Eurasian household might be able to celebrate in such a manner, the EA has always placed the needy at the front and centre of their activities during the year-end holiday season.

The EA began holding afternoon festive parties for children sometime between 1928 and 1930 at the Singapore Recreation Club. This continued even after World War II. For instance, it held one such event at the Victoria Memorial Hall for 1,200 children in 1955. Each child received a gift.

Such parties were usually generously organised, filled with food, and fully packed with activities. Attendees were treated to concerts or talentime contests. Sometimes, films were screened. Also usually on hand was Father Christmas to spread warmth and good cheer.

This extra care during Christmas has carried through 100 years of the EA's existence. In 1994,



**Little Amy Ferguson, was one of the hundreds of children at the Singapore Eurasian Association's Christmas Treat at St. Joseph's Institution yesterday.—Straits Times picture.**

*The Straits Times* ran a photograph of Amy Ferguson, one of the hundreds of children at the EA's Christmas Treat at St Joseph's Institution, a day after the event on 4 November 1939. Picture: SPH Media Limited

its welfare arm rolled out a project to clean, maintain and repair the homes of needy and elderly Eurasians living in HDB flats so they could have a more cheerful and homely ambience for Christmas.

The Eurasian way of celebrating Christmas has an even wider reach these days. The EA hosts Eurasian Christmas Festivals and organises an annual Family Support Services Christmas lunch. This sometimes includes dancing, skits, and trivia.

The Eurasian Community House also plays host to the annual Children's Christmas Treat, which is a multiracial event where the EA invites children from the other self-help groups.

Children get to interact with characters such as Santa Claus and Santarina who invoke the yuletide spirit.

They are also entertained with music, balloon sculptors and games.

No one goes home empty-handed and each child leaves with a gift.

### THE NEW YEAR'S EVE DANCE

The festive season, defined by good cheer and gaiety, typically revolved around house visits and parties.

It would culminate in the association's mega New Year's Eve Dance organised by groups such as the Eurasian Association or the Girls' Sports Club. The dance was usually held at the grand old dame — Victoria Memorial Hall, which first opened its doors in 1905.

The soiree was the perfect opportunity for young women to meet young men while chaperoned by parents. The hall would be filled with live music from popular bands such as the Sambodians. Hundreds of dancing couples and groups of teenagers, dressed to the nines, would

spill out along the corridors of the hall.

The formal ball would end at 2am after the tradition of ringing in the new year.

Many a party-goer would dance into the wee hours of the night, until the crack of dawn, by simply walking across the Padang to the Singapore Recreation Club, which would host a sunrise party. This meant that festivities lasted from 8pm to 8am for some of the revellers.

The EA has continued hosting the New Year's party. It has served as an event to keep the Eurasian community together, as well as a function which other Singaporeans could join in and experience Eurasian hospitality and celebrations.



New Year's Eve Dinner and Dance in 2015. Picture: Eurasian Association

### A MAGAZINE TO BIND THE COMMUNITY

In 1919, the year the EA was established, Eurasian T. C. Archer started a monthly periodical called *Our Magazine*. It was likely borne out of a renewed assertion of Eurasian identity in colonial Singapore as a result of the growing anti-Asian sentiment among Europeans, noted Dr Antonio L. Rappa in his 2013 book, *Saudade: The Culture and Security of Eurasian Communities in Southeast Asia*.

In 1988, a new magazine called *EA News* was launched by then-EA committee member Gerry de Silva. It served as a communication tool to keep the Eurasian community informed, and to introduce Singaporeans to Eurasians. Every quarter, the publication was disseminated to Eurasian households, community associations and the authorities.

The goal was to be transparent with its activities and ongoings. The newsletter also complemented the EA's networking activities with the wider community and the authorities as it sought support and grants in its work. Over time, the publication helped to raise the EA's profile.

The EA positions itself at the centre of Eurasian social life, and the newsletter helps to convey this. It updates the community on its societies and interest groups such as the Toastmasters Club, its dragon boat team called EA Dragons, Golf Society, Soccer Team, and Social Circle. The EA hopes that by interacting with one another, Eurasians can develop a stronger sense of belonging to the community and to the country.

Mr de Silva adds that the spirit and

stories of the community — its families no longer living in close proximity to one another in former enclaves such as Waterloo Street, Queen Street, Kampong Java Road, Upper Serangoon and Kampong Siglap — have been kept alive through the regular circulation of the newsletter.

Another by-product of the publication is its function as a record of the evolving identity of Singapore's Eurasians, as well as the EA's work.

In 2006, the magazine's name was changed to *The NewEurasian*. The new handle seeks to better reflect the changing demographics of the community and attract first-generation Eurasians.

Today, *The NewEurasian* is read by about 7,000 Eurasians in Singapore. It is circulated to various ministries, statutory

boards, other government offices, community organisations and self-help groups. It conveys the association's direction, and updates its community on its various outreach and development programmes, as well as its successes as a self-help group. The magazine also functions as a platform to promote Eurasian heritage education and preservation. It further captures the contributions of its stalwarts, senior members, and its movers and shakers. Eurasians are at the heart of the publication.

Besides engaging the community through large-scale annual events and via the platforms of music and publications, the EA has also geared its outreach efforts towards gaining interest and support from the youth, who will take the association forward in future.

## EURASIANA AT THE ESPLANADE

The biggest concert organised by the EA was *Eurasiana*, an extravaganza put together to celebrate the EA's 90th anniversary in 2009. The term "Eurasiana" was chosen as it represented a cross section of Eurasian musical artistes.

To showcase the best of Eurasian musical talent for the EA's 90th anniversary, then-EA President Edward D'Silva and his team arranged for a line-up of prominent Eurasian artistes and performers including Vernon Cornelius, Royston Minjoot, John Molina, Claressa and Jeremy Monteiro, among many others.

The EA also engaged reknowned composers Iskandar Ismail and Dick Lee as the event's music directors, and the event was supported by the People's Association, which lent its 50-musician strong orchestra.

Hosted by veteran radio presenter Brian Richmond, presenter Hamish Brown, former Nominated Member of Parliament Eunice Olsen and actress Andrea De Cruz, it had something for everyone — from golden oldies and upbeat arrangements of familiar ethnic songs to the latest pop hits.

A new generation of talents, including singer-songwriter Michaela Therese, Alemay and Vanessa Fernandez, and Candice de Rozario thrilled with their powerful vocals, while those who have lived through the 1960s savoured nostalgic moments with local pop star Vernon Cornelius and accordionist Royston Minjoot.

Women went gaga over rocker John Molina and singer-songwriter Don Richmond turned up the tempo with his own song from the local production of the hit play, *Bent*.

Songstress Claressa Monteiro gave a lovely rendition of "Somewhere Over The Rainbow", while her brother, Cultural Mendallion recipient Jeremy Monteiro, performed on the piano his unique take on the tune that sings of the Eurasian love for music, dance and life, "Jingkli Nona".

The guest of honour for Eurasiana was Mr S. R. Nathan, then-President of Singapore. Also in attendance was Mr George Yeo, then-Minister for Foreign Affairs who was also the minister representing Eurasians in the Cabinet, Mr Mah Bow Tan, then-Minister for National Development, as well as two Eurasian Members of Parliament: Mr Christopher de Souza and Mr Michael Palmer.

Eurasians across Singapore had also been invited to attend the showcase, and the venue was packed to the rafters. The sense of community was palpable during the rehearsals and performances at the Esplanade over two nights in June 2009. Towards the end of the show, the music and performances so moved the audience that many stood up to dance.

The concert had succeeded in affirming and celebrating the Eurasian spirit. The concert had also raised the profile of Eurasians and shared with the wider Singaporean community their rich cultural heritage and musical talents.



The performers of *Eurasiana* in 2009 with Singapore President S. R. Nathan and his wife. Picture: Eurasian Association



President of the Republic of Singapore, Madam Halimah Yacob (second row, second from the left) and Senior Minister of State for Transport, and Communications and Information, and OnePeople.sg chairman, Dr Janil Puthuchearu (first row, leftmost), with the EA President, Dr Alexius A. Pereira (second row, third from the left) and the EA team, at the Orange Ribbon Walk 2018. The Orange Ribbon symbolises friendship, brotherhood and kinship, underpinned by values of respect, understanding and trust. The annual event organised by OnePeople.sg — a national body for racial and religious harmony — rallies Singaporeans to make a stand against racism and combat racial discrimination and prejudice. Picture: Eurasian Association

## REACHING OUT TO OTHER COMMUNITIES

The EA is also committed to building better ties between the Eurasian community and the other races in Singapore.

The EA is a regular participant at inter-racial and inter-religious events, such as the annual Orange Ribbon Walk, which started in 2013, and the annual Inter Racial Inter Religious Harmony Nite, which began in 2004.

The EA directly contributes to promoting social cohesion in Singapore by having a permanent representative sit in national-level committees.

The National Integration Council (NIC) was set up in 2009 to drive integration efforts between Singaporeans and new immigrants. The EA representative is the EA President.

