

WOMEN IN POLICING



- Special Edition -

CONTENT SPOTLIGHT



Women Power: She Inspires

Gender is never a limiting factor in the Singapore Police Force (SPF). In this issue, *Police Life* caught up with the first woman to hold the rank of Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) in the SPF. Read on to find out more about DCP Florence Chua's perspective on women in policing.

P6



The Singapore Police Force's First Certified International Post Blast Investigator

Retirement is no reason to stop learning and this is especially true for Superintendent of Police Geraldine Tan. The exclusive interview details her experience on becoming the SPF's first Certified International Post Blast Investigator.

P22



Celebrating 70 Years of Women in Policing

The SPF celebrated 70 years of women in policing on 2 March 2019. Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister for Manpower & Second Minister for Home Affairs who was the guest of honour at the event, paid tribute to our female officers – past and present – for their immeasurable contributions in safeguarding Singapore.

P8

Contents



04

Speech by Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister for Manpower & Second Minister for Home Affairs



06

Women Power: She Inspires



08

Celebrating 70 Years of Women in Policing



13

The Evolution of Women in Policing



16

Poster



18

Voices of our Women in Blue



22

The Singapore Police Force's First Certified International Post Blast Investigator



24

Sportswomen in the Force



28

Hasta La Vista - Spreading A Sparkle of Joy!



30

The Bonding Force

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Celebrating 70 Years of Women in Policing

Speech by Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister for Manpower & Second Minister for Home Affairs, on 2 March 2019

Commissioner of Police, friends and colleagues, including our counterparts from Hong Kong. Good morning. It is a great honour for me to be here.

70 years is a long time, so it is meaningful to look back and celebrate the achievements of our women in policing.

It happens that this is our Bicentennial Year. When we look back at Singapore's history over the last 200 years, it is clear that women contributed as much as men to building up modern Singapore:

Take Mdm Hajjah Fatimah, for example. A tradeswoman and philanthropist who came to Singapore in the 1800s, Mdm Hajjah built houses for the poor and donated money and land to build a mosque for her community.

Another example is Hedwig Anuar. Just eight years after starting her career as a librarian in 1952, Mdm Anuar became the first Singaporean to be appointed as the Director of the National Library. Her leadership laid solid foundations for the modern library system that Singaporeans now enjoy and benefited generations

of avid readers. So, we visit the library, we enjoy the services, but we probably didn't know that all of these came about because of one woman. She started it.

Then, there is Mdm Gloria Lim, an expert on fungi, who became the first woman to be named Dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of Singapore, and later on as the first Foundation Director at the National Institute of Education when it was set up in 1991. So, Gloria Lim is the person who built up the NIE that trained generations of our educators, who in turn helped to bring up the next generation of Singaporeans.

What about women in policing? In addition to the many names that Florence has shared with us, the history of women in policing is quite interesting. As it turns out, the first women to begin police training in Singapore did so in 1949. We know that by now. The pioneering group had just 10 women. Including a woman by the name of Mary Quintal. Mary excelled in a field traditionally dominated by men, and as Florence reminded us, what possessed these 10 women to have the guts to step out of their comfort zone, and to believe

that they can contribute something to society. Much more than themselves, they can do something about justice in Singapore, that they can help maintain law and order in our fledgling, at that time not even a nation, we didn't even have a government in 1949. But these 10 women had it in them. Without Mary Quintal and the other colleagues of hers, who formed that magnificent 10 you could say, and the other trailblazers that came after them, we might not today have the privilege of a woman heading our CID today.

This is a fitting occasion to pay tribute to past and present generations of women police officers like Mary, Jessica, Lois, and all the other names who were mentioned, who dedicated themselves to keeping Singapore safe and secure.

Journey of Female Police Officers in Singapore

In the early days, women officers were assigned primarily to supporting functions. They were operators for 999 calls, traffic controllers, and took on specialised roles where a female presence was required.

Over the years, our women officers have made remarkable progress.

In 1980, the first all-female riot and crowd control Task Force was established. Riot and crowd control are essential, when you have a situation or incident.

In 1981, five women made history by becoming our first female Investigation Officers.

By 1984, we had seen the first batch of female graduates joining the SPF as Senior officers.

