

THE

# NEW EURASIAN

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JANUARY – MARCH 2013

## Yule Rules

Evolving Christmas traditions

### PLUS

#### A VISIT FROM THE HEAD OF STATE

President Tony Tan takes dinner with the EA

#### LEARNING TO CARE

Two young students look set to shine in their future careers

#### A TRIBUTE

Remembering the late Lawrence da Silva

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On the Cover

THE  
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# President's Message

Dear fellow Eurasians and friends

Sadly on the 1 January 2013, we lost a very dear friend and stalwart of the Eurasian community, Lawrence da Silva, who passed away suddenly at the age of 74. Lawrence was passionate about education and spent most of his professional life in the field, running or building successful educational enterprises. More recently, he was the founder and Chairman of the Board of Governors of SJI International. He was also a staunch supporter of EA's educational programmes, both as a wise adviser and generous benefactor. Lawrence has enriched the lives of many within the community and will be greatly missed by all of us. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his beloved wife Elsie, daughter Genevieve, sons Henry and Christopher and all the family.

The last couple of months have been fairly busy for the EA as we embarked on a series of activities to mark the festive season. This kicked off with the joint Christmas tree lighting up at the SRC, followed by the Social Circle's Christmas Dinner and Dance at the Eurasian Community House, the FSS Christmas Lunch and the Christmas Family Carnival and Children's Treat, where we also had children from some of the other self-help-groups join us.

The FSS Christmas lunch was hosted by the FSS team and youth volunteers from the International School of Singapore and was one of my favourite events as it allowed us to bring Christmas cheer to many of the needy within our community. It was also heartening to have a number of the clients come up during the event to thank us for the assistance we had given them during the year or to share with us how the help we had provided had motivated their children to work harder in school, to do better. Our ability to help the FSS clients is really thanks to all of you who have generously donated directly or through the Eurasian Community Fund to the FSS programmes. Last, but not least, we ended the year with our annual New Year's Eve Ball which was once again a very successful and enjoyable event attended by almost 300 people.

The Christmas season is an important one for the Eurasian community as it is a time for us to spend with family and friends and to strengthen our ties. I am therefore appreciative of the many of you who were able to join us for the various Christmas events as they provide an opportunity for us to spend more time with each other and to strengthen our bonds. It is only by coming together that we can build



a strong community and only by working together that we can ensure a vibrant future for the Eurasian community in Singapore.

As we begin the New Year, I would like to thank our many volunteers, the Secretariat team and my fellow members of the Management Committee for all their hard work and commitment through the last year. I would also like to thank our patrons and trustees for their guidance and our many donors for their generous support. Without the assistance and support of all of you, our ability to reach out to and help so many in the community would not be possible.

Wishing all of you a very Happy and Successful New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Benett Theseira'. The signature is stylized and fluid, written over a white background.

**Benett Theseira**  
*President*



President Tony Tan and the EA Management Committee and trustees



EA President Benett Theseira presents a gift to President Tony Tan



EA trustee Gerry da Silva gives the President a guided tour of the ECH

## Dinner with the President

President Tony Tan was the special guest of the EA at an informal dinner at Quentin's in November with his predecessor and new patron Mr SR Nathan, the trustees and management committee.

President Tan was also given a tour of the Eurasian Heritage Centre and was presented with James Newton Boss's book, *The Portuguese Mission in Singapore (1825-1999) – St Joseph Church* by EA President Benett Theseira.



Dancing to the sounds spun by DJ Bernard Jeremiah



Dr Johnny Goh (in pink shirt), Benett Theseira (in blue shirt) and guests at the SRC light-up

## Deck the Halls

Christmas came early at the Eurasian Community House when the Social Circle's annual Christmas Dinner 'n' Dance was held on 1 December amid a décor dominated by a ceiling-high tree together with poinsettia and holly.

Some 100 guests came full of festive enthusiasm, and the complimentary bottle of wine and Quentin's Christmas fare contributed to keeping spirits high.

An array of prizes kept the lucky dip busy and the floor was full of dancers – not least of all, Eurasian 'elders' Helen Joseph and Esther Edwards – moving to the discs spun by DJ Bernard Jeremiah; there was also line dancing to country music. The evening ended to the tune of Feliz Navidad.

## Illuminating Traditions

A joint Christmas tree light-up ceremony between the EA and the Singapore Recreation Club was held at the SRC on 16 November.

EA President Benett Theseira lit the tree with SRC President Dr Johnny Goh and each hung a red and gold bauble below a blue ribbon on the tree, representing unity (the SRC colours are red, gold and blue and the EA's blue and gold). Benett and SRC Vice President, Captain Francis Koh, gave speeches that reflected on the ties between the two organisations.

Guests were treated to carol singing with Janelle Stewart and her family in the lobby and the festivities included a Eurasian buffet dinner from Quentin's.

## Hey, We're on Facebook and Twitter!

Stay up to date with the latest news and events at the Eurasian Association. Follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/EurasianSG> and don't forget to 'Like' us on <http://www.facebook.com/eurasianassociation>



## A Christmas for Everybody

The EA's Family Christmas Carnival & Children's Treat on 15 December was a multicultural affair as members and friends from all ethnic groups turned up to enjoy the festivities.

A hot favourite were the bargains available on the stalls, from edibles such as sugce cakes, fruit cakes, pang susis and pickles to gifts such as crocheted items from the in-house Artsy Craftsy stall plus clothing, table centrepieces, T-shirts with Christmas motifs, and more. Quentin's restaurant provided Eurasian culinary treats and there was also halal food for the EA's Malay friends.

When guests weren't chancing their luck with the tombola session they were up on the floor boogieing to the sounds of Gerard Danker.

For kids from the four self-help groups, there was an array of games stalls to participate in plus entertainment by ToyBox's Reuben and Mark and magic by 'Mr Handsome'. And, of course, the most important guest of all made an appearance – Santa himself.