The Ministry of Culture, Community and

Youth's National Working Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony was set up in 2008 to build close relations at the top level of community, government and faith leaders. The EA representative is the EA President.

OnePeople.sg (OPSG), which organises the Orange Ribbon Walk, was established in 1997 to promote racial harmony and spearhead programmes and initiatives to bring the different ethnic communities together. The EA is represented by one of its Vice-Presidents.

To promote inter-community bonding, the EA makes it a point to invite members of other communities to all of the EA events, including the Education Awards and the Christmas Light-Up at the Eurasian Community House.

## GOING REGIONAL

The EA's community engagement extends beyond Singapore's shores. The EA maintains close ties with regional associations such as the Penang Eurasian Association, Selangor and Federal Territory Eurasian Association, Australian Eurasian Association of Western Australia, and Malacca Portuguese Eurasian Association. Owing to strong bonds built over the years, the EA has been regularly invited to participate in the Malaysian Eurasian Games, and sent teams in 2012, 2016 and 2018 to Kuala Lumpur and Penang.

From 23–24 March 2012, the EA organised the Eurasian Reunion, a significant conference that gathered more than 200 Eurasians from America, Australia, Britain, India, Macau, Malaysia and New Zealand, to celebrate their heritage and deepen their ties. The reunion was driven by then-EA President William (Bill) Jansen, who was inspired by the World Anglo-Indian Reunion in Perth, Australia, which he had attended in 2010. He told the guests: "I have long cherished the hope that the wider Eurasian community with our shared history and ancestry should one day reunite."

The Eurasian Reunion began with a buffet lunch at the Singapore Recreation Club (SRC), followed by an Asian Civilisations Museum visit and a city tour. The day's highlight was the renaming of the Eurasian Community House's three galleries as the Eurasian Heritage Centre by the guest of honour, then-President S. R. Nathan.

Subsequently, in his speech at the dinner, he paid tribute to former Minister for Foreign Affairs George Yeo, the event's special guest, as a "long-time supporter of the Eurasian community" who had been "instrumental in giving the Eurasian community pride of place in this building". Mr Nathan added that he hoped the reunion would help the community see how it could work together to enhance its status in society and strengthen its bonds with other races and cultures.

The second day started with a conference, "Eurasians in the 21st Century", which

representatives of Singapore's other ethnic communities were invited to. In his opening address, then-EA Vice-President Benett Theseira said that the Eurasian community should examine where it stood, what its future held and how members could maximise this. Then-Speaker of Parliament Michael Palmer gave the keynote speech, underlining the importance of the conference to "chart the future of the Eurasian community in Singapore and perhaps the region" and to "better understand each other and celebrate both our similarities and our differences". Three panel discussions, chaired separately by Barry Desker, Member of Parliament Christopher de Souza and Angelina Fernandez, delved into these areas.

The landmark event ended with a gala dinner at the SRC and dancing to the beat of Eurasian bands from Singapore and Malaysia. There, the EA announced that the guest of honour, Mr S. Iswaran, then-Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Home Affairs and for Trade and Industry, would succeed Mr Yeo as the Minister representing Eurasians.

The EA has also contributed to regional humanitarian efforts. For example, after the Asian tsunami struck on 26 December 2004 and claimed more than 200,000 lives, the EA held "The One Voice Music Tribute" on 20 February 2005 to raise funds for victims' families.

Then-EA Vice-President Gerry de Silva mooted the idea, which most EA members supported heartily. Then-EA President Bryan Davenport offered his funds to kick-start the project.

More than 100 musicians, singers and celebrity presenters such as Roy Dragon, Vernetta Lopez and Mark Van Cuylenburg (the Flying Dutchman) contributed pro-bono to the five-hour concert at The Newsroom Bar at Robertson Quay.

The organising committee comprised Gerry de Silva (chairman), Bryan Davenport, Patricia Monkman, Michael Bheem, Kathleen Woodford, Amanda de Silva, Brigitte Ow, Peter Boudewyn,



TOP: Former President S. R. Nathan opened the renamed Eurasian Heritage Centre in March 2012, in conjunction with the EA's Eurasian Reunion, which brought together Eurasians from the region to celebrate their heritage.

BOTTOM: Gerry de Silva (right) accepting an UNAS token of appreciation on behalf of the EA from Mr Raymond Lim, Second Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the UN 60th Anniversary Dinner in October 2005.

Pictures: Eurasian Association

Sonya Tracy, Lorraine Bligh, Royston Jalleh and Toh Kia Hing. With EA members and friends, they helped as ushers and sold food, T-shirts and more than 600 One Voice CDs.

In all, One Voice raised more than \$30,000 for tsunami victims, for which the United Nations Association Singapore (UNAS) presented an award to the EA.

In 2007, led by then-Nominated MP Eunice Olsen, Vernon Carroll and Gerry de Souza, EA volunteers helped the victims of the floods in Johor, Malaysia, from December 2006 to January 2007. Patricia Monkman helped to organise the EA volunteers, who spent many hours packing

dry food, flashlights and blankets at the Eurasian Community House for the victims.

Liaising with the MP of Sinar, the team borrowed a large 5-tonne army truck, which could wade through the flood waters, to deliver the items.

Also in 2007, a group of mainly Singapore Eurasians, led by EA member Vernon Carroll, travelled to Pai, north of Chiang Mai, Thailand, with funds and supplies, such as blankets, clothes, and sports goods, to help build a school.

While providing help for the needy in Singapore, the EA raised its profile by also helping those in need overseas.



The members of the Eurasian Association's Mentoring Young Leaders Network in February 2010 included: (from left) Mr Joachim C. Pereira, Mr Darren Francis, Ms Sybil Rocha, Mr Zaf Coelho, Mr Andrew Pang and Mr Edmund Twohill. The outreach arm to young professionals, launched in 2008, had 100 members in 2010. Picture: SPH Media Limited

### ENGAGING THE YOUNG

The EA's youth programmes aim to create a vibrant Eurasian youth community where young Eurasians pursue their dreams with passion, determination and belief. The programmes, including sports programmes, are geared at helping them to realise their potential and develop a strong sense of shared purpose of service towards the country and to the Eurasian community.

The EA Youth Committee — with 11 members in 2019 — leads and plans the youth vision and agenda for the year. The committee seeks to help young Eurasians to develop to their full potential and realise their aspirations; strengthen the bonds of friendship among young Eurasians to give

them a sense of belonging to the Eurasian community; and build a pool of young, dedicated Eurasian leaders committed to serving the community and country.

Mentorship programmes are among the more successful and popular types of programmes with the youth. In 2008, a Mentoring Young Leaders Network (MYLN) for young professionals started strongly with 120 young Eurasians. It achieved this partly by actively reaching out to Eurasian students through tea sessions organised at tertiary institutions such as the National University of Singapore and Republic Polytechnic. Many of its sessions were held in downtown areas — Shenton Way and Orchard Road — for the convenience of the young professionals.

For example, Mr Christopher Gordon, who has chaired the EA's Youth Committee since 2016, was mentored by Eurasian Member of Parliament, Mr Christopher de Souza, in 2008. Back then, Mr de Souza had just returned from Britain after studying law there and Mr Gordon was heading there to study engineering. During the holidays, both of them would meet so that Mr de Souza could give him some general advice and tips on living overseas and personal development matters.

In turn, Mr Gordon, a civil servant, is now mentoring two other young adults — a university student and another who has embarked on a career in the army.

What was most effective about this MYLN was that it helped younger Eurasians get to know one another, and to form bonds, some of which remain until today.

However, work and family commitments led to flagging participation among the young over the next few years. "Things became a bit quiet on the youth front in 2009 and 2010 because youth outreach and engagement are largely driven by volunteers and so participation depends on the interest and availability of volunteers," said Mr Gordon, 36.

Over the years, the EA has continued to bring together young professionals by providing a platform for networking, as well as mentoring and guidance from Eurasians established in different professions.

From 2017 onwards, the EA youth arm decided to tweak the mentorship model to organise a series of workshops and have a finale session of networking with mentors every year.

Workshops that have been organised included neurolinguistic programming and visualising success through mindfulness to enable young professionals to maximise their effectiveness and productivity in their studies and careers. There have also been resume writing workshops and career dialogues about the legal and healthcare professions.

The series of workshops will culminate in a mentoring and networking session, held in a "speed dating" style. It has partnered Young NTUC to offer a broader range of mentors and young Eurasians can choose the mentors they would like to speak to, one after another in quick succession. After the session, the young adults can indicate their preference for a specific mentor to meet with them one-on-one for the next few months.

Young people found the opportunities to meet influential people in various fields and pick up skills through talks and forums helpful.

There were also casual social meetups organised for young Eurasian professionals to relax and bond with one another in bars and restaurants after work in the Central Business District.