Time and again, our women officers proved themselves to be more than competent and effective in their work. Some notable role models of course include:

Ng Guat Ting, who became the first female to lead a Land Division in 1999, 20 years ago.

Zuraidah Abdullah, who was appointed the first female Senior Assistant Commissioner in 2013. And today, if you go to Changi, and everything goes smoothly at Changi, that's because Zuraidah and her team are keeping watch.

Sng May Yen, who was the first female commander to lead a SPF peacekeeping contingent to the United Nations Integrated Mission in East Timor in 2007;

And of course, not forgetting Florence Chua, who was appointed the first female Deputy Commissioner and concurrent Director CID last year. I am happy to share with you that Florence will be inducted to the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame later this month. She is not going to be the first amongst our women police officers to be in the Hall of Fame. She will join 152 other exemplary women, including Zuraidah who was inducted in 2014.

Today, women officers undergo the same training and are deployed alongside their male counterparts in every Police unit except in the Gurkha Contingent. And we do not expect any otherwise, no one thinks twice about that today.

Beyond policing, some of our women officers went on to assume key positions in external organisations and continue to contribute to the community in their own ways.

For example, Zuraidah is currently serving her third term as a Board member of the National Library Board, and also joined

the Agency for Integrated Care as a Board member last year.

All these inspiring stories about women, will be shared as part of the Bicentennial commemoration and I think on the occasion of our 70 Years of Women in Policing, we must equally share the stories of our outstanding trailblazers and the Police force amongst the women, to inspire future generations of women police officers.

Looking to the Future

We now have close to 1800 women officers serving in SPF today, this is a far cry from the 10 pioneers in 1949.

In truth, it is not easy for women officers to manage career and family. I have seen it first-hand. Your work often requires sacrifices; such as weekends with loved ones that you cannot be part of or key events at home that you missed because you're on duty. But we know Singaporeans can count on you because of your dedication, and we know you will do us proud.

More importantly, I want you to know that we want you to succeed. You deserve to, given the extraordinary commitment needed in a policing career.

Remember always that you are not alone in this journey. The Police Women's Committee, or PWC in short, chaired by Florence, has been advocating for all of you.

Through various activities, the PWC has laid the foundation to build a more close-knit community amongst women officers. It also allows our women to contribute and share their concerns as well as their experiences.

The PWC has become the 'voice' and front issues specific to women officers. For example, very practical thing that women are good at, we asked you to tell us what you think during the recent review of uniforms. I'm glad we were able to incorporate your views.

Moving forward, I believe that the PWC will continue to drive new initiatives to better support our women officers. For example, science and technology will be a big part of policing in the years to come. And technology will increasingly play a part in our work. How can our women officers be more future-ready? How can you help SPF scale new heights? How can SPF bring out the best in you?

Conclusion

Next Friday is International Women's Day.

To be honest, for me personally, the women who have most inspired me have not been international big-names but people in my personal lives. They include friends and colleagues, and of course my grandmother who is no longer with us and my mother.

As some of you know, my mother was a police officer. That is why I said that I have seen first-hand what it takes to be a women police officer, and the sacrifices that you make. It was my mother's first and only career. At different times in SPF, my mother served in Radio, I've actually visited the underground facility which you have all the switchboard, Traffic, CID and ISD. I even remember her doing shift work when we were still living in a one-room flat in Geylang Serai. She's right here today.

If you have ever wondered where I found the courage to enter public life, look no further than my mother. Her feisty character and resilience must have rubbed off on me. Her willingness to sacrifice her own leisure to help me look after my children when they were young was critical. It gave me the peace of mind to focus on work. As to what moulded my mother's character, I'm inclined to believe the Police and Old Police Academy had a lot to do with it because when she started her police career, she was not yet 20. So, it must have moulded her character.

So to Mum and all the women police officers, thank you for your spark and strength. Every single one of you helped to keep Singaporeans safe, and our country secure. And that has been the case for over 70 years. But your impact was probably much more, beyond anything you might have imagined, and definitely beyond anything the first 10 women in 1949 has set foot to start police training could have imagined.

For all the women in policing today, the future is for us to create together. And the future is bright.

I wish you and all women police officers, past and future, Happy 70!