Kids have fun during the Children Christmas Treat



Santa gives a youngster an early Christmas present



Children play 'Simon Says' with 'Mr Handsome'



Down in one: guests brave the drinking challenge



Fun and games at Oktoberfest

## Cheers! Prost!

EA members got in touch with their European side recently when they tucked into traditional German cuisine such as pork knuckle, sausages, sauerkraut and mashed potatoes (plus some Eurasian favourites) to celebrate Oktoberfest at the ECH. The event was attended by some 80 members and guests – including some from Australia.

A beer-drinking contest is an essential event at Oktoberfest and five sporting ladies and men bravely took to the floor to show how fast they could down a mug of beer. Prizes for the contest and for the tombola games were sponsored by Quentin's restaurant and the Social Circle.



The balut champions (from left to right): Philomena Nonis, Rita Ignatius and Helen Joseph

## Final Roll of the Dice

The EA's eight-month long in-house balut competition came to an end on 5 October when the final round was played to determine the top scorers for the year. The players had been kept in suspense for two months as the scores were not publicised, so there were many surprised faces when the results were read.

Based on players' six best scores from eight rounds, the top three prizes went to:  
2012 In-House Champion: Rita Ignatius – 3,691 points  
1st Runner-Up: Helen Joseph – 3,601 points  
2nd Runner-Up: Philomena Nonis – 3,559 points

Other prize winners were:

**High Individual Aggregate (Single Game)**

**1st Place:** Philomena Nonis – 671 points

**2nd Place:** Rita Ignatius – 643 points

**High Individual Score (Single Game)**

**1st Place (Tie):** Rita Ignatius & Peter Rodrigues – 157 points

**2nd Place:** Yvonne Pereira – 156 points

EA Balut Section sponsors Evelyn Rodrigues and Quentin and Kristine Pereira presented the winners with trophies, balut cups and bottles of wine.

Balut adviser Yvonne Pereira says: "The balut section would like to extend our grateful thanks to Evelyn, Quentin and Kristine, Sandra Chan, Philip and Joyce Cordeiro for their kind sponsorship; to the EA Secretariat, especially Bridget, Daniel, Bernadette and Ram for helping to run the monthly sessions, to convenor Peter Rodrigues, and to everyone else who helped."



# An Educational Life

Lawrence da Silva 1938 – 2013

Friends and colleagues mourn the loss of St. Joseph's Institution stalwart and prominent EA member, who has died from a heart attack, aged 74



Lawrence presents an educational award to a deserving student



Lawrence da Silva (second from right) at a Eurasian Community Fund event



Lawrence da Silva chats to EA Vice-President Vincent School

Lawrence da Silva became a war orphan when only a young child, losing first his father and then his mother; and the hardships of those early years were instrumental in forming his lifetime values. Life was tough and money scarce; he was late starting school at St. Joseph's Institution and had to depend on grants to help him pay for his education – from school right through to university.

But SJI took care not only of Lawrence's financial needs but also his wellbeing, and he proved a capable student, completing his 'O' Levels in 1956 and his pre-university education in 1958. At school, he not only proved himself academically but was also an avid sportsman. Later, he was awarded a government scholarship to pursue a university education. He studied for a Bachelors (Hons) degree in Economics at the National University of Singapore, and in 1979 was sponsored by the United World College of South East Asia (UWCSEA) to study Business at Stanford University in California.

His career in the field of education began at Singapore Polytechnic, where he worked for six years as the Assistant Registrar of Academic Affairs. Lawrence was the founding chairman of SJI International and served as a member of the SJI Board of Governors for more than 20 years, retiring only recently. While on the board, he chaired the SJI Family Assistance & Scholarships Committee.

The hardships in his childhood equipped him with resilience and a sense of compassion for people – to become a man for others. He has said: "SJI has provided me with a first-class education and cared for me as a person. Surely, when the appropriate time came for me to give back to my alma mater and the society in general, it was not only a natural but a pleasurable thing to do? Saying 'thank you' through service is the best way of doing so."

Lawrence was a prominent member of the Eurasian community and one of the founding members of the selection committee set up to oversee the EA's Endowment Fund after the association was awarded charitable status and given the status of a self-help group.

He also generously donated \$150,000 (\$50,000 a year over three years from 2009) for a new bursary/scholarship scheme for ITE, polytechnic and junior college students, to be administered by the EA.

EA Education chairperson and colleague Geoffrey da Silva says: "Lawrence was humble and very approachable. He had a great empathy for the plight of needy students and families. As such he was a very generous benefactor to the Eurasian Association, especially to the Family Support Service and Education. The funds he contributed to EA helped many deserving students continue their studies to ITE, Poly and University."

In 1971, Lawrence joined the newly formed UWCSEA as Director of Administration and Finance, where he played a prominent part in building it into one of the most eminent international schools in Asia.

In 1993, he began working with a group of Australian venture capitalists to develop and implement a business model for providing college courses that were an alternative pathway for entry into university. The IBT Group, which grew out of this venture, now owns 21 such colleges around the world. Lawrence recently retired from the board of directors but continued to retain a major interest in the company.

He leaves his wife, Elsie, three children and eight grandchildren.

## Leading Roles

EA Opportunity Fund Award winning teenager Charlyn Pereira has already packed a lot into her short life

Eighteen-year-old ITE College Central student Charlyn Pereira is a girl on the go. She's a familiar face at the Eurasian Association, where she has helped to host a few educational events including the recent Eurasian Community Fund, IRIR and the Opportunity Fund Presentation ceremony.

At school, she played a part in major events such as National Day and Teachers' Day celebrations, investitures, graduations and award ceremonies. More recently, she was involved with the Symbolic Move Event that celebrated the coming together of the five existing ITE College Central campuses to the new Ang Mo Kio Campus. She has also represented ITE in competitions as well as being an ambassador to exchange students.

The final year business student is currently busy with the ITE musical production, *Fame*, which opens in March, and loves performing and acting as an MC.

Besides performing, Charlyn is also involved in the ACE Programme at ITE College Central, which provides opportunities for the top five per cent of students to develop leadership skills. She says: "I have organised leadership camps for 100 students as well as gone overseas to do community service. The programme has also given me opportunities to develop confident public speaking skills and meet national leaders such as Members of Parliament and the Prime Minister."