A neurolinguistic programming workshop held at the EA in 2017. Picture: Eurasian Association



Youth meet and mingle at a networking session in 2019. Picture: Eurasian Association

To protect and preserve the precious family recipes of Eurasian cuisine, some young people also took the initiative to facilitate private dinner sessions in the homes of older Eurasians who had strong culinary skills as well as to upload videos on Eurasian cuisine on YouTube for their peers to try their hand at replicating the dishes.

In 2018, a leadership programme was initiated to equip young people with the skills needed to come up with a community project to implement at the end of it, whether it is environmental, social or heritage-related causes.

As a result of these initiatives that are aimed at connecting better with the youth, the youth participation numbers in EA's activities have gone up, Mr Gordon said.

Its database has about 300 young adults, from 17 to 35 years of age, and about a quarter join in at least one youth activity a year currently.

The youth committee is engaging working professionals further by introducing a running interest group. It meets to train for a few times a week about three months before a marathon. The members usually run at the Kallang Practice Track, opposite the Singapore Sports Hub, and Pasir Ris Park, and they plan to design their own EA running jersey soon.

The youth committee also intends to introduce a photography interest group

and small-group life coaching sessions for young people to "find their *ikigai* (reason for being in Japanese)" in life. These sessions, which will be facilitated by a social enterprise, will be open to youth of all races from all self-help groups.

"With the leadership and mentorship workshops, I am heartened to see that many of our youth have changed and matured and now have a greater clarity of what they want to do in life," said Mr Gordon.

"That means that they have found their purpose and can begin making a positive difference to Singapore and the people around them.

#### **SOCIALISING THROUGH SPORTS AND GAMES**

Eurasians have always enjoyed and excelled in sports. The leading role they play in sports is disproportionate to the size of the community and many factors contribute to the history of the Eurasian's deep involvement in sports, observed former national runner and hockey player Ann Ebert-Oehlers in the book, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes and Dreams*.

The EA was formed in 1919, 36 years after the founding of the Singapore Recreation Club (SRC). In 1883, the Eurasian community had set up the SRC as a sports club to provide Eurasians with opportunities and facilities to play team sports, especially cricket.



Mr Jared Bateman (third from the left) with the EA running club. Picture: Eurasian Association

## CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Whenever Mr Jared Bateman steps into a Starbucks outlet or neighbourhood coffeeshop, he would tell the counter staff to pour his cold brew coffee, or *kopi peng*, into his protein shaker bottle. To him, every single action, no matter how small, matters when it comes to environmental conservation or sustainability.

It is no wonder then that when the opportunity came for Mr Bateman to implement an eco-friendly project, he chose the Eurasian Community House as his experimental laboratory. "When we want to do something, we always start from our own home. The Eurasian Community House is like home to us so we decided to start from it and see if we can tackle some root causes," said Mr Bateman, 24, who has been an EA youth committee member since 2017.

On behalf of the EA, its youth committee took a climate action pledge in a campaign organised by the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources in 2018.

In line with that pledge and as part of a young Eurasian leadership programme, Mr Bateman and his team came up with several ways that the Eurasian Community House could decrease its carbon footprint through reduction in energy usage.

All halogen light bulbs will be switched to LED lights this year, for instance. The former tends to consume more electricity and burns out faster while the latter is more energy efficient and durable.

Mr Bateman also worked with EA staff to introduce various changes. The air-conditioning, normally set at 20 degrees Celsius or lower, is being maintained at 25 degrees Celsius instead. Notices are pasted on the switches and doors to remind

users to turn off the lights when they are not in use.

A new paper policy has been adopted to reduce material consumption and wastage. During meetings, staff and volunteers are advised not to print documents unnecessarily and view these on their own electronic devices. If printouts are needed, printing the documents on used papers and reducing their margins and font sizes to optimise paper use is encouraged.

Instead of disposable cups, glass pitchers and mugs are being used during EA meetings as well.

"The EA management committee has been very supportive regarding these efforts. The youth are interested but are busy with their own lives, so we have to see how to engage them more on this," said Mr Bateman.

He aimed to continue organising activities to reach out to the wider Eurasian community to create awareness on the importance of environmental protection. These activities may include beach clean-ups, environmental dialogues and upcycling workshops. He is also working with Youth Corps Singapore, which looks into providing volunteering opportunities for young people, to see how to spread the green message to the youth on the national level.

"I wasn't motivated much about this green cause at first but after reading up and being aware of the irreversible damage our actions are inflicting on wildlife and their habitats through climate change, I began to realise how important this is," said Mr Bateman, a mechanical engineering graduate.

"It is about cultivating the right habits because every single action matters; bit by bit, they all add up and impact the environment."

In the years before World War II, the EA maintained close ties with the SRC and the two associations had many members in common.

The EA and SRC have upheld the decades-old tradition of holding combined games, such as *balut* (a dice game) and football, and the winners would be awarded the Crystal Cup.

In the 1990s, the EA also offered team sports such as football, badminton and netball.

"These were held for the whole family at St Patrick's School field every Saturday afternoon. I attended the games sessions regularly. My son played soccer and my daughter played netball then," said Ms Yvonne Pereira, 71, the EA's 2nd Vice-President and chairperson for community development and human resource.

EA also had its own soccer school catered to children between the ages of eight and 15 years old, which aimed to instil values such as sportsmanship, discipline and teamwork in its trainees.

In 1996, its youth soccer and netball teams even flew to Australia to engage in friendly matches with other Eurasian peers there.

The EA Men's Senior Soccer team was first formed in 2003. The EA Men's Junior Soccer team was formed two years after, in 2005, by Mr Frederick Fox (known fondly as Freddie Fox).

In 2016, the EA revived the Men's Senior Soccer team, which in 2019 became the EA Men's Soccer team that is open to male EA members aged over 18.

In 2006, the EA began to have a dragon boat team.

The idea for the rowing team came from then-EA President Gerry de Silva, who pledged to raise the profile of the Eurasian community by involving them in the wider community. One platform to achieve that would be through sports, such as in the Chinese-dominated sport of dragon boat racing.

Mr de Silva walked the talk and rowed in the team's inaugural race in the Singapore River Regatta that year, though they finished last.

Redoubling their efforts and training hard, the EA Dragons became the newly crowned champions in fewer than four years in the Singapore River Regatta in 2009.

In its heyday, the group had nearly 40 members. Besides Eurasians, there were also Cambodian, American, Australian, Indian and Chinese members in the team.

A small portion of the annual budget went to the renting of the dragon boat equipment, but this investment reaped returns in terms of the visibility given to the EA — its profile was raised when its logo and name were being represented in national races.



## FRIENDLY FOOTBALL

There are many social football teams around, but not many welcome older men and even fewer count celebrities and entertainers in their ranks.

Country singer-songwriter Mel Ferdinands, former radio presenter Mark Richmond and rock singer John Molina have been known to come by and kick a ball with players from the EA Men's Senior Soccer team.

The team was revived in 2016 by Lloyd Branson, who for years had been playing with other teams and was eager to create an opportunity for Eurasians to get together over a sport.

At first, it was meant to be for Eurasian men above the age of 40. In 2019, however, the team rebranded itself as simply the EA Men's Soccer team to cater to a growing segment of younger players. "The men started bringing their children and nephews over for the matches so we have a mixed team now, of older and younger ones," said Mr Lyle Cordeiro, 44, a soccer committee member.

Over the years, the team has expanded from about a dozen people when it first started to some 60 players in 2019, both regular and ad hoc ones. The team does not have a training venue of its own. It plays friendly matches with external teams in fields all over the island about once or twice a month.

"We don't have the speed or stamina of young people so we seek out mostly veteran teams to play against. We identify more as a social group rather than a sporting one, though we also play to win," said Mr Cordeiro.

The team has also taken part in various competitions locally and overseas, the latest being the Malaysian Eurasian Games that was held in Penang in 2018 where the team came in second place.

To keep records of their matches and gatherings as a legacy for future generations of Eurasians, Mr Cordeiro created a website for the team in 2018. From the website, one is able to keep up to date about upcoming matches and track match statistics.

Some interesting teams that the EA Men's Soccer team has played against include the Farrer Park Diplomats, East Coast Rangers, Essex from Catholic Junior College, Gan Eng Seng Veterans, Singapore Cerebral Palsy and Alexandra Hospital Veterans. The match scores

are all diligently recorded on the website.

"Should we be no longer around in future, at least there is a record that all these happened and there is something to pass down to the next generation," said Mr Cordeiro, a procurement sourcing manager with IBM.

Mr Harry Pereira, 53, who was on the soccer team committee from 2004 to 2006, said Mr Freddie Fox was the person who started the soccer team way back in the mid-1980s. Then, he put together a team of Eurasian youth to play every Sunday. The team would also go to Malaysia or Perth every year to take part in regional competitions.

In the 2000s, Mr Fox started a soccer school and opened it up to children from all over Singapore. He brought in professional players, such as the former national player David Lee and former national coach Sebastian Yap, to train children aged from five to 15. They used the football field at Ping Yi Secondary School in Chai Chee.