Women Power: She Inspires

By Denise Luo
(Photo: Public Affairs Department)

A strong woman, to me, possesses confidence and humility. She relishes challenges and carries out her duties with conviction. This woman, who dares to dream and make mistakes, is always at ease with herself, regardless of the situation. I am thrilled to be able to speak to one such woman who has shown great mettle and wits as she outdid herself in a male-dominated field. Being the first female to hold the rank of Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) in the Singapore Police Force (SPF) is an awe-inspiring accomplishment. While one would expect a stern taskmaster, I am charmed by her disarmingly candid and unassuming disposition which shone through as we spoke. In our 80-minute long conversation which was occasionally punctuated by her warm and infectious laughter, DCP Florence Chua opened up on her work experience and perspective on women in policing. It is clear how DCP Chua who currently serves as the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Investigation & Intelligence) concurrent Director of Criminal Investigation Department loves her daily grind, even after being in the Force for close to three decades. Unfazed by hard work and long hours, the former national hockey gold medallist is nothing but heartfelt from the moment we met. She's inspiring and she's unstoppable.

Women Empowerment

To many female police officers, DCP Chua is the epitome of women empowerment in today's context. She has broken perceived norms and conventions in a uniformed organisation that is traditionally dominated by men. In recognition of her outstanding achievement, DCP Chua is one of the eight women who will be officially inducted into the Singapore's Women Hall of Fame come 23 March 2019.

Despite her wealth of experience in police work, it is apparent how DCP Chua is not one who is interested in being placed on a pedestal. She is often quick to give recognition to her predecessors who were pioneers in other fields. "There was Assistant Commissioner of Police (AC) Ng Guat Ting – she was the first female commander. Then, we had Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police (SAC) Zuraidah Binte Abdullah who was Commander of Jurong Division and also the Training Command. And not forgetting

AC Jessica Kwok who served as the Commander of Ang Mo Kio Division," DCP Chua said matter-of-factly.

To DCP Chua, gender is never a limiting factor in the SPF. She strongly emphasised that it is the individual's ability that really matters. "Regardless of your gender, all police officers undergo the same training and draw the same arms. The same resilience is expected of all officers. If male officers are expected to carry a 10 kg load, female officers will lug that weight as well. The requirements are all the same. All of us do Individual Physical Proficiency Test (IPPT). The only plausible difference lies in the scoring of IPPT standards," DCP Chua said firmly.

Truth be told, female officers are climbing the ranks and taking up positions in almost every aspect of policing. While this would not have been imaginable in the early days, it has become increasingly common in recent times. Female officers are fielded in Emergency Response Teams

(ERTs) to respond to terror incidents, notwithstanding the fact that some of them are even serving as team leaders. Even in specialist units such as the Police Coast Guard, female officers are deployed alongside their male counterparts in the elite Special Task Squadron. "This is testament to the limitless opportunities for female officers in the SPF," DCP Chua affirmed.

Whilst opportunities are aplenty and many female officers have gradually assumed leadership positions, DCP Chua reckoned that it remains a challenge to have female leaders in every area as they form the minority in the Force. "Given the current ratio of male to female officers, it is difficult to have females leading in every area. By the time you spread them out, it is too thin," DCP Chua explained squarely.

"It is also a matter of time, space and opportunity. There needs to be a vacancy before any movement. It is never because you are a female and therefore not

competent or suitable. It would also not feel good if you are placed in a leadership position just because you are a female and need to make up the numbers," DCP Chua said in allusion to female representation in management roles.

Ultimately, DCP Chua strongly believes that it is one's personality and character that come through more than his or her gender. Being a male or female does not hinder your career in the SPF. Interestingly, she observes that it takes a certain type of female to join a uniformed organisation. "They tend to be confident of themselves, know what they want and are not afraid of challenges," she said.

Investigation an Inexorable Passion

Being able to continue doing work that challenges her every day, keeps DCP Chua going. Since joining the Force in 1989, her penchant for investigative work has never diminished. Having served five stints at CID – Senior Investigation Officer Anti-Vice Enforcement Unit, Deputy Head Secret Societies Branch, Assistant Director (AD) Investigation Support and Services, AD Operations and Training and a most memorable stint as Deputy Director (DD) from 2012 to 2015 – DCP Chua feels honoured to return to the CID to lead its operations. It is no surprise why DD CID remains her most memorable posting to date. "Back then, Commissioner of Police Hoong Wee Teck was our director. It was an exciting albeit challenging period as many high-profile cases took place then. There was the SMRT strike, Kovan double murder, the Messiah hacking case, Little India riot, Sheng Siong kidnapping case, just to name a few," DCP Chua said as she recalled the rigours of investigation. "Investigation is tough work. It is a team effort... your weakness may be my strength. We should always complement one another and work as a team," she continued.

