



HENRY LIM ELECTED PRESIDENT OF GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY, SINGAPORE

~Report from Mr Henry Lim

At the 17th Annual General Meeting held at York Hotel on Saturday, 23rd August 2003, Mr Henry Lim was elected to serve a term of three years as President of the Society in succession to Mr Laurence Wee. Dr Kalyani Mehta and Professor Kua Ee Heok were elected 1st and 2nd Vice President respectively. Ms Ellen Cheng and Mrs Betty Ong were elected Asst Hon

Treasurer and Hon Auditor, respectively. The full membership of GS Council for 2003/2004 is as follows:

President	- Mr Henry Lim, PBM BBM
1 st Vice President	- Dr Kalyani Mehta
2 nd Vice President	- Prof Kua Ee Heok, PBM
Imm Past President	- Mr Laurence Wee
Hon Secretary	- Ms Mary Low
Hon Treasurer	- Ms Diana Koh
Asst Hon Treasurer	- Ms Ellen Cheng
Hon Auditor	- Mrs Betty Ong
Hon Legal Advisor	- Mr Dennis Lim
Admin Officer	- Mr Allan Choo

Editorial comment

The editorial board has decided to produce a "bumper crop" Dec/Jan issue. We have lots of pictures from our AGM meeting to share with you. For some of you who were present at the meeting, this issue will no doubt bring back memories, and for those who were not there, I hope this will encourage you to attend our next AGM. The committee has invested a great deal of effort in making the AGM a memorable event for our members.

Council Members

Dr Chiang Hai Ding - Dr Chow Yeow Leng
Ms Kwek Puay Ee - Mr Seen Keen Fai
Mr Tan Ong Chwee

Mr Laurence Wee in his outgoing message said that Singapore is one of the world's fastest-aging

population countries. The number of elderly in Singapore will increase rapidly starting from 2010 – just seven years from now. He emphasized the implications of such dramatic changes, particularly in terms of old age security and health care financing are tremendous. To effectively respond to the considerable social and economic impacts of both demographic and accompanying epidemiological shifts forecasted, greater understanding of the dynamics and consequences of both individual and population aging in these diverse settings is essential. GS, he said, organizes from time to time Regional Conferences and Seminars inviting speakers and experts from various gerontological community abroad to come and share with us information, knowledge and understanding of the dynamics and consequences of aging in their countries. GS also provide a platform for those working with the elderly to exchange ideas and promote the truth about aging.



Token of appreciation... to outgoing President

Immediately after the AGM, there was a talk on ‘Elderly Victim Of Crime’ by Mr Eric Low, Vice President of the National Crime Prevention Council. It was followed by a SKIT performed by the Gerontological Nurses Chapter and a Self-Defense Demonstration by Mr David Yew and his partner. See separate report on the talk, skit and demonstration. **GS**



*Interesting Crime Talk by Mr Eric Low Vice President
National Crime Prevention Council*

CRIME PREVENTION ELDERLY VICTIMS

less real or intense, nor that striving to solve social problems is a fruitless enterprise. What it does mean is that any resolution of social problems requires the understanding and efforts of others, not just those afflicted with a particular difficulty. In fact, social scientists and older people themselves have attempted and often succeeded in changing elements of society in regard to such public issues as retirement policies, health care and housing. Since society is continuously changing, older people and those who work for and with them, are confronted with new and different social problems. One such problem is that of crimes committed against older people.

Many of the problems associated with aging are social and not just personal problems. This is not to say that the sufferings of those individuals affected are any



Talented cast of the SKIT-Gerontological Nurses Chapter

Believing that criminal victimization of older people is not only an 'elderly problem', but also a social problem, and that knowing more about a problem is a necessary step in solving it, we invited Mr Eric Low, Vice President of the National Crime Prevention Council to talk on the subject. The idea was for Mr Low to communicate to the audience a body of data and ideas on the subject of criminal victimization of older people. Members present at the talk found Mr Low's talk very interesting and informative.

Mr Low cited some reasons why crimes against the elderly are on the rise:



It's question time....



Clarifying a point...

- They warm up (to strangers) too quickly and they trust too readily.
- Often they are alone and lonely.
- Failing health can make them long for miracle cures.
- They wear excessive jewelry.
- They carry too many valuables on their persons especially when walking alone.
- They love to walk in secluded places.

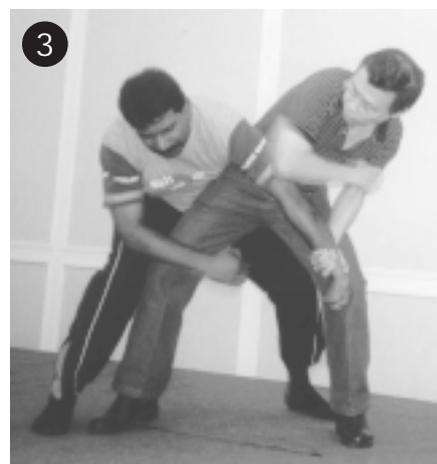
Mr Low also gave advice on how to avoid falling prey to them. The elderly should be wary of strangers who may:

- offer to provide them with spiritual healing or good luck charms;
- invite them to join in a profitable business ventures;
- ask them for donations for their religious organization;
- ask them for loans after telling a hard-luck story;
- try to sell them worthless items; or
- ask them for financial help after a 'mishap' or accident that has befallen their family member.