"It was like a family affair. The mothers would have picnics there and the fathers would join their sons in the matches after the children finished their training," said Mr Pereira, who runs a publication distribution firm.

He started playing football with the EA when his two sons, then five and six years old, joined the EA soccer school in 2002. He would join the father-son matches.

Later on, he was roped in to organise tournaments for the children, such as the Racial Harmony soccer tournament. The EA partnered the North East Community Development Council to organise this large-scale competition for football teams from all over Singapore.

Unfortunately, the EA soccer school closed down in 2010 because of dwindling response and interest.

Going forward, Mr Cordeiro hopes that the team will be able to secure a permanent football field to play in and create a separate youth wing team for the younger players.

"It is very inspiring to see Eurasian gentlemen making time to commit to the soccer team," said Mr Cordeiro. "Through soccer, we are able to share a common interest, bond with our families who come by to watch us or join us and build a community."



The EA participating in the Inter-Faith Soccer 7's Tournament in 2016.  
Picture: Eurasian Association



The EA Men's Senior Soccer team before playing a match against Victoria Old Boys in 2018.  
Picture: Eurasian Association



Members of the Dragon Boat team in April 2009. Picture: Eurasian Association

That same year in 2009, the game of balut was introduced to the EA by Ms Yvonne Pereira.

Balut was invented at the end of World War II by an American soldier called Edgar Woolbright who lacked playing cards for poker. He was stationed in the Philippines and initially named the game "poker dice". In the early seventies, it was renamed as balut.

The objective of the game is to chalk up the maximum number of points by rolling five dice and scoring according to seven different categories. The highest score one can get is when the player gets 'balut', that is when all the dice faces are the same. It is a game that involves both luck and strategy.

The EA team started off with 12 players and its membership has since more than doubled to 25 active members. They are

mostly women aged from 60 to 89 years old.

"It is a very good game for interaction and bonding because after every game, losing players have to change tables so you don't stick with the same four players and people get to mix around and meet others from all walks of life," said Ms Pereira.

The balut activity is self-sustaining; prizes for winning players, such as bottles of wine or grocery vouchers, are donated by EA members.

Besides playing for fun, members participated actively in balut competitions among themselves and in inter-club competitions. The EA is represented by two teams in the inter-club balut competition where players from clubs such as the Singapore Recreation Club, Singapore Cricket Club, Tanglin Club, Indian Association and the National University



Malaysian Eurasian Games Carnival in 2018. Picture: Eurasian Association

of Singapore Society compete over a six-month period. Each club takes turns to host the competition at its own premises.

Ms Pereira also introduced balut to other Eurasian associations in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Malacca, thus allowing for more opportunities for bonding and interaction with Eurasians abroad.

In 2018, the EA Singapore sent its balut and soccer teams to the third edition of the Malaysian Eurasian Games held in Penang. Teams from Penang, Selangor and Perak also took part in the games. The EA won gold for balut and silver for soccer.

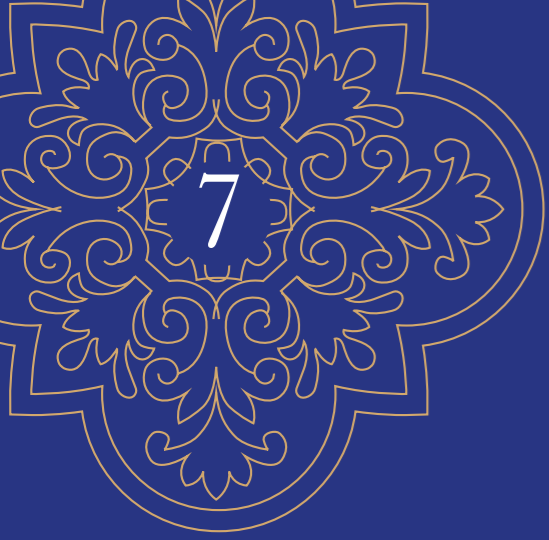
In 2013, the EA formed its own Golf Society. Members took part in inter-club competitions and organised games for fundraising purposes.

Owing to the lack of players for dragon boat racing and golf, both sports teams

closed down in the mid-2010s. As at 2019, only the balut and men's soccer team are active.

The senior men's soccer team does not have its own field for training. Instead, the team plays friendly matches with other clubs or associations every month. Often, the team members' relatives come along to support them and they also organise gatherings like barbeques when they are not on the pitch.

"Sports has been relatively successful in gathering more Eurasians together to bond, especially those who would otherwise not come to the EA at all," said Ms Pereira. "Going forward, if we can secure permanent training facilities like a soccer field or sports courts then I think we may be able to restart certain sports and generate more interest in the younger generation."



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*The*  
**Centennial**  
*Year and*  
**Beyond**

In its centennial year, 2019, the Eurasian Association, Singapore (EA) celebrated its past, present and looked forward to the future.

To celebrate the past, it unveiled the Eurasian Heritage Gallery, which was officially opened by the President of the Republic of Singapore, Madam Halimah Yacob, on 21 September that year.

To celebrate the present, the EA organised a Eurasian Festival to commemorate its 100th anniversary on 28 July 2019. It was held at Our Tampines Hub, with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong as the guest of honour.

Casting an eye to the future, the EA, in collaboration with the Singapore Bicentennial Office, organised a “by the youth, for the youth” campaign, known as “Eurasian-ish”, which culminated in a dialogue discussing the future of Eurasians, Eurasian culture and the EA.

Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies Tharman Shanmugaratnam said at the EA’s Charity Fundraising Dinner, held at J.W. Marriott Singapore South Beach on 11 May 2019: “The Eurasian community was amongst our earliest communities. But it is also part of our future. It is again growing,

with the new Eurasians being part of our population.

“I hope this special character that the community has had, that adeptness with people of all cultures and that wanting to make Singapore even more tightly knit as a multiracial society, remains the natural instinct of Eurasians old and new in the years to come.”

#### CELEBRATING THE EA’S HISTORY

In addition to being one of Singapore’s official ethnic self-help groups, the EA is the only institution in Singapore that acts as a guardian of Eurasian heritage and culture. It had set up the Eurasian Heritage Centre in 2003, with further extensions made in 2006 and 2011.

To commemorate the EA’s centenary, one of the key initiatives was to revamp the heritage centre on the fourth floor of the Eurasian Community House.

The Eurasian Heritage Gallery is not just a consolidation of the three smaller and separate galleries in the Eurasian Community House, but offers a fresh perspective on the history of Eurasians in Singapore, their lifestyle and culture, and their contribution to nation building.



President Halimah Yacob and her husband, Mr Mohammed Abdullah Alhabshee (third from the left), were viewing a diorama of Bahau, where many Eurasians had been interned during World War II, while listening to MP Christopher de Souza (rightmost). Looking on was EA President, Dr Alexius Pereira (leftmost). Picture: Eurasian Association



President Halimah Yacob (fifth from the left) and EA President Alexius Pereira (second from the right), with the EA Heritage Committee — (from the left) Percival Shepherdson, Gerardine Donough-Tan, Sharon Miller, Julia D’ Silva (chairperson), Geoffrey Morris, Jacqueline Peeris and Cedric Pereira — at the launch of the Eurasian Heritage Gallery in September 2019. Picture: Eurasian Association



Lead vocalist Alemay Fernandez, back-up vocalists Shanice Hedger and Jill Arul, and the Jazz Association Singapore Orchestra, conducted by Jeremy Monteiro, performing the EA centenary song. Picture: Eurasian Association

## THE EURASIAN CENTENNIAL SONG

In 2018, in preparation for the EA's 100th anniversary, Singapore Cultural Medallion winner and long-time supporter of the EA, Jeremy Monteiro, was commissioned to write a song to celebrate the centenary.

At the opening ceremony of the Eurasian Heritage Gallery, Monteiro's composition, "To Be Eurasian, To Be Singaporean, It's One And The Same", was given its world premiere, performed by lead vocalist Alemay Fernandez, with backing vocals by Shanice Hedger and Jill Arul, and Monteiro conducting the Jazz Association of Singapore Orchestra (JASSO).

### Lyrics

#### Verse 1

What does it mean to be Eurasian? What does it mean to be me?

Feeling all these cultures within me in this land where we are free.

My forefathers came here before me, from many different lands.

Here they found love and family and they chose to call this home.

#### Chorus 1

We are strong and we love our home,  
Our hearts beat together as one.

For our friends and our family, together we'll cherish our land.

What we always will remember for a hundred years and more:

To be Eurasian, to be Singaporean, it's one and the same.

#### Verse 2

We love to cook and we love to sing and dancing is our favourite thing,

But we also reach for excellence in every field we're in.

Whatever we do in our daily lives; a soldier, teacher or nurse,

A writer, sportsman or lawyer, we will always do our best.

#### Chorus 2

We are strong, we love Singapore,  
Our hearts beat together as one.

For our friends and our family, together we'll defend our land.

What we always will remember for a hundred years and more:

To be Eurasian, to be Singaporean, it's one and the same.