Shedding more light on the fundamentals of investigation, the veteran police officer who has had an illustrious sporting achievement expounded the parallels between sports and policing. According to the former national hockey captain who has played in six Southeast Asian Games and three Asian Games, it is always important to have the presence of mind and be able to think on one's feet. "From my hockey experience, we learnt to constantly anticipate challenges and think how to outplay our opponents. It is crucial to make quick decisions and give clear instructions to my fellow teammates.

Likewise, in policing, we need to think of different strategies and tactics, be creative and improvise quickly... outwit these bad guys," DCP Chua quipped.

From leading investigations to overseeing intelligence operations, DCP Chua has done it all. As former Director of Police Intelligence Department (PID), DCP Chua has not only integrated intelligence capabilities with frontline investigation but has also proven herself when she took the lead in several high-profile operations to dismantle organised crime groups and syndicates. Under her leadership in PID, DCP Chua also successfully cracked down the largest illegal remote gambling syndicate which then became the first case to be prosecuted under the Organised Crime Act.

Now, as she approaches her tenth month as Deputy Commissioner of Police (Investigation and Intelligence) and Director CID, DCP Chua remains cautious about the trap of complacency and is aware of the need for continuous capability development. As the SPF continues to transform itself vis-à-vis technology, officers need to transform too. "Even if our officers are not tech-savvy, they must be open to changing the way we operate. Be adaptable and flexible," enthused DCP Chua who also highlighted the importance of doing more with less and at a faster pace.

When asked about the future of investigation and intelligence practices, she shared, "We are going paperless with CRIMES 3 – a new investigation management system. With this, we will increase productivity, do better sense-

making with analytics and improve communications with stakeholders such as the courts," she revealed.

Inspiring the Young

An alumna of CHIJ St. Theresa's Convent, DCP Chua stands guided by her school's motto – Simple in Virtue, Steadfast in Duty. Albeit constantly pushing limits, DCP Chua is mindful of her boundaries and has no qualms about taking accountability. As the eldest of four sisters, DCP Chua has always been confident and comfortable in taking the lead. Focussed and singular in her mission, DCP Chua is not one who sits on the sidelines. She leads by example and cares genuinely for her men. "If officers have to work long hours, I will pull the hours with them. I want to be in action with them, not sit around," she exclaimed.

Reflecting on her journey in the SPF, DCP Chua reminded officers to find the purpose and meaning in their work. "When you find yourself looking forward to go to work every day, then that is the job for you. If you wake up and do not feel like going to work, then maybe it is time to leave," she shared.

Finally, DCP Chua hopes to inspire more young officers with her mantra at work. "As new officers, you must always be prepared to learn from your seniors. You must be humble enough to learn from officers who may be junior in ranks to you but have more experience than you. It is all about the right attitude and aptitude."

Photo: DCP Florence Chua



DCP Florence Chua [front row, second from the left] celebrating her team's victory.

Celebrating 70 Years of Women in Policing

By Hadi Hafidz
(Photos: Public Affairs Department)

The Singapore Police Force celebrated 70 years of women in policing at the Home Team Academy on 2 March 2019. The event saw the attendance of close to 750 retired and serving female officers, their family and friends, their male counterparts and female students from the tertiary institutions. Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister for Manpower & Second Minister for Home Affairs who was the guest of honour at the event, paid tribute to past and present generations of female police officers who have and continue to dedicate themselves to keeping Singapore safe and secure.

At the event, guests were treated to performances by the talented all-female SPF Band and Women Police Pipes and Drums, as well as an impressive Police Defence Tactics (PDT) display by 70 female police officers from various vocations. As the celebration came to a close, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Investigation & Intelligence) Florence Chua led our officers in reciting the Police pledge, to renew their commitment to serve the community and safeguard Singapore every day.