She was grateful to receive the Opportunity Fund Award, which she says has provided her with more learning prospects without causing too much financial strain on her family.



Charlyn Pereira with her friends

Charlyn relaxes with a friend

And she is certainly forging her own path in life. She explains: "As an express student in secondary school, I was expected to attend a junior college or polytechnic straight after my 'O' Levels. ITE was never an option to consider. But I'm glad that I am where I am now." And when she finishes ITE, she hopes to pursue a Bachelor in Arts Business Management and Performing Arts.

## Helping Children to Grow

A stint working with underprivileged children made student Sarah Pennefather realise her vocation in life – and at only 21, her work has already received public recognition

When Sarah Pennefather worked for six months as an intern with the Children's Aid Society during her final year in Nanyang Polytechnic, she realised it was her vocation to work in the social service sector.

She is now pursuing a degree in Social Work and recently received one of the inaugural Prime Minister Social Service Awards at the annual members' conference of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

The awards are given to exemplary students who are keen to pursue a career in social services. Worth \$10,000 each, they are disbursed to two students each year to allow them to embark on more extensive projects.

Sarah says: "Unlike some people, I was fortunate to be blessed with a family who cared and provided sufficiently for me. Only when I started

my tertiary education did I experience the other side of society – the ones who are struggling and in need of assistance.

"And it was only in my final year at Nanyang Polytechnic, when I was doing my internship at a children's home, that sealed the deal that working in the social service sector is what I was called to do. This exposure to the 'real world' compelled me to want to do something about it."

As an intern youth worker, Sarah worked with vulnerable teenage girls. Perhaps to her surprise, she received as much as she gave: "Even as much as I gave them a listening ear and assisted them in developing skills, I felt they gave me just as much, if not more. They really taught me what it means to have resilience and a fighting spirit.

Sarah is currently discussing with NCSS how to spend her award money on her research on



Sarah Pennefather during her social work in Cambodia

institutionalised children. "I feel that children who have been raised in an institutional setting are often overlooked and neglected. Many of their needs go unaddressed and therefore more needs to be done in developing this area."

But there is more to working in social services than just wanting to do good, she advises: "Don't come in thinking a good heart is all it takes. Instead, it takes heart, mind and hands to be a good social worker."

She concludes: "I also remembered my professor saying in class that the first two years out in the field are the toughest; you either make it and survive through to become a great social worker, or break and burnout and make a career switch. Therefore, the going is not going to be easy; but if you persevere and surpass that two-year mark, you will be contributing to the lives of the needy, disadvantaged and underprivileged."

# Opportunities for Educational Help

Since becoming a self-help group in 1994, the Eurasian Association has placed great emphasis on education, one of its key pillars. Each year, the EA offers various awards, bursaries and scholarships to students from primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Below is a table of EA education schemes 2013 and the application period.

To apply, please contact Jacqueline Peeris at 64471578 or [jacqueline@eurasians.org](mailto:jacqueline@eurasians.org). You can also obtain application forms from the Secretariat Office, Level 3, The Eurasian Association, 139 Ceylon Road, Singapore 429744.

S/N	Education Scheme	Level	Eligibility Criteria	Application Period	Notes	Quantum Cap
1.	ECF Education Awards	Primary, Secondary, Tertiary	For Bursary Awards: PCI <\$700 For Merit, Excellence & Distinction Awards: solely based on academic grades (average 'B' and above)	Apply by 31 May 2013	This is a reward to students for their hard work in the previous final examination	\$100 - \$300
2.	Project Ray Of Hope	Primary, Secondary, Tertiary	PCI <\$500	Apply by 31 May 2013	Popular & Bata store vouchers to purchase items for school	\$250 - \$350
3.	Temasek Cares Education Bursary (TCEB)	Primary	PCI <\$700	Apply by 28 February 2013	Covers: School fees, books, uniforms, transport and meals	\$1,200 per academic year
4.	Coral De Cruz Memorial Fund (CdCMF)	Secondary	PCI <\$700	Apply by 28 February 2013	Covers: School fees, books, uniforms & transport	\$1,200 per academic year
5.	Merit Bursary Award	ITE & Polytechnic  (NP, NYP, RP, SP, TP)	- Academic merit (grades) - Family background / income - CCA involvement - Volunteer activities	March to April 2013	Covers the full cost of tuition and book stipend for the full duration of the course	ITE: \$3,500/yr for a 2-year course Polytechnic: \$5,500/yr for a 3-year course
6.	EA University Scholarship (for Poly graduate) / Oscar George Da Silva University Scholarship (for JC graduate)	University  (NUS, NTU, SMU, UniSIM, SIT, SUTD)	- Academic merit (grades) - Family background / income - CCA involvement, - Volunteer activities	March to April 2013	Covers the full cost of tuition and book stipend	\$10,000 per year for a 3-year course

Note: PCI = Per Capita Income (Total monthly household income divided by the number of people staying in the same household)





# The Spirit of Christmas Past

Christmas celebrations have changed considerably over the years. As Christians put the festive decorations away for another year, *The New Eurasian* talks to EA members who look back on how the season was celebrated in simpler times before the onset of our rich, modern consumer society



Christmas: it can be a whirlwind of a season and there is no other holiday quite like it. Christmas is a time for exuding goodwill. It's a time for families to reunite and be grateful for what they have; to sit down together over delicious meals and enjoy concerts and carol singing.

Bryce Woodford, 39, recalls the Christmases of his childhood when he was growing up in a two-room Pasir Ris HDB flat with his sister and four brothers. During Christmases, the house was decorated with ornaments and holiday wall hangings, although Christmas festivities in the house were more subdued than now, he says. The family would put a tree in the living room and bake cookies, but instead of special stockings, they hung regular socks to be filled with candies and chocolates.

"We didn't get toys like kids do now," says Bryce. "Our toys were usually hand made. Clothing seemed to comprise the main items wrapped under the tree. I had become a voracious reader, so a few books would be revealed as I unwrapped presents."