#### Chorus 3

We are strong, we love Singapore,  
Our hearts beat together as one.

For our friends and our family, together we'll cherish our land.

What we always will remember for a hundred years and more:

To be Eurasian, to be Singaporean, we're one and the same.

To be Eurasian, to be Singaporean, it's one and the same.

#### Outro

One and the same,

We're one and the same.

One and the same,

We're one and the same.

*Composer and lyricist: Jeremy Monteiro*

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*SP UMusic Publishing P/L (COMPASS)*

With the support of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, the National Heritage Board, the President's Challenge and several other donors, a dedicated team of Eurasian volunteers, led by the EA Heritage Committee's chairperson, Ms Julia D'Silva, curated a gallery that truly tells the story of the Singapore Eurasian community.

President Halimah Yacob, speaking at the launch of the Eurasian Heritage Gallery at the Eurasian Community House on 21 September 2019, said: "At the launch of the Bicentennial exhibition four months ago, I spoke about three key traits that define the Singaporean DNA. The first is openness and connectivity. Singapore has always been open and connected, welcoming of people and ideas from the region and the world. This is, and will continue, to be our strength.

"Second, multiculturalism. Our forefathers came from many different lands, bringing their own cultures, religious beliefs and practices, and traditions. Over time, we developed a common and collective sense of identity. It is something precious that we must not take for granted. It must be upheld and nurtured.

"The third trait is self-determination. Our ancestors faced challenges and struggles in their early days of moving to a new country, and lived through dark periods. However, they were determined to be masters of their own destiny and they survived. We must adopt the same spirit, continue to innovate and adapt to make our way in the world.

"I am glad that the Eurasian community in Singapore exhibits these similar traits. Your community is one with a long history, with customs and traditions from across the world. You make a concerted effort to promote your own identity and heritage. At the same time, your community is focused on interacting harmoniously with other ethnic groups in Singapore."

"Your community is one with a long history, with customs and traditions from across the world. You make a concerted effort to promote your own identity and heritage. At the same time, your community is focused on interacting harmoniously with other ethnic groups in Singapore."

The gallery will play a critical role in raising awareness of the Eurasian community in Singapore.

Ms Julia D'Silva said: "Not many people in Singapore know who the Eurasians are. Very often we get people asking us, are you Singaporean? Where are you from? So this is a chance to tell the Eurasian story. How we came to Singapore, how the community was formed and how we took root and grew here. I hope people will have a better understanding of Eurasians and know that we are Singaporeans too."

#### EURASIAN FESTIVAL IN THE CENTENNIAL YEAR

On 27 July 2019, almost 100 years to the very month it was established, the EA threw its biggest birthday party yet for the Eurasian community, and invited all of Singapore to be present.

The Eurasian Festival at Our Tampines Hub, drew nearly 4,000 participants — of whom at least half were Eurasians.

They were entertained by several Eurasian musical performers such as Vernon Cornelius, The Music Men, Rebecca Louise and The Wildebeats led by Trevor Martens-Wong, storytellers, and the Eurasian dance troupe.

It was a special reunion for some of the dancers in the troupe, a number of whom were involved in the EA's first fiesta in 1991 at the National Museum. The

choreographer for this 2019 showcase was Mrs Valerie Scully, who was also part of the 1991 troupe and has devoted much of her life to preserving various aspects of Eurasian heritage, especially the dance.

Participants enjoyed walking through the festival grounds where education booths and displays on the history and contribution of the Eurasian community, as well as *kampung* games such as hopscotch, *goli* (marbles) and *chaptah* (shuttlecock kicking) were on show.

In addition, Singapore's largest *sugee* cake — as certified by the Singapore Book of Records — was shared with participants. This cake, personally contributed by chef Quentin Pereira, weighed 40 kilograms and had a 0.9-metre-wide square top surface.

The EA capped off the event with a birthday celebration for centenarian Madam Phyllis Perreau, who turned 100 on 18 October 2019.

Joining the EA in the celebration were Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Deputy Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for Tampines Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Communications and Information S. Iswaran, Members of Parliament Christopher de Souza, Joan Pereira, and Alex Yam, who is also the People's Association's (PA) Integration Council Adviser, as well as the PA's Chief Executive Director Desmond Tan.



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (sixth from the left), Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat (fifth from the right), Minister for Communications and Information S. Iswaran (third from the left), MPs Christopher de Souza (rightmost), Joan Pereira (second from the right), and Alex Yam (second from the left), EA President Alexius Pereira (sixth from the right), and fellow Eurasians singing "Happy Birthday" to the EA in Kristang, at the Eurasian Festival at Our Tampines Hub on 27 July 2019. Picture: Eurasian Association



The 40-kilogram, 0.9-metre-wide square birthday cake (right), from chef Quentin Pereira, was certified the largest *sugee* cake by the Singapore Book of Records (left). Pictures: Eurasian Association

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong wrote on his Facebook page: “The EA, like the other Self-Help Groups in Singapore, has made many contributions to our country and society – funding assistance schemes, encouraging inter-racial interactions and promoting Eurasian customs and heritage.

“By the early 20th century, the Eurasians had formed a sizeable group here, and developed a distinctive identity. The community embraced the East and West, and created for themselves a unique position in British Singapore. They had their own proud heritage, but remained inclusive and embracing of others. In 1919, a hundred years ago, the Eurasian Association was formed, with a mandate to take care of the welfare of Eurasians, and to promote their interests.

“Today, your community epitomises and embodies Singapore’s multiracial, multireligious and multicultural society. In you, there is Singapore, and in Singapore, there is you – more than a little bit. And because of this inclusive psyche, Singapore Eurasians have immersed themselves in nation building.

“The success of the Eurasian community is a litmus test for our multiracial meritocracy.

“It shows that ours is truly a society of equal opportunity, not one where the spoils are grabbed by a single majority group, or carved up among a few powerful groups while marginalising the rest.

“In Singapore, even a member of a small community, perhaps around 17,000, expects to receive full and equal treatment, to be assessed on his merit and contributions, to enjoy the same opportunities and rights as any other citizen, and of course to bear the same obligations of citizens. It so happens, and long may this continue.”

This special centenary version of the Eurasian Festival

“The success of the Eurasian community is a litmus test for our multiracial meritocracy. It shows that ours is truly a society of equal opportunity, not one where the spoils are grabbed by a single majority group, or carved up among a few powerful groups while marginalising the rest.”



Eurasian-ish — a combination of dialogues and online social media engagements — culminated with a youth seminar that was held at the BlackBox in Fort Canning Centre on 14 September 2019. Ms Hannah Hendriks (leftmost) and three guest speakers discussed a range of Eurasian-identity related issues with an audience of around 50 youth. Picture: Eurasian Association

was deeply important to the EA and the Eurasian community.

First, it was an opportunity for the EA to celebrate a major achievement, as it had stood the test of time: remaining relevant to the community and striving to improve the lives of the Eurasian community.

Second, and equally important, the festival was a way to share the friendly and joyous Eurasian spirit with the rest of Singapore, as almost half of the participants at the festival were non-Eurasians. As expected, it did not take long for the participants to start dancing at the atrium of the venue.

### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In its centennial year, the EA made it a point to look forward to the next 100 years. Where should the Eurasian community be headed? What should the EA’s role be?

One ground up initiative that attempted to chart a path for the Eurasian community and the EA was Eurasian-ish. This initiative was led by Ms Hannah Hendriks and her team, which consisted of several Eurasian volunteers all under the age of 35.

The initiative was a combination of dialogues as well as online social media engagements, including a specially set-up Instagram page.

## VOICES OF THE FUTURE

In looking ahead to the future, perhaps the best way to understand the EA's direction is to hear from the EA volunteers and youth sub-committee members below the age of 35 at the time this chapter was written, in the year 2020. Having been involved with the EA, they were asked:

1. "What are your hopes for the Eurasian Community in the future? How do you see the Eurasian identity evolving in the future?"
2. "How do you envision the role of the EA in the future? What more can the EA do to remain relevant in Singapore?"

### Community and Identity



Ms Heleyna-Ann Fernandez, who was part of the Eurasian-ish organising team:  
 "I look forward to seeing how the EA will reshape its ideas of the Eurasian identity, for a greater exploration of our multiple narratives and community stories."



Ms Leann Ow, EA youth sub-committee member:  
 "We should strive to inspire a sense of belonging by raising awareness of the Eurasian community as a safe space. We should welcome Eurasians, especially first generation ones, who may not have shared a long history with the wider Eurasian community, but who may be searching for their place in Singapore. We should extend invitations to them to experience Eurasian friendship, openness and hospitality first-hand."



Mr Andre Frois, EA youth sub-committee member:  
 "I hope we will continue to provide fellow Eurasians with a sense of identity and community, and give support to the greater community. The Eurasian identity will continually evolve — it is inclusive rather than distinguishing — even more so as the world becomes increasingly globalised."