An especially heart-warming event, our female officers were reminded of how women in the Force have played a pivotal role in policing in the past and will continue to do so today. Our retired officers also thoroughly enjoyed themselves as they reminisced their experiences in the Force.

Let us look back at some of these picturesque moments!





WALL OF THOUGHTS



Senior Staff Sergeant (Ret.) Teo Ai Choo, Cecilia
 • Served in the SPF from 1971 to 1997

I am happy to see how far women in the Singapore Police Force (SPF) have come. Although the job is tough, there is no limit to what female officers can achieve. I am really proud that we have our first female Deputy Commissioner of Police!



Sergeant (Ret.) Lim Kwee Chu
 • Served in the SPF from 1972 to 1997

It feels really good to see my ex-colleagues at the event as I have not seen them for a long time. It is nice to sit with them and reminisce the eye-opening experiences that we shared when we were serving in the SPF.



Inspector Maybelin See
 • Joined SPF in 2015
 • Emergency Response Team, Bedok Division

When I signed on with the SPF, I wanted a career that not only gives me a sense of fulfilment, but also the option to explore the different aspects of the organisation. Seeing our female officers in their respective uniforms at the event represents the many opportunities that the SPF provides for its female officers.

It has always been my childhood ambition to be a police officer. Each time I don my uniform, I feel a great sense of pride. Seeing how bonded the retirees were during the event also made me realise that the camaraderie instilled in us can go a long way even after retirement.



Staff Sergeant Tutik Humaira
 • Joined SPF in 2013
 • Community Policing Unit, Woodlands Division

WALL OF THOUGHTS



Siti Nurshana

- Currently studying in ITE College West
- Cadet Inspector for Hillgrove Secondary School

I am very impressed with our female officers who did the Police Defence Tactics display at the event. It showed me that when I do join the SPF and train as hard as these female officers, I can be just as capable as them.

As someone who is interested in modern technology, I hope to join the SPF and play a part in its implementation of technologies that could enhance the SPF's operations. It would give me a great sense of fulfilment to be able to do my part in keeping Singapore safe and secure.



Ng Xue Ai, Cheryl

- Currently studying in Singapore Polytechnic
- Cadet Inspector for Riverside Secondary School

Scan the QR codes to watch the videos screened at the event:



Think Again

Celebrating 70 Years of Women in Policing

Scan the QR code to watch the event highlights:



"70 Years of Women in Policing" Event Highlights



The Evolution of Women in Policing

By Rachel Ng
(Photos: Public Affairs Department)

On 1 June 2018, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) welcomed its first female Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) and Director of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), DCP Florence Chua. It was a significant milestone in women policing.

It all started 70 years ago, when the first batch of 10 women were enrolled as members of the Special Constabulary (Active Unit). Newspapers then reported of the new "experimental" unit in the SPF, and debates raged behind both closed doors and in public about the suitability of women for police work. Mary Voon was one of the 10, and when she became the first female Inspector just months after she was recruited in March 1949, she was lauded for her qualifications and capabilities. Her four-month attachment in 1950 to the women police in England was widely publicised and she was greeted by photographers and columnists on her arrival in London. For many years after, Mary Voon continued to be the face of the women police in Singapore till 1974, serving as its Officer Commanding (OC) - a post that no longer exists because female officers are no longer a separate contingent.

Yet, beyond the publicity, the pioneer batches of female officers were making important contributions to the Force and their efforts resonate till this day. After all, the impetus for the recruitment of female officers arose from the very real security needs of post-war Singapore.

Formation of Women Police Constabulary

The Second World War left destruction in its wake and living conditions were poor after the war ended in 1945. This led to an uptick in destitution and crimes such as prostitution and those involving juveniles. Due to the social conventions of the time, female and juvenile offenders were not screened by male officers. Thus, it was a common practice for Police Constables to escort these offenders back to the station to be screened by their wives who were paid \$1 per search. This unsurprisingly had many flaws as suspects could easily discard evidence on the way back to the station. Moreover, the wives of Police Constables were untrained to testify in court.



Mary Voon in London during an attachment with the Metropolitan Police, circa 1950s.

The urgency to recruit female police officers to assist in the screening of suspects only increased with the declaration of the Malayan Emergency in 1948. Communist guerrillas were waging war from the Malayan jungles while their supporters sustained them with resources. These subversive elements could come in all guises and it was imperative to detect and arrest them.