One year, he even had a visit from Santa; it was his neighbour, who brought along a red rocking chair as a gift. "I thought the Santa coming to the house was just the greatest gift I ever got," says Bryce.

Timothy de Souza, 25, usually spent Christmas Eve at his grandmother's, where the entire family would gather for dinner and prayers. His grandmother, Mary Klass, a prominent Eurasian, was always the main coordinator, cook and prayer leader during Christmas, he says. "My uncles and aunts from Australia would fly here every year for this event," he adds.

Along with two cousins, he and his brother would be the centre of attention during the gifts exchange as they were the youngest. Afterwards,



Krystle Nonis's magnificent Christmas tree

*"We didn't get toys like kids do now. Our toys were usually hand made"*

the family, dressed in their Christmas best, would attend midnight mass.

He, too, remembers gifts being made, rather than bought. And the days of big gatherings with numerous relatives have been downsized as the size of families has shrunk. "My grandparents came from a generation where they had many siblings."

Some things, happily, don't change. Like the food. "Christmas pie, feng and devil curry were usually served during Christmas and were lovingly prepared by my grandmother and mother," says Timothy.

"Being Catholic, for us Christmas is still very much a religious season as it is a season to be

merry," he adds. "The importance of family has always been something that has remained; no matter how distant we grow over the year, Christmas is always the time to meet again, catch up and be happy. The tradition of the family dinner on 24 December is something that has been ingrained with me and I hope to pass it on."

For 23-year-old Krystle Nonis, the Christmases of her childhood are remembered as a noisy affair, filled with lots of laughter, gifts, great food and family from all over. Krystle, who grew up in a very large family, says: "Since I was a child, we've spent every festive season with my mother's family in Klang, Malaysia, in a sleepy neighbourhood called Palm Grove. These holiday family gatherings were a real treat for us as we saw our relatives only once a year."



Krystle Nonis' table full of festive goodies



Krystle's family give thanks at Christmas



Timothy de Souza with his family and relatives.



She says her grandparents; Ruby and Vincent Gomes ('Mama and Papa') have eight children: five daughters and three sons. During Christmas, they each had a role to play. "Decorating my grandparents' home was an important part of the festive preparations," she recalls. Her grandparents had an eclectic mix of ornaments, many of them hand made, and each with a little story to tell.

Cooking is also a big part of her family culture. "From the fruitcake rich with cherries and nuts, to the delicate pineapple tarts, we all had a hand in crafting some of the holiday's best treats. "One of my favourites was Mama's traditional semperit cookies. These sweet, flower-shaped cookies made with custard flour were delicately topped with small pieces of green or red cherries. Even today, just the smell of these cookies brings me back to my childhood."

But it was the pineapple tarts that were the star turn. The older women in the family would help out with the kitchen preparations and the little children would each get pieces of dough to play with and to keep them entertained and out of trouble.

For her family, too, dinner on Christmas Eve is also a family tradition. "This meal was probably the most special meal in the year for my family as everyone is present. Surrounded by loved ones, Christmas Eve dinner was always a highlight, followed by the giving of presents."

But tradition has had to give way to the pressures of modern life. "With everyone working and travelling, we don't always have the opportunity to celebrate the festive season together. Also, some of my cousins have migrated overseas, with many travelling during the year-end break, so celebrations have become much more fragmented."

But modern life has its compensations. For Krystle, Christmas decorations at home have been upgraded. "Our décor is now much more modern and store-bought. Putting up the Christmas tree together is now more important than ever and we make a real celebration out of it with Christmas songs."

"Of course, one tradition we have not strayed from is the Christmas Eve family dinner," she said. "While the spread is not quite as extensive as when we were kids, the food is lovely. We still have the classics like curry devil, rendang, mixed vegetables and a nice roast, and have also incorporated some new dishes to the menu. We have also started a tradition of board game competitions for the festive season."

*"We would usually have one 'open house' during the festive season"*

She adds: "While Christmas today probably won't ever be how it was for me as a child, we have started some new traditions and forged new memories amid the old ones. Some things are for sure: there will still be laughter, loved ones gathered, and one large tub of Mama's pineapple tarts on the table, guarded by my mother," she says.

Tricia Seow said that massive preparations were undertaken well in advance during her grandparents' day. "Meals took about two weeks to prepare because of the sheer number of visitors that would drop by during Christmas. The most important items to be baked were sugee cake and pineapple tarts. For the menu, typically, there would be curry devil, beef pot roast, salad with egg dressing and meat pies. "For the curry devil alone, my grandfather would have

to slaughter 20 chickens. My uncles had to tend to the charcoal fires and stir the enormous pots while the ladies were busy preparing the rempah (spice paste) using mortar slabs and pestles.

And her father, too, had a major job to do: "My dad also took at least two weeks off work before Christmas to paint the house. The smell of fresh paint, baked goods and curry – to me these are the smells of Christmas."

As time went on, preparations became less intensive but there was still the same sense of occasion. "We prepared the same food, but by then we used only about five chickens for the curry, and preparations took only two or three days. We also no longer had to prepare the rempah by hand but used a blender, and we cooked on stoves, not over charcoal.

She adds: "My dad always had carols playing on the stereo, too, in December which always set a nice mood. It was also a must to make new curtains, buy new bathroom and kitchen towels, clothes, pyjamas – we had to wear new clothes on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, right down to our undies!

"We would usually have one 'open house' during the festive season, either on Christmas Day itself or on New Year's Day. Friends and family would come over either for lunch and dinner," she says.

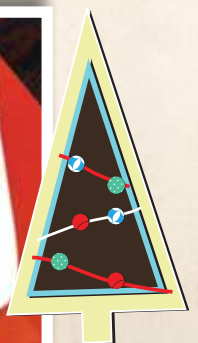
And one thing remains very special – the decorations that belonged to Tricia's grandmother. "We used to decorate the tree when I was a child. These ornaments are older than my mother – making them at least 60 years old. They're too fragile and precious to hang on our tree these days, but we take them out at Christmas and display them in safe place around the house. I treasure these ornaments and hope to pass them to my children in the future."