Mr Low offered many recommendations so that members would be able to help their elderly friends or relatives to prevent their golden years

from losing their lustre. Immediately after the talk, members from the Gerontological Nurses Chapter presented a very entertaining and educational skit on Crime Prevention. It was followed by a Self-Defense Demonstration by Mr David Yew and his partner.

Through the medium of our Newsletter, the Organizing Committee of the Talk and Self-Defense Demonstration would like to record their thanks and appreciation to the Gerontological Nurses Chapter, Mr David Yew and Mr Eric Low. **G**



SELF-DEFENCE TACTICS IN ACTION!

Listening to

LETTER FROM AMERICA



Some of us know Prof Kua Ee Heok. We probably know him as a psychiatrist of international repute. His first love has always been the welfare, care and protection of the frail aged. His special interest is geriatric medicine. You may not, however, know that he is a budding novelist as well. Prof Kua could well stand shoulder high with our own local greats.

I was taken aback when at a dinner he kept me lively occupied discussing English literature. It

was then that I learned that he had written his first novel: "Listening to Letter from America". That was in October last year.

My first reaction on viewing the title was to mutter under my breath that this must be another psychological thriller. It was not so. His novel gives life to a mundane subject, a day care centre for the elderly.

The story is set in the day care centre of the former Woodlands Home. Six elderly people

meet at the centre for therapy under the guidance of a doctor who is in doubt as to its usefulness and under the constant oversight of the “don’t quote me lest I get into trouble” superintendent of the Home who “accepts the uncertainty of life with equanimity.” The plot is simple though unique, inventive and revealing. It is drawn from a historical perspective of the Japanese Occupation.

Life at the day care center would have been a humdrum were it not for Ali, a former soldier of the First Royal Malay Regiment. He suffers from Parkinson disease. He recalls nostalgically his near addiction to listening to Alistair Cooke’s weekly programme on BBC radio programme “Letter from America” based on his experience in America before and soon after the Second World War.

That was a catalyst for group dynamics to be in motion. Soon the group was recounting each other’s poignant memories, both pleasant and sad of their youth during the difficult and trying period under the Japanese occupation.

The MP who visited Woodlands Home heard of the sharing experience. He was so impressed that he arranged for the group’s participation in a morning radio talk show. That is the climax of the story. The group solidifies and strengthens its coping mechanism over time and even in the face of an untimely death of one of the participants.

This is a “must” read book for all those engaged in the social service for the aged.

What impress, apart from his literary skills is Prof Kua’s keen power of observation of the fauna and flora and the variety of birds that perch in the woody trees and foliage surrounding the home. Many of us who have

been closely associated with Woodlands Home will be surprised at the factual and detailed drawing to the approaches to Woodlands Home. His knowledge of classical music, as expressed through one of the group members, a pianist, is equally outstanding. She recalls with passion Paganini’s Rhapsody, Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata, and Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No 2. Music, she says, is an art: “You never achieve perfection. Every piece is different to every musician.” How true!

Some of the staff of the former Ministry of Community Development will be able to identify the key players and, indeed the members of the group. Prof Kua has drawn a sympathetic and recognisable profile of the Superintendent. The Director, however, is a caricature based largely on the impressions created by the Superintendent.

The novel is a work of immense research, an easy read and by any local standards a great achievement. It shows an imaginative breath and wealth of mind.

Prof Kua has an underlying message to all: that day care centres in any form need not be a holding camp. Given the right setting it can be lead the way to the creativity of the human mind even at old age.

I commend the book especially to those in the service of the aged. Those who were closely associated with Woodlands Home will be saddened by its closure. 

K V Veloo

GS Member



MESSAGE

from Immediate Past President

I wish all members of GS a Merry Christ and Best Wishes for the New Year!

It had been an exciting 3-year term of service. And it was even more gratifying with the staunch support all-round from fellow Council Members.

My sincere appreciation goes to all our GS members and volunteers. Without their presence and support at GS seminars, our events would not be sustainable in the long term. We must remember not to take things for granted and if possible, to step up our public education programmes, especially in areas that are pertinent in enhancing the well-being of our older people. One example was the recent forum on Medication for the Elderly. It was meaningful, and the response just great in terms of audience participation. Prof Kua Ee Heok, Associate Prof Tan ChayHoon and Dr Chan Kin Meng shall have to do a repeat seminar sometime in late 2004? Like good food it is never enough to whet our appetite!

For the new term of office, with Mr Henry Lim as president together with a strong committed team serving the society, it augurs well for GS. It will only grow from strength to strength - to better serve our members. More importantly, to advance our cause of changing mindset in the young and the old that older people have the potential to

contribute positively in this age of globalization, constant change and uncertainty. But let's move on and anticipate the good things that can come with the new year ...for life is about hope!

Again, my warmest wishes to all,

Laurence Wee



賀年
梅花一枝報春來
爆竹四起送舊歲

Greeting
Season's Greetings
and
Happy New Year

to all Our Readers

From:
President and Council Members
Gerontological Society



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Mr Henry Lim
Mr Seen Keen Fai

Published by
Gerontological Society of Singapore
c/o No. 5 Mayflower Terrace
Singapore 568550
Printed by : Milton Press Co Pte Ltd