With these considerations in mind, then-Commissioner of Police, R. E. Foulger, inaugurated the women police in 1949 as part of the Special Constabulary (Active Unit). The contribution of the first female officers proved to be so valuable that they began to be absorbed into the regular force in 1950. To further enhance their effectiveness, the initial two months of training was increased to three months in 1949 and six months by the 1960s, which was on par with the training for male officers.



Female officers undergoing marching drills, circa 1950.

Early Duties Assigned to Female Officers

Besides screening and escort duties, female officers were commonly deployed for clerical work and as radio or telephone operators in the Divisional Operation Rooms. Other than the occasional work as plainclothes decoys, women police duties rarely extend to the field in the 1950s. They worked normal office hours, six days a week and a roster would be put up for night duty when necessary.

Despite being confined to mostly clerical work, female officers made their mark where they were deployed and gradually became an indispensable part of the Force. In 1964, 15 female officers were deployed to the Radio Control Room at Pearl's Hill for the first time. At the nerve centre of police operations, these officers answered '999' calls, produced reports, and dispatched patrol cars via radio to respond to crimes – all without the aid of modern automated systems. Female officers proved so effective at the job that the management of the entire Radio Control Room, save for the Duty Officer and Assistant Duty Officer, was eventually handed over to them in 1972. Those who answered '999' calls came to be known as "Triple Niner Girls".



Female officers manning the Radio Control Room round-the-clock in 1980.

Another area where female officers played an active role was in the Traffic Police. They were originally deployed as traffic wardens and later as enforcers. Although the work was limited, it was one of the few early avenues for female officers to be seen in public carrying out police duties. In 1971, female Traffic Police officers broke into another all-male domain when the female mobile squad was formed despite initial concerns that it was unfeminine for women to ride motorbikes.



First batch of female Mobile Squad officers on their Vespas in 1971.

Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission.



First all-female riot task force training in 1980.

Women Police Come to the Fore

Despite the steady progress made by female officers in their designated fields of work, it was not until the 1970s which saw a real expansion of their roles and responsibilities. Once again, change was brought upon by a Force adapting to the challenges of the day.

Since the early 1970s, recruitment levels had been falling and the Force started to face a manpower shortage. To address this situation, recruitment for female officers was stepped up to comprise around 12% of the Force. They were also gradually given a more active role to play.

Female officers rose to the occasion and proved themselves more than capable for the task. Promotion opportunities increased as the Force embarked on a program to open up more middle hierarchy appointments to female officers in 1977. That year saw multiple promotions of female officers to the rank of Inspector and the first female Duty Officer in the Radio Division. In 1979, the designation of OC Women Police ceased to exist as efforts were made to unify the career development schemes for male and female officers.

In the 1980s, female officers also began taking on more field and investigative roles. They were trained for riot control duties in the Women's Task Force, started to be appointed as Investigation Officers (IO) in 1981, and despite initial objections, were put

in charge of running Neighbourhood Police Posts in 1984. Their contributions in CID, especially on anti-vice cases, were also increasingly recognised. In 1982, Assistant Superintendent of Police Mandy Goh became the first head of the Anti-Vice Enforcement Unit. She was then the highest ranking female officer in the Force and had worked her way up from Police Constable since 1952.

Such an expansion in roles necessitated the development of a new generation of female Police leaders. Thus, in 1984, the recruitment of female graduates as direct-entry Inspectors began, paving the way for females to enter the senior ranks of the Force.

Since then, female officers have continued to achieve many firsts, and many from the core group of leaders who entered in the 1980s and early 1990s continue to serve with distinction today. From leading Land Divisions and HQ departments, to patrol and IO duties, female officers have proven their capabilities wherever deployed. Today, there are around 1,800 policewomen in active service, which makes up approximately 19% of the Force and can be found in almost every unit. Thanks to those who dared to be the first, it is no longer an uncommon sight for females to work alongside their male counterparts towards the common goal of keeping Singapore safe and secure.