Tricia Seow's grandmother's treasured Christmas ornaments



*"Even today, just the smell of semperit cookies brings me back to my childhood"*







Benett Theseira presents a client with vouchers



Santa's little helpers make the party go with a swing

## FSS Christmas Party

Some 86 FSS clients celebrated Christmas early on 2 December with a lunch and party to launch the festive season; an event that was supported by numerous people and organisations from both inside and outside the Eurasian community.

MC Paul Rodrigues entertained guests with his jokes and Christmas trivia and two-piece band William and Barbara performed Christmas carols and other songs during lunch. The Rondallians, from the NUS, also added to the festivities with their selection of Christmas carols.

A dance team, Om Shanti Om, from St. Anthony's Canossian Secondary School gave a vibrant



Om Shanti Om put on a colourful display

performance of colourful Indian dance, while International Singapore School teachers Bruno Alen Lebon, Mrs Finnegan and Dal Forno led a team of pupils dressed as little reindeers, who escorted the guests, helped them with food and drinks and generally took care of them. The 'reindeers' also performed a medley of carols.

If there were reindeers, Santa couldn't be far away and he, too, put in an appearance. Guests received goodie bags and some also walked away with NTUC vouchers that were prizes in the lucky draw. The festivities ended on a sweet note as guests enjoyed tea with suggee cake and éclairs donated by Cedric Pereira.

Francesca Eber, chair of the FSS says: "Our FSS guests had a wonderful time and the EA Family Support Services would like to thank all the donors together with the teachers and students of St Anthony's and the ISS for helping to make this happen. And we would like to extend our appreciation to DHL for kindly sponsoring 84 cartons for households receiving hampers for Christmas. A heartfelt thank you to all!"

## Finding Strength through Adversity

Since becoming a single parent, Rose has faced immense challenges – yet she believes hardship has made her more resilient

Nine years ago, Rose (not her real name) made the toughest decision of her life – to divorce her unfaithful husband. He left her with their two children, aged seven and five, and she also has to take care of her ailing father.

Life has been tough. Without any family support, Rose has been working hard but keeping up with the bills is a struggle. "I can't pay all the bills; I have to alternate and pay one this month, another next. It's so worrying. On the rare months when I do manage to pay everything off, I maybe get three days to relax and then it starts all over again. I'm constantly fighting, constantly falling behind," she admits.

In addition to her financial worries, she has had to be both mother and father to her children as, although her ex-husband pays maintenance after what she says were tough negotiations, he has had little contact with their children. He has now re-married and the children have since refused to see him. Rose's father is also very ill, having undergone emergency surgery for cancer.

But she isn't totally alone: "I rang the Eurasian Association Family Support Services and found

it very useful. I received advice on my rights and received emergency cash relief and grants as well as food vouchers," she says. She also received assistance with getting money from her husband for their children.

"I feel very thankful towards EA's FSS as their help has helped me managed to gain enough strength during hard times to cope with the demands of being a single parent. I hope this will give some encouragement to the many single parents out there who have to manage bringing up their children without the support of the other parent, and who have to cope with other challenges in their life," she says.

**Your contributions make a difference:** Any donations you can make will enable the EA to continue to meet the needs of our community, specifically low-income families, youth at risk, struggling single parents and the lonely and poor elderly. To make an online donation, please visit: <http://www.eur Asians.org.sg/a-helping-hand/fundraising/>

## Multiple Opportunities for Single Parents

Single parents and their children may now seek help from the EA's Family Support Services. If you are an unemployed single parent or have a household income of less than \$1,500, you may qualify for assistance.

This FSS assistance programme provides employment help which can include: basic IT skills, a career readiness workshop, transport allowance, grooming voucher, skills training to enter the workforce, financial literacy workshops and food vouchers. Terms and conditions apply.

Children of single parents will be referred to tuition centres run by the self-help groups, which offer them continuous assistance for their education. They will also receive childcare administrative fees and school bus fees for the first month.

For more information, contact our Family Support Services Executive, J. Ramakrishnan at [ram@eur Asians.org](mailto:ram@eur Asians.org) or 6447 1578.



## Competing Across the Causeway

A group of Singapore Eurasians set out for Penang recently to participate in the first-ever Malaysian Eurasian Games.

Supported by the Penang State Government and hosted by the Penang Eurasian Association (PEA), the games were held at the grounds of College General in Tanjung Bungah, Penang from 10-11 November 2012.

Themed 'Go Forward in Togetherness', they aimed to forge ties through games and sporting activities among representatives of the EAs of Malacca, Selangor, Kedah, Sarawak, Perak, Penang and Singapore.

Led by chef de mission Yvonne Pereira, the 14-strong Singapore contingent comprised EA Singapore President Benett Theseira and his mother Christina, Nancy Fobrogo, Philip and Joyce Cordeiro, Dorothy, Rosemary and Eddie Tessensohn, Lawrence Kam, The Ban Khi (Yang), Daniel Chong, Brian Higgs and Sylvie Tan.

Our island's representatives managed to reel in a decent haul of medals through helping to shore up numbers among the Malaysian teams which were short of participants for cross country, football, telematch, tug of war and volleyball.

And the Singapore Carroms squad comprising Philip, Eddie, Nancy and Yvonne brought home the gold medal, while the balut team emerged as second runners-up.

Penang were crowned overall champions and Malacca took home a trophy for having the largest

contingent. Aloysius Gasper, President of Penang EA and games organising chairman, said he hoped the games would become an annual affair, with different Malaysian states taking turns to play host.

The participants also took part in an evening mass at the College chapel, and the social highlight was an eight-course gala dinner held at the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

If you'd like to take part in this year's Malaysian Eurasian Games, the competition is slated to take place in Kuala Lumpur in September and further details will be issued nearer the time.