Ms Farzanah Friday, EA youth sub-committee member:  
 "I hope to see the community grow and everyone to have a strong sense of identity tied to their Eurasian culture. The uniqueness of Eurasians also means we get to meet different types of Eurasians and allows us to explore the different aspects that make us who we are, keeping us united through every step of the way"

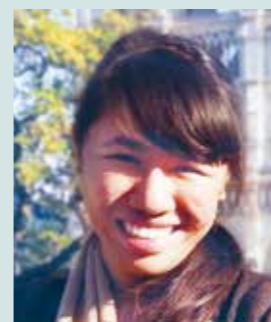
### The EA's Self-help Role



Mr Christopher Gordon, EA Management Committee member, and youth sub-committee chair:  
 "The EA should be a platform where Eurasians of all backgrounds can achieve their highest potential and make a positive difference to Singapore and the world in the process. We must continue to provide Eurasians with the resources, support and encouragement to unleash their personal passion, positive energy and creative ideas. Beyond encouraging community bonding within the Eurasian community, the EA must also take the lead to create more opportunities for Eurasians to network and interact with those of other races and encourage them to partner one another to drive positive change in common social causes they are passionate about, whether it is protecting the environment, reducing social inequality, promoting better mental health and wellness, or promoting inter-racial and inter-faith understanding and harmony."



Ms Shannon Siew, who was an EA education scholarship recipient:  
 "I envision that the EA will reach out to more Eurasians and Singaporeans from underprivileged backgrounds. To remain relevant in Singapore, the EA can help reach out to more individuals with special needs and mental health conditions, in tandem with the nation's growing efforts to boost aid rendered in these areas."



Ms Amanda Eber, who was part of the Eurasian-ish organising team:  
 "It is my hope for the EA to continue to provide the Eurasians community a sense of belonging and connectedness, and for less-privileged members of the group to always be able to get help and to feel welcome. I'm proud of the EA's longevity and the role it has played in shaping the community. With growing membership, especially among the younger generation, the EA will have much potential to develop itself for the future."



## The EA's Role in Singapore



Ms Cheyenne Phillips, who was part of the Eurasian-ish organising team:  
"The current generations of Eurasians have inherited the EA's proud 100-year legacy of community and friendship. As we commemorate its centennial, it is a good moment in time to further consider the role that the youth can play to grow camaraderie through youth-led and youth-centric activities. While legacy and tradition will always have value, the path forward will be through encouraging our youth to express and craft their own identities. This will be the life source that will continue to keep the EA relevant and alive for generations to come."



Mr Andrew Pang, EA Management Committee member, and youth sub-committee vice chair:  
I envision the EA playing an integral role in grooming national leaders, championing positive change, and fervently fighting for the marginalised, the needy, and the underprivileged. We should strengthen regional and global ties with the international Eurasian community. Groom our [ Eurasian ] youth now.



Mr Dean Hunt, who was an EA education scholarship recipient:  
Eurasians should be aware that there is always a community for them to turn to for help and support. I believe the way forward is for even more collaboration with Singapore's other self-help groups to showcase and share Eurasian culture and EA activities with the wider community of Singaporeans.



Mr Danni Jay Luke Danis, EA Management Committee member, and youth sub-committee vice chair:  
I envision the EA to remain a catalyst to continuously bring together our Singapore Eurasian community and at the same time, be a key bridge linking the community to others to ultimately achieve greater things for Singapore as a multiracial society. Relevance to the community is key to the success of the EA's goals. Given the rate of which our economy and social norms are growing, the EA needs to be agile, and constantly learn, adapt and shape its programmes, initiatives and activities to suit the digital era and the ever growing demands of today's Gen Z and Alpha generation.



Mr Christopher de Souza, Member of Parliament:  
"The role of the Singaporean Eurasian is key. Loyal to Singapore, the Singaporean Eurasians display how, notwithstanding numerical size, a community can contribute to nation-building in all areas. The Singaporean Eurasian community, with its rich cultural diversity and lineage, embodies multiracialism. Eurasians can show new citizens that they too can have a stake in Singapore. The Eurasian Association's role in this is essential — it brings together the community to advance a multiracial Singapore. The dedication and commitment of the EA's leaders, volunteers and members, for over 100 years, have ensured its continued relevance today. Congratulations to the EA on its centennial — what an achievement!"



Ms Joan Pereira, Member of Parliament:  
"I hope that the Eurasian community will grow closer and stronger together, and embrace greater diversity than before. The beauty and challenge of the Eurasian identity is that there is no single definition of what it means to be Eurasian. The uniqueness of our Eurasian identity is that there are many facets of being Eurasian, and I see our Eurasian identity continuing to evolve in the future. The role of the EA in the future is important as Singapore progresses and self-help groups expand their roles and mandate. A self-help group is only as relevant as the demographic group whose interests it represents. And hence, it has to continue serving the needs and interests of Eurasians and the wider Singaporean community, continuing to evolve and adapt to new needs and challenges."

The objective was to encourage youth, especially Eurasian youth, to reflect on what it means to be Eurasian, to consider the role played by Eurasian heritage as being part of the Eurasian identity, and how they saw the Eurasian identity evolving in the future.

Eurasian-ish held roadshows at several locations — such as at community centres and regional libraries — across Singapore in the month of August to meet with

Eurasian (and non-Eurasian) youth.

The initiative culminated with a youth seminar that was held on 14 September 2019 at the BlackBox in Fort Canning Centre, as one of the EA's contributions to the stable of Singapore Bicentennial events that took place over the year. At the seminar, Ms Hendriks and three guest speakers discussed a range of Eurasian-identity related issues with an audience of around 50 youth.

An emergent theme from that seminar was that Eurasian youth felt that they had to confront “multiple identities”. In particular, some spoke about the tension of being “Eurasian versus Singaporean”. This was difficult for some, as they said “...there was no one (particular) way to be Eurasian,” and “...they were not sure if they were Eurasian or not”.

For instance, several participants said they were not officially categorised as Eurasians in their NRICs. One said he was listed as Chinese because his father was Chinese; however, because his mother was Caucasian, he thought he might be Eurasian, but was not sure, which was why he attended the seminar.

Lastly, some participants found it hard to understand what to centre and base their Eurasian identity on. Should it be surrounding a particular thread of history, such as the community’s ordeal during World War II, or cultural symbols such as curry *debal* and the Eurasian dance? Some, especially first generation Eurasians, found it hard to identify with the past.

Eurasian-ish facilitator Ms Hendriks said she believed the EA of the future will have to focus more on creating opportunities and “space” for younger Eurasians: “The way forward is to expand the concept and idea of being Eurasian and to allow people to mingle as a hybrid culture, without imposing the old ideas

of what being Eurasian is, on them.”

Agreeing, Mr Benett Theseira, who served as EA President (2012–2018), said: “Diversity is part of our [the Eurasian community’s] culture. Our hybrid culture is what has given the EA its success.”

### CONCLUSIONS

In its 100th year, the EA has unveiled a refreshed logo. The new graphic treatment conveys an approachable and warm organisation, while the calligraphic treatment of the typography and circle evokes a sense of cohesiveness and connection. Its colours of maroon and gold respectively symbolise the passion, strength and warmth of the community, as well as its deeply planted roots.

Being able to constantly re-orientate itself to serve the needs of the community is one of the reasons that the EA has stood the test of time.

When the EA was founded 100 years ago in 1919, its main focus was to provide welfare services for the underprivileged in colonial Singapore and to advocate for the rights of Eurasians in response to discrimination from the colonial authorities.

Since then, it has served as a cultural and literary organisation, a social and sports club, and more recently, from the 1990s, a government-recognised ethnic self-help group and an association that serves to bond and develop the community.

In the foreword of the EA Charity Fundraising Dinner souvenir magazine, the former Minister representing Eurasians in the Cabinet and current EA Patron, Mr George Yeo wrote: “Since the late 1980s, there has been a wonderful revival of the Eurasian community. A younger generation came forward determined to make its own stamp on Singapore. A revitalised Eurasian Association under the leadership of Timothy de Souza grew from strength to strength. The government gave it support. Temporary buildings were provided at Mountbatten Road before the new Eurasian House was built at Ceylon Road. In 2016, a young Eurasian, Joseph Schooling, won for Singapore its first Olympic Gold Medal. Suddenly the whole world realised that Singapore is not just Chinese, Malay and Indian. Singapore is also Eurasian. Indeed, Eurasians are now contributing in every field from politics and science to art and culture.”

Fittingly, perhaps the last word on the EA’s 100th anniversary should go to Mr Herman R. Hochstadt, the EA’s Patron (2001–present), who wrote in the Souvenir Magazine of the EA’s Charity Fundraising Dinner: “The EA has come a long way since its founding in 1919 and has achieved much in furtherance of its aims and objectives. Particularly in recent years. This is in no small measure owing to current EA President Alexius Pereira and his Management Committee, as well as to immediate predecessor EA President Benett Theseira and his Management Committee.