**SINGAPORE
POLICE FORCE**
SAFEGUARDING EVERY DAY



Voices of our Women in Blue

By Hadi Hafidz
(Photos: Public Affairs Department)

The 70 years of Women in Policing milestone not only celebrates the progress that the Singapore Police Force (SPF) has made in ensuring more involvement of our female officers, it is also a celebration for all our female officers who have worked as hard as their male counterparts to safeguard Singapore every day. Police Life caught up with six of our female officers who were also the organisers of this year's celebrations, to share about their experiences and motivations to don the blue.



Assistant Commissioner of Police, Pauline Yee, Director Community Partnership Department

- 28 years in service
- Mother of three kids
- Joined the SPF in search of a purpose-driven career, over of a profit-driven one
- Chairman, Organising Committee of Celebratory Dinner

What is the best part of being a police officer?

The best part of the job is that you are constantly learning about different aspects of the organisation as I was given the opportunity to be posted to a new unit every few years. Personally, I have served in 11 units since joining the SPF over 20 years ago.

But I must say that while this can be exciting, it comes with many challenges - having to manage a steep learning curve and adapt quickly whenever I move to a new post. I am thankful for the colleagues and supervisors who have been encouraging and supporting me throughout my career.

What is the hardest part of being a police officer?

As a parent, I would say that the toughest part of being a police officer is the lack of time with my children when I am involved in major operations, projects and large-scale events. For example, the Trump-Kim Summit required officers to be deployed for long hours and leave plans had to be cancelled as we needed to pull all our resources together to ensure the success of this historic event. Despite these sacrifices, the sense of fulfilment and pride is high at the end of it when we see how our hard work has helped to present Singapore as a safe and secure nation to the rest of the world.

What is your most unforgettable moment in your policing career?

The moment occurred when I was a Commanding Officer (CO) of a Neighbourhood Police Centre (NPC). While my

officers were on duty, a truck crashed into one of the patrol cars, killing both officers in the car. Although we were all grieving the loss, I was extremely proud of my NPC officers as they responded in such a united and resilient manner. Teammates of the officers who passed away continued to carry out their duties professionally and stayed focussed on the mission even though I know they were deeply affected

by the loss of their teammates. At the same time, officers from the other teams also stepped in to support them.

What advice would you give to aspiring officers?

Never lose the passion. It is important that we remember why we chose this profession as there will be challenges to overcome and it will give us the strength to carry on.



Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Police, Serene Chiu, Deputy Director Public Affairs Department

- 20 years in service
- Growing up watching countless police dramas and was a former National Police Cadet Corp (NPCC) in school
- Inspired to serve and see that justice is done
- Chairman, Organising Committee of Celebratory Event

What is the best part of being a police officer?

Doing good, as I believe that good triumphs over evil. Policing is challenging and offers a compelling purpose. It is a job that provides me with great satisfaction.

What is the hardest part of being a police officer?

It has to be dealing with death, whether it is informing the next of kin of the death of their loved ones or learning that

an officer passed on in the line of duty. I remember when I was an investigation officer, I attended to a case of a naked man found dead in a hotel room. The man had checked into the room with a female companion who was not his wife. The hardest part was having to break the news to his wife.

What is your most unforgettable moment in your policing career?

The security deployment at the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew's lying-in-state at Parliament House was one I would never forget. The security plans had to be changed and implemented very quickly on the ground when queues of people waiting to pay their last respects swelled. As a result, the hours were extended to round the clock daily and many more officers were deployed at short notice to provide the additional security coverage over the four-day period. No one complained about the long hours as we were solely focussed on executing our mission.

At the end of our deployment, my officers and I were given the opportunity to pay our last respects to the late Mr Lee and I saw some officers with teary eyes. That moment meant a lot to me as we stood by our policing duties faithfully throughout the four-day deployment before we finally got to be like any other civilian paying our respects to a great leader.

What advice would you give to aspiring officers?

Never stop learning, seize the opportunities that come along your way and do your best. Every assignment is a chance to build your credibility and dependability, qualities that go beyond competency and experience. Through building such reputation for yourself, opportunities will then follow naturally. It is also important to build your network of support at work and outside work. After all, policing is a demanding career and it helps to have someone to turn to for support when needed. Most importantly, love what you do and you will achieve personal fulfilment.