A gentler sport - but still fierce rivalry



Yvonne Pereira presents the Singapore banner



Pull! Benett Theseira and team in the tug of war



EA Singapore and their Malaysian friends at the Malaysian Eurasian games 2012

## Showing Appreciation

Toastmasters need to be flexible to wrap their minds – and tongues – around any subject that they might suddenly be called to speak on.

At the December meeting of the EA Toastmasters' Club, language evaluator of the day Crispin Rodrigues gave members the word 'appreciate' on which voice their thoughts. Taking up the challenge, Vernon Lim, Ted Chong, Jason Lu, Shiwen Yap and Joachim Pereira delivered entertaining, informative and humorous speeches on the notion.

The afternoon included both prepared and impromptu speeches together with speech evaluations. For the impromptu 'table topics', visiting toastmaster Regina Rassulova of James Cook University instructed speakers to talk on the subject of Christmas – and injected amusing words that they had to use. The result, says EA Toastmasters' convenor Peter Rodrigues,

"had the audience in stitches".

Equally engaging speech evaluations were given by Crispin Rodrigues, Adam Abdeali, Peter Rodrigues, Vernon Lim and Jason Lu.

The Christmas theme continued in the interval with servings of curry devil, Eurasian salad, turkey and cranberry sauce and fruit punch.

The event ended with Vernon Lim voted the best speaker, Atharv Kale the best table topics speaker and Adam Abdeali the best speech evaluator.



The Toastmasters get into festive mood

If you would like to join the Toastmasters, please contact: Peter Rodriguez at [info@eurasianm.com](mailto:info@eurasianm.com)



## Learning New Kicks

The EA's new soccer team started its first training session at its temporary home at Tampines SAFRA in November. A squad of 11 boys gathered at the soccer field and got to know each other during as they did some warming-up exercises of simple stretches and running around the field.

Coach Clifton Dragon then taught them basic soccer foot work and techniques such as dribbling with the ball, passing and retrieving the ball. Finally it was time for a mini game.

Clifton said the team had a good start but needs more players. Training will be held at weekends and the team will participate in soccer tournaments.

*If you are interested to join the EA soccer team or have any recommendations for training venues, please contact Bridget Basnayake at 6447 1578 or [bridget@eurasians.org](mailto:bridget@eurasians.org)*



*Having a ball: the EA soccer team enjoy their first training session*

## A Visible Difference

Some 30 young professional Eurasians, together with the EA's Youth Sub-Committee, met at the Singapore Recreation Club to discuss how they could make the ethnic group more visible in Singapore.

Member Emma Chiau said the Eurasian community must appeal to and be relevant to young Eurasians so that they remain part of the Eurasian community and the Eurasian Association.

Crystal Tan, an EA youth volunteer, said that many of her friends did not have a clue what a Eurasian was or that the Eurasian Association existed. "We need to take it out there – maybe do a road show or something – because we need to create awareness that we are part of Singapore community." She added that young people needed to know about the work of the organisation and the volunteering opportunities and activities available.



*Young Eurasians aim to make their voice heard in Singapore*

## The EA Dragons are Recruiting!

If you're fun loving, competitive and have an interested in learning how to race dragon boats, we welcome enthusiasts to join in our training sessions and upcoming rows.

Over here, we have a team of committed and experienced male and female rowers, as well as some beginners, who train together every week.

If you're interested in joining us or have any queries about the EA Dragons, contact Captain Bianca at [Bianca.hoeden@yahoo.com](mailto:Bianca.hoeden@yahoo.com) or call 6447 1578 to find out more.

*You can also find out more about us at:  
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/5814044607/>*



Hubert Yohannan suggested that the sub-committee organise a team-building activity where Eurasians could have fun while bonding and networking.

Chairperson, Graham Ong-Webb said: "The voice of the young generation needs to be listened to and taken into consideration if we want a strong Eurasian community now and in the future. By discussing, debating and testing ideas, the young generation can give voice to their thoughts, differing views and fears about the community; then we can understand how to take it from there."

The sub-committee will be updating members of YPE through its Facebook group about its Eurasian Conversation discussion, which is slated for early 2013.



*Alan Oliveira gives his thoughts about youths today*



# Donation Drive for Items for the EURASIAN HERITAGE CENTRE

The Eurasian Association will be enhancing two of its three galleries in its Eurasian Heritage Centre between January and April. The three galleries will be:

- (1) Showcasing Our Roots [an introduction to our origins, culture and lifestyle]
- (2) World War Two – The Eurasian Story [experiences and real-life accounts of those who went through WWII]
- (3) Remembering Our Prominent Eurasians [focusing on the contributions of the EA since its inception in 1919, and the prominent Eurasians who contributed to our community and the wider society]

We are grateful to the Eurasian community for your support over the years and to the dedicated volunteers who help us in our key pillars of Education advancement, Welfare and Community engagement. As the EA approaches its 100 years anniversary in 2019, it is important that the younger generation know their roots, and that we crystallise our unique culture in our Eurasian Heritage Centre.



We would like to involve the community in this meaningful heritage project, by inviting you to donate or loan artifacts or items pertaining to the Eurasian culture, lifestyle and prominent Eurasians, whose contributions, whether big or small, helped to shape our small but vibrant community.

If you would like to donate or loan items for our Eurasian Heritage Centre, kindly contact Jacqueline Peeris at 6447-1578 or [jacqueline@eurasians.org](mailto:jacqueline@eurasians.org) Thank you and we appreciate your support!

## Help to share our Eurasian Heritage. Be an EA Heritage Volunteer

The Eurasian Association Heritage Committee is looking for heritage volunteers to give tours of the Eurasian Heritage Centre, which houses three galleries:

- The Eurasian Showcase (focusing on Eurasian culture and prominent Eurasians in Singapore)
- Roots of Our Community (showing the history and influence of the Portuguese, Dutch and British on the Eurasian community)
- World War II – The Eurasian Story (encapsulating stories and real-life accounts of Eurasians who survived WWII)

For more information, please contact

**Jacqueline Peeris**  
Assistant Manager, Education & Heritage  
Tel: 6447 1578  
Email: [jacqueline@eurasians.org](mailto:jacqueline@eurasians.org)





# A Brush with Fate

Singapore Eurasian artist, Melissa de Silva describes the inspirations that get her paint flowing

## Have you always known you wanted to be an artist?

My life with art began when I was tiny and would scrawl on the walls of my bedroom in crayon. When I was five, I graduated to Faber-Castell coloured pencils and paper. In secondary school at CHIJ Toa Payoh, I was in the Art Elective programme. Doing art made me feel vital, alive. I never felt more 'me' than when I was drawing or painting.