“For the next 100 years of its existence and development, I look forward to our EA not only persisting in what it has aimed to do and achieved, but in going on to higher, nobler and much more important and urgent aims, objectives and accomplishments. In the interest not only of the Eurasian community but the Singapore community as a whole. To forge national cohesion through mutual respect and tolerance for each other’s beliefs and customs. Such that our nation may enjoy continued peace and progress.

“We Singapore Eurasians have within each of us the DNA of the main ethnic and religious makeup of our multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation. Let us put that unique and invaluable legacy to best use. To the benefit of our Association and above all, our Republic of Singapore.”

“... Singapore is not just Chinese, Malay and Indian. Singapore is also Eurasian. Indeed, Eurasians are now contributing in every field from politics and science to art and culture.”

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## EA COMMITTEES (1919–2019)

In these pages are the names of all those  
 who stepped forward to serve as  
 Committee Members, Patrons, Trustees and  
 Ministers representing Eurasians in the Government.  
 They came from all walks of life  
 but had one common aim —  
 to further the cause of the EA.  
 The EA would never have seen its Centennial  
 Anniversary without the fortitude of all of them.  
 This record is in tribute to each and every one of them.

### EA ADVISORY ROLES

<b>Minister representing Eurasians in Cabinet</b>	<b>Patron</b>	<b>Visitor of EA</b>
E. W. Barker (1986–1991)	E. W. Barker (1992–2001)	S. R. Nathan (2005)
George Yeo (1992–2011)	Herman Hochstadt (2001–)	Abdullah Tarmugi (2009)
S. Iswaran (2012–)	S. R. Nathan (2012–2015)	George Yeo (2011)
	George Yeo (2012–)	Joseph Schooling (2016)
<b>Trustees</b>	Barry Desker (2001–)	Gerry De Silva (2009–)
E. W. Barker (1986–2001)	Timothy de Souza (2001–)	Judith Prakash (2016–)
Herman Hochstadt (1992–2009)	Joe Conceicao (2004–2016)	Edward D’Silva (2016–)
Oscar Oliveira (1992–2016)	Gerald Minjoot (2009–)	

### EA COMMITTEE OFFICE BEARERS (1919–2019)

<b>Year</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>Vice-President</b>	<b>Secretary/Assistant</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
1919	Newbold B. Westerhout	Noel L. Clarke (Dr)	A. H. Carlos / G. M. Koenitz	T.W. Stubbs
1920	Noel L. Clarke (Dr)	W. J. C. Le Cain	A. H. Carlos	T.W. Stubbs
1921–1922	Newbold B. Westerhout	W. J. C. Le Cain	A. H. Carlos	J.M.Jansen
1923	J. C. Pestana	Claudio A. da Silva	A. H. Carlos	M. Pereira
1924	Noel L. Clarke (Dr)	W. J. C. Le Cain	William H. Mosbergen	W. Mosbergen
1925	Edwin Tessensohn		W.A. Aeria	
1926	Noel L. Clarke (Dr)	W. J. C. Le Cain	William H. Mosbergen	W. Mosbergen
1927	W. J. C. Le Cain	Claude H. da Silva	William H. Mosbergen	W. Mosbergen
1928	Noel L. Clarke (Dr)	Claude H. da Silva	William H. Mosbergen	W. Mosbergen
1929	Noel L. Clarke (Dr)	R. Tessensohn	William H. Mosbergen	V.F. d’Almeida
1930–1933	Noel L. Clarke (Dr)	Claude H. da Silva	William H. Mosbergen	V.F. d’Almeida
1934	Noel L. Clarke (Dr)	Claude H. da Silva	William H. Mosbergen	G.H. Kraal
1935	Noel L. Clarke (Dr)	R. Tessensohn	William H. Mosbergen	G.H. Kraal
1936	R. Tessensohn	Armand J. Braga	William H. Mosbergen	Gilbert B. Shelley
1937–1938	Hugh R. S. Zehnder	Claude H. da Silva	William H. Mosbergen	Gilbert B. Shelley
1939	Hugh R. S. Zehnder	Claude H. da Silva	N. N. Leicester	William F. Mosbergen
1940–1942	Claude H. da Silva	Emile Galistan	N. N. Leicester	William F. Mosbergen
1942–1945	Charles J. Paglar (Dr)	Syonan Eurasian Welfare Association (SEWA)		
1946–1948	George E. N. Oehlers	(No records of committees, except for Presidents from 1942–1953)		
1948–1953	Peter F. de Souza			
1954–1955	Peter F. de Souza	Charles J. Paglar (Dr)	A. V. Pestana / C. L. Tessensohn (Dr)	N. Aeria / Phillip C. Marcus
1956	Peter F. de Souza	C. L. Tessensohn (Dr)	A. V. Pestana / N. Aeria / J. L. Pestana	V.O. Galistan
1957–1958	Peter F. de Souza	T. J. Leijssius	William H. Mosbergen / A. V. Pestana	V. O. Galistan
1959–1963	Peter F. de Souza	T. J. Leijssius	William H. Mosbergen / A. V. Hogan	V. O. Galistan
1964–1969	William H. Mosbergen	Thomas W. Prins	W.A. Rodrigues / G.M. Theseira	C. A. J. D’Cotta

Year	President	Vice-President	Secretary/Assistant	Treasurer
1970	Thomas W. Prins	P.M. d'Almeida	G.M. Theseira / Dorothea Ebert	T. J. Albuquerque
1971	Thomas W. Prins	P.M. d'Almeida	W.A. Rodrigues / Dorothea Ebert	T. J. Albuquerque
1972–1973	Thomas W. Prins	Trevor J. Hale	C.J. D'Cotta / Dorothea Ebert	T. J. Albuquerque
1974–1975	Thomas W. Prins	Andrew Clarke	C.J. D'Cotta / Dorothea Ebert	T. J. Albuquerque
1976	Thomas W. Prins	Trevor J. Hale	C.J. D'Cotta / D. Mosbergen	T. Albuquerque
1976	Thomas W. Prins	Trevor J. Hale	Caroline Richards / Dorothea Ebert	T. Albuquerque
1977–1978	Thomas W. Prins	Trevor J. Hale	Caroline Richards / Denis Mosbergen	F. Scully
1979–1980	Thomas W. Prins	Trevor J. Hale	C. D'Cotta / Denis Mosbergen	F. Scully
1981		(No records)		
1982	Trevor J. Hale	Ronald H. Barth	C. D'Cotta / Denis Mosbergen	F. Scully
1983	Ronald H. Barth	T. Aeria	C. D'Cotta / A. de Rozario	F. Scully
1984	Ronald H. Barth	Trevor J. Hale	A. de Rozario / A. Clarke	A. Pereira
1985–1986	Ronald H. Barth	Trevor J. Hale	A. de Rozario / Kenneth Eber	A. Pereira
1987	Ronald H. Barth	Trevor J. Hale	A. de Rozario / P. Desker	A. Pereira
1988	Kenneth A. Eber	Arthur W. Fox	P.E. Desker / P. Grosse	A. de Rozario
1989	Victor Olsen	G. de Vries	Edmund Rodrigues / David Oehlers	Burton Westerhout
1990	Victor Olsen	G. de Vries	Gerry de Silva / Timothy de Souza	Burton Westerhout
1991–1992	Timothy de Souza	Edwin O. Thompson	Gerald Pereira / Judith Arul	Colin Meyer

Year	President	Vice-President	Secretary/Assistant	Treasurer
1992–1993	Timothy de Souza	Robert Scully	William Jansen / Judith Arul	David Oehlers
1993–1994	Timothy de Souza	Robert Scully	Martin V. Marini / Paul Desker	Randal Snodgrass
1994–1997	Timothy de Souza	Robert Scully	William Jansen / Bryan Davenport	Benett Theseira
1997–1998	Timothy de Souza	Bryan Davenport	Benett Theseira / Kathleen Woodford	Jean de Souza
1998–1999	Timothy de Souza	Bryan Davenport	Benett Theseira / Kathleen Woodford	Gerald Minjoot
1999–2000	Timothy de Souza	Bryan Davenport	Benett Theseira / Mark Ferrao	Gerald Minjoot
2000–2001	Bryan Davenport	Burton Westerhout	Gerry de Silva / Paul Desker	Gerald Minjoot
2002	Bryan Davenport	Burton Westerhout	Gerry de Silva / Paul Desker	Roy Higgs
2003	Bryan Davenport	Gerald Minjoot	Gerry de Silva / Edward D'Silva	Roy Higgs
2004–2005	Gerald Minjoot	Gerry de Silva	Gerry de Silva / Edward D'Silva	Roy Higgs
2006–2007	Gerry de Silva	Edward D'Silva	Barry Pereira (Dr) / Rene Shepherdson Jr.	Harry Pereira
2008	Edward D'Silva	Barry Pereira (Dr)	Harry Pereira / Christine Clunies-Ross	Zafran Coelho
2009	Edward D'Silva	Barry Pereira (Dr)	Harry Pereira / Christine Clunies-Ross	Lynn Desker
2010–2011	William Jansen	Benett Theseira	Jason Dendroff	Lynn Desker
2012–2013	Benett Theseira	1st Vincent Schoon 2nd Yvonne Pereira	Carla Barker	Paul Leong
2014–2015	Benett Theseira	1st Carla Barker 2nd Yvonne Pereira	Geoffrey da Silva	Paul Leong
2016–2017	Benett Theseira	1st Alexius A. Pereira (Dr) 2nd Yvonne Pereira	Angelina Fernandez	Martin Marini
2018–2019	Alexius A. Pereira (Dr)	1st Vincent Schoon 2nd Yvonne Pereira	Angelina Fernandez	Martin Marini

**EA COMMITTEE MEMBERS (1919–2019)**  
**(Excluding their terms as Office Bearers)**

Aeria Kevin N. M. (2014–2015)	D'Silva Edward (1999–2002)	Ebert Dorothea (1967–1969, 1976)
Aeria Terence O. (1979–1982)	D'Silva Julia (2016–2020)	Ess B. J. (Dr) (1937–1940)
Aeria William A. (1924–1927, 1935–1940)	Da Silva Claudio A. (1918–1922, 1924, 1926–1929)	Ess J. F. (1924, 1926)
Albuquerque Thomas (1979–1983)	Da Silva Claude H. (1924, 1926, 1935–1936, 1964–1965)	Ferdinand Mel (2003–2005)
Angus J. R. (1924, 1926–1928)	Da Silva Geoffrey (2003–2015)	Fernandez Aloy E. (1976)
Angus Jean (2017)	Da Silva William (2002–2005)	Fernandez Angelina (2012–2015)
Anthonisz James W. (1967–1979)	D'Almeida James (1984)	Fernandez Euyth (1995–1999)
Archer T. C. (1919–1920)	Davenport Bryan (1992–1994)	Fernando Rennie (1984–1988)
Arul Judith (1995–1996)	D'Cotta C. A. J. (1970–1971, 1976–1979, 1984–1985)	Fernando Shelton (1988)
Barker Carla (2008–2011)	D'Cruz W. (Dr) (1928–1937)	Ferrao Eric G. (1979–1982)
Barth Ronnie (1980–1981)	De Conceicao Humphrey (2006–2009)	Ferrao K. (1971–1973)
Bateman C. A. R. (1939)	De Silva Gerry (1989)	Ferrao Mark (1997–1999)
Beins P. A. (1920–1922)	De Souza F. B. (1957–1963)	Finck A. S. (1919–1922)
Braga Armand J. (1930–1935, 1938–1940, 1964–1966)	De Souza F. O. (Dr) (1928–1929)	Fox Arthur (1983–1987)
Braga-Blake Myrna (1989–1990)	De Souza J. N. (1972–1978)	Fox Douglas (1967)
Brett Ronald (1997–2000)	De Souza M. (Mrs) (1956)	Fox Frederick (1995–1999, 2003–2005)
Carlos E. B. (1954–1955)	De Souza S. C. (1929–1935)	Galistan E. (1918, 1935–1936, 1938–1939)
Chapman R. V. (1940)	De Souza Terence (1966)	Gomes E. (1954–1955)
Chelvam Charmain (2002–2003)	De Souza Timothy (1989)	Gomes M. (1918)
Clarke Andrew (1970–1973)	Deans Leslie S. (1964–1969)	Gomes M. F. (1924, 1926–1928)
Clarke Francis W. F. (Dr) (1927–1929)	Dendroff W. (1957–1963)	Gordon Christopher (2016–)
Clunies-Ross Christine (2006–2007)	Desker Paul (1991–1997)	Grosse Patrick (1984–1987)
Coelho Zafran (2007–2009)	Don H. (1956)	Hagedorn O. (1920–1921)
Conceicao Francis (1981–1982)	Eber Christian (2008–2009, 2011–2012, 2018–2020)	Hale Trevor J. (1971, 1974–1975, 1983)
Cordeiro A. V. (1956)	Eber Francesca (2010–2016)	Hendriks Hannah (2018–2020)
Cordeiro C. S. (1956)	Eber H. S. (1924, 1926–1927, 1929)	Hoffman R. C. (1954–1955)
Cornelius A. F. (1931–1933, 1936, 1964–1965)	Eber Kenneth (1979–1984)	Hogan N. S. (1939–1940, 1954–1963)

Holmberg F. R. (1926–1927)	Paglar Charles J. (Dr) (1927)	Shepherdson Rene Jr. (2000–2005)
Jansen J. M. (1936–1938)	Pang Andrew (2018–2020)	Sheridan-Lea P. (Mrs) (1957–1963)
Klass James (1991)	Peacock Gerry (2000–2001)	Siddons D. E. (1954–1955)
Koenitz G. M. (1927–1929)	Peralta A. V. (1924, 1926–1930)	Siddons Gwendoline (1966)
Kraal E.C. (Mrs) (1957–1963)	Pereira Alexius A. (Dr) (2014–2015)	Smith A. (1919–1922)
Kruseman W. M. (1970–1972)	Pereira Allan (1998–1999)	Snodgrass Randal (1994–2000)
Le Cain W. J. C. (1919)	Pereira Austin (1983, 1988)	Soliano Michelle (2003–2005)
Lee Charlene (2015–2016)	Pereira Colin (1990)	Stewart Stanley T. (1956)
Leicester Henry R. (1965–1969)	Pereira Gerald (1989–1990)	Stubbs T. W. (1918, 1921–1922, 1924, 1926)
Leicester N. N. (1935, 1937–1938)	Pereira Martin (1992–1993)	Tessensohn Edward (1968–1969)
Leijssius T. (1954–1956)	Pereira Renay Veronica (2006)	Tessensohn Edwin (1919–1922)
Long Leslie (1966)	Pereira S. (1937)	Tessensohn Joseph J. (1971–1980)
Lopez Luiz (1982–1984)	Pereira Stephanie (Dr) (1964–1965)	Tessensohn Michelle Ayn (2012–2013)
Luke Danis Danni Jay (2018–)	Pereira Stephen (1966–1970)	Tessensohn R. (1919–1922, 1930–1934, 1938–1939)
Marcus Phillip C. (1937–1938)	Pereira Vincent N. (1972–1982)	Tessensohn Zena (1954–1955)
Martens John (1983)	Pereira Yvonne (2007–2011)	Theseira Benett (2000–2001)
Mathieu Harold (1993–1994)	Perreau V. E. (1964–1965)	Theseira George (1975–1978)
McClelland R. H. (1920)	Pestana J. L. (1957–1963)	Theseira Gerard (2014)
McIntyre Clare (1982–1987)	Pinto Horace (1986–1987)	Trollope Duncan (1989)
Minjoot Gerald (2002)	Prins Thomas W. (1956–1960, 1962–1963)	Valberg E. H. (1930–1936, 1938)
Minjoot Raymond (Col) (1981)	Quah Ursula (1992–2000)	Van Cuylenburg John B. (1924, 1926–1929, 1933)
Monteiro Eric (1984)	Richards Caroline (1980–1982)	Wait O. H. (1920–1921)
Moore P. (1940)	Rode Stanley (1964–1973)	Webb Charles B. (1934–1938, 1940)
Mosbergen Andrew P. (1964–1983)	Rodrigues Brian (2000–2001)	Westerhout Burton (1994–1996, 1998–1999, 2009–2011)
Mosbergen Denis (1970–1975, 1977–1978, 1983–1984)	Rodrigues Edmund (1990–1991)	Westerhout Johannes B. (1929–1937)
Mosbergen Vincent (1976–1980)	Rodrigues Smith Melanie (2018–)	Westerhout Victor C. (1954–1955)
Mosbergen W. (1920–1922)	Rodrigues W. A. (1970)	Wheatley E. G. (1939)
Mosbergen W. F. (1929–1937)	Schelkis C. L. (1954–1958)	Woodford Eric J. (1966–1967)
Mosbergen W. H. (1939–1940)	Schoon Vincent (2010–2011, 2017)	Woodford Kathleen (1988, 1991–1997)
Nonis Michael (1975)	Scully Frank (1972–1977)	Zehnder Hugh R. S. (1919–1922)
Norfor John (1993–1994)	Scully Robert (1990–1991)	Zuzarte Catherine (1998–2000)
Norris H. H. (1919)	Scully Valerie (1998–2004)	Zuzarte Lionel (1988)
Norris V. H. (Dr) (1930–1934)	Shelley Gilbert B. (1930, 1932, 1934–1935, 1939–1940)	
Oehlers Ann (2003–2005)	Shepherdson Cuthbert (2002–2003)	
Oehlers G. R. (1930–1932)	Shepherdson Martha (2006)	
Oehlers George E. N. (1937–1940)		
O'Hara A. R. P. (1954–1968)		
Ong-Webb Graham G. (2012–2013, 2016–2020)		



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