However, my formal academic education took me away from the art path, and I ended up doing a degree in English Literature then working as a magazine journalist for a number of years.

A few years ago, I reconnected with a dear, long-lost friend. She showed me a photo she'd taken of a drawing I'd given her and her brother when we were 16. It was a pencil work I'd done of Kurt Cobain (we had all been rabid Nirvana fans). I stared at the drawing, and Kurt's haunted eyes stared out at me. I was amazed that I ever had the skills to create something like that. And that led to my next thought – why the heck am I not doing this now? That incident was a turning point for me.

After 15 years, I picked up a pencil again and began to draw. I enrolled in a part-time art course at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. At that point, I realised that I have always been an artist inside, even though it took me a pretty long time to get that inner artist out!

## Who or what have been your most significant influences?

Seventeenth and 18th century line engravings, John Tenniel (who illustrated Lewis Carroll's 1865 *Alice in Wonderland*); watercolour botanical illustrations; the witty, works of British children's book author and illustrator Anthony Browne;

Modigliani; Georgia O'Keeffe for her resilience and vision; Russell Chatham for his ethereal landscapes; exciting mixed media art of any sort, such as by Judy Pfaff, who does woodblock prints with collage and hand colouring; and wonderful South African sculptor and children's book author illustrator Marjorie van Heerdan, who told us at an illustrators' workshop to always, always draw something every day – even if it's just a circle.

“Doing art made me feel vital, alive”

## You love nature. Is it true to say that your art inspiration comes from nature?

I love illustrating animals and plants. The stark silhouette of a leafless tree, the sheen of a bird's plumage, the patterning of an armadillo's skin – almost everything in nature can inspire me.

## What is your favourite art medium – and why?

Oh dear. Do I have to choose? I like many media, each for their own unique qualities. Right now, I like working with a mixed media combination of ink, watercolour, pastel and collage.

## Do you work in a studio or at home?

My 'studio' is my bedroom at home, at a large desk with a drawing board and lighting set up.

## Do you work from photographs or memory? How long does a piece usually take?

A combination of photographic reference and imagination. I usually do a lot of visual research and practise drawing the subject until I am familiar with its structure and form. Usually I take at least a few weeks to complete a piece.

## What do you like to listen to while you are working?

Silence! Or birds. Or the breeze rustling through



Deer with pastels

the trees. Or Indian ragas or Chet Baker. Anything with a gentle pace that can help unfold the imagination.

## If you could take your Nomad Brush anywhere in the world, where would you go, and why?

Sweden, where I would paint the gorgeous landscapes and I could sit in the middle of a forest and do plant studies without tropical ants swarming all over me!

## Are you working on anything right now?

I am collaborating with an Australian writer to illustrate a children's ABC book with a difference. We will be featuring quirky and unexpected words.

## What's next for you?

Some illustrations for a book that will be produced by an NGO on the Cambodian justice process. On the backburner is my own picture book I've written for kids involving a mythical creature – and candy.

You can view Melissa's work at <http://findingthelotus.wordpress.com>



A logo that was designed for Michelle Tessonsohn for her Beautiful Natural Balance workshop, using acrylic paint, gold foil and lace.



Melissa de Silva



Solitude tree with ink



## Look Behind You...

Actress and radio presenter Vernetta Lopez speaks about her recent role in W!ld Rice's Christmas pantomime, *Hansel & Gretel*

Vernetta Lopez's voice is familiar to us on Class 95FM Morning Express or we know her as Denise in Singapore's popular TV sitcom, *Under One Roof*. Just before Christmas, the versatile 39 year old made her third professional stage appearance in W!ld Rice's production of the pantomime *Hansel and Gretel*. Her first theatre piece was Johnny Lau's *Who Shot Mr Kiasu* in 1994 and she played Mrs Ang, a tai-tai of sorts, in Zebra Crossing's production *What the Butler Saw*, a classic Joe Orton comedy revamped with a local twist.

"Being on stage is such a trip", she says. "On screen, the nerves appear when the camera is on, but on stage the adrenaline is a constant rush. Plus, with an interactive show like *Hansel and Gretel*, you never knew what might happen with a 'live' audience!

Playwright Alfian Sa'at worked the popular Grimm fairy tale into a local wonder – the siblings

were abandoned in the jungles of Mandai and found a house made of fish ball sticks, kueh lapis and kaya toast. They then went on a culinary and musical adventure with minahs, army boys, maids – and a whole lot of food.

Vernetta Lopez played Cassan-drah, the evil stepmother who was constantly scheming to get rid of the children while trying to make her aspirations to pop stardom come true. "Cassan-drah was a very vain, scheming, selfish, violent, songbird that couldn't sing. I just had to be myself on stage, really," she jokes.

Vernetta loved working with the cast of *Hansel and Gretel*. "I'd always wanted to work with Denise Tan and I was very happy to be working with her on this show.

"The entire cast and crew was such a fun bunch. There was always a ready joke, and the children were so adorable! They were so tiny yet they



Vernetta Lopez turns evil in *Hansel and Gretel*

were singing their hearts out, and dancing like pros – I loved it."

Since then she's put her evil stepmother persona aside and has been catching up on some sleep. And then? "More radio, perhaps another book, and I'm working on creating my own TV show. I'm tracing my ancestry through a project on OKTO, and may do more kids' shows."

## Dark Waters

Student Wesley Aroozoo has just published his first novel, a dark story based on real-life events

Two tragedies that occurred on the same day in Singapore have led post-graduate student Wesley Aroozoo to write a novel and a play to try and make sense of them.

Wesley, who is studying for his Master of Fine Arts at New York University Tisch Asia in Singapore, says he has been intrigued by the puzzling consecutive drowning that occurred recently at Bedok Reservoir.

"I couldn't comprehend what would drive a person to commit suicide at the reservoir and so wanted to understand by getting into their minds and writing a fictional take of what could have happened," he says.

His novel is a story about loss, searching and acceptance of one's own demons. "*Bedok Reservoir* is a story about the dark side of Singapore not openly discussed. It tells the story of a mother searching for her child in the Bedok Reservoir while naval divers are in search of them," he says.

"Strangely, although I love to write, I'm not an avid reader," he admits. "I grew up reading video

“The stage play and novel versions of *Bedok Reservoir* differ with alternate endings”

game magazines”, he says. “I also love writing different forms, be it for the television a feature, a stage play, poems or a novel. Each form has its own unique advantage. For example, the stage play and novel versions of *Bedok Reservoir* differ with alternate endings. This is because what would work on the page, wouldn't necessarily work on the stage and vice versa.”

Wesley is better known as an artist from 13 Little Pictures, Pinball Collective and Studio Thirteen. His works have screened in more than 80 festivals, such as the International Film Festival Rotterdam. He is also the film curator for several local projects and a freelance scriptwriter for *Random Island*, Channel 5's new TV series from the writing team of *The Noose*. In addition, he works as an adjunct lecturer at LASALLE College of the Arts.



Wesley Aroozoo (above) talks about his new book, *Bedok Reservoir*



But he is not resting on his laurels. "I am currently working on writing my next novel which will hopefully be ready by late 2013 or early 2014. And I am also working on my first feature film," he says.

*Bedok Reservoir* is published by Math Paper Press and is available at BooksActually, Kinokuniya and online through the Kinokuniya and BooksActually web stores. <http://booksactually.bigcartel.com>

# A Different Look

Singapore-born photographer Emmanuelle Chiau Ong-Webb, who completed a Bachelors of Fine Arts in Graphic Design and Visual Communication in Paris, discusses her upcoming Eurasian photo project



A selection of portraits taken by Emma Chiau Ong-Webb

## How did you discover photography?

My passion for photography grew during my graphic arts studies, especially when I became a member of the photography club. As graphic arts student, we were trained to appreciate all kinds of media and I strived to capture those moments in time I found to be visually appealing.

## What motivated you to develop the Eurasian photo project?

I still continue working with my clients on a range of corporate, fashion and personal projects through a company I own and run called Triggahappy. However, almost all artists feel the need to accomplish other personal goals. Client work is bound by certain constraints that set limits on expression. The pursuit of non-commercial projects allows artists to challenge themselves.

## What drew you to do a Eurasian photo project, and why Eurasians in particular?

Since I was a child, my parents have always encouraged us to embrace our European and Asian cultures but it has not been easy, because I have never felt completely part of either culture. I somehow managed to become proud of who I was and many people (especially in Europe) were intrigued about my background, especially about my features, noticing how I didn't look Asian, nor Caucasian!

So I have always had this knowledge that Eurasians can arouse questions and curiosity, initially on a physical level. People can be intrigued by our looks and I myself have reactions from people very often. So this project is the extension of a personal reflection.

## What is the most important goal of the project?

Ultimately, it is to raise awareness about who we are as Eurasians. A lot of Singaporeans continue to lack an understanding and appreciation of their Eurasian counterparts. The basic message is: 'No, we are not tourists; neither are we ang mohs or expatriates – but Singaporeans just like you!'

My aim is to photograph expressive Eurasian faces, which will induce inquisitiveness in other Singaporeans to ponder, acknowledge, and appreciate our identity.

## Have there been particular challenges you've encountered during the project?

Well, I am just in the beginning stages and so far it is unfolding quite well. Having said that, the Eurasians I have approached tend to be shy about taking part. For the record, this is not an elitist project as I do not wish to photograph model-esque people. All I need is a warm smile I will do the rest!

## Do you like to talk to your subjects, and how do they respond to your presence?

People often tell me I make my subjects feel comfortable. I'm very pleased to hear that because my own shyness was quite a problem when I first started photography, which was why I was concentrating only on landscapes and still subjects for a long time (oh and my dogs too). When it comes to portrait photography, I make it a point to communicate openly with my subjects, and to make them feel confident and relaxed.

## Will there be an exhibition?

Yes, I am planning to hold an exhibition when the project is completed. There will also be an online component to the publication.

## What advice would you give to those who want to embark on a long-term project but don't know where to start?

Surround yourself with inspiring people. Also, come to grips with the pulse of current culture, which is constantly evolving. Most importantly, go into the field. The great thing about photography is that no matter what level you are, take any camera with you, go out and shoot whatever, whichever and whoever. The world is your canvas and the only limits are the ones you impose on yourself.

You can view Emma's work at <http://triggahappy.co/>





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# *A Night of Glitz and Glam*

Oh what a night it was... Dressed in their most glittering outfits EA members and friends arrived at the Concorde Hotel ballroom to usher in 2013 in style.

They enjoyed a sumptuous international buffet and kicked up their heels to the sounds of Gerard Danker & MSG band, Romito Mendoza, Robert Fernando, and DJ Bernard Jeremiah, spurred on by lively MCs Graham Ong-Webb and Michelle Tessensohn.

A lucky draw produced prizes that included holiday packages to Bangkok, Phuket, Bali and Malacca, kindly sponsored by Best Western Hotels & Resorts, Hotelbank Pte Ltd, Dorothy Tessensohn and Kerala Resort Homes Sdn Bhd, together with an array of other attractive prizes sponsored by well-wishers. A bonus prize of a trip to Hong Kong was drawn half an hour before midnight, sponsored by loyal benefactor Glenn De Souza from Best Western Hotels & Resorts, who drew the winning ticket.

As midnight beckoned, Old Father Time (aka Peter Rodrigues) appeared to signal the passing of the old year, as five young beauties counted down the clock to usher in the New Year.