Photo: Woodlands East Neighbourhood Police Centre



Superintendent of Police Phoa Hui Lin, Commanding Officer, Woodlands East Neighbourhood Police Centre

- 12 years in service
- Competed in netball tournament since young and aspired to be a national netball coach
- Joined the SPF with the desire to contribute meaningfully to the community
- Programme Subcommittee Officer-in-Charge, Celebratory Event

Tell us about your work.

I am currently the CO of Woodlands East NPC. As a CO, I lead my NPC in our fight against crime. To do that effectively, I strongly believe in cultivating strong bonds

amongst officers and creating a family-culture workplace. Having such a culture allows us to work better together; there is a saying in my NPC: *"WE are family. WE are Woodlands East"*.

Elaborate on your toughest moments while serving with the SPF.

Having experienced working through 24-hour shift as an Investigation Officer and 12-hour shift as a Team Leader, I thought I was ready for my staff posting in Operations Department. Little did I know that it would be by far the toughest moments of my career as the learning curve was extremely steep!

One project which stood out was the implementation of the Community Policing System (COPS). From presenting at many high-level meetings, to drafting parliamentary and media replies, and to coordinating with multiple stakeholders, I have learnt so much about my strengths and weaknesses through the complexities involved and the long hours working on the project.

What does work-life balance mean to you?

Our heavy workload makes it challenging to achieve a complete work-life balance. I am not used to the phone calls in the middle of the night or late night operations, and never will be. That said, I truly enjoy what I am doing and believe in spending time outside work. As such, whenever the opportunity presents itself, I will simply chill-out with great company over awesome food and drinks!



Inspector Jolene Kua, Staff Officer, Criminal Investigation Department

- 4 years in service
- Does archery and plays computer games
- Inspired to sign on with the SPF after experiencing firsthand how the SPF officers would always find a way to pull through difficult times together during her internship
- Publicity Subcommittee member, Celebratory Event

Tell us about your work.

I am a staff officer who drives transformation initiative for the investigation fraternity to be implemented in

the near and long-term future. This responsibility allows me to dream big and still be in touch with the day-to-day operations. Even though I may not be able to see the results immediately, this is a meaningful way to bring about positive change in this organisation.

Elaborate on one of your toughest moments while serving with the SPF.

I remember the toughest day in my investigation life – 23 April 2017. It was a Sunday morning, and those tend to be quite peaceful. However, first thing in the morning, we received an electronic police report stating that they had seen a video online of a middle-aged couple pushing an old man at a Toa Payoh hawker centre. We immediately began tracing the parties involved, but little did I expect that the incident would gain so much attention.

During the same tour, there were several other urgent and sensitive cases to follow up concurrently. Despite not being on duty, my remaining team members returned to follow up on the cases, and fight this battle together. There was a moment that after 30 odd hours of not sleeping, I told my Deputy Head Investigation, *"Ma'am, I am very tired. Can I sleep first?"* After an hour of sleep, we continued with the investigations. When we finally cracked all the cases, there was a real sense of relief. Whenever things get tough, I would always remind myself that it cannot be as bad as that day.

What does work-life balance mean to you?

A supervisor once told me that there is no such thing as work-life balance. There is only work-life effectiveness. I think it depends on your stage of life; I am at that stage where I have that bandwidth to do more things, and to try

new experiences. I am not obsessed with reaching home by a certain time every day, but I make the effort to spend time with people I care about. It does not have to be often, but they need to know you value them.



Deputy Superintendent of Police Brenda Ong, Commanding Officer Bukit Panjang Neighbourhood Police Centre

- 6 years in service
- Enjoys cookouts at her friend's house
- Inspired to sign on with the SPF by her dad, a retired police officer
- Publicity Subcommittee Officer-in-Charge, Celebratory Dinner

Tell us about your work.

As a CO, other than leading my NPC in our fight against crime, I take pride in ensuring my officers' development. It gives me a sense of satisfaction seeing how they become stronger and better in their work.

Elaborate on one of your toughest moments while serving with the SPF.

I remember being tasked, as part of a team, to set up a new unit that focuses on charting the SPF's future plans. Part of my job scope was to create a Technology Masterplan to help with the SPF's technological needs. With minimal experience in technology systems, I had to conduct a lot of research to attain the necessary knowledge before eventually coming up with a suitable plan.

What does work-life balance mean to you?

To me it is necessary to make time for your loved ones as they will always be there for you. For example, my father is always ready with a *"Back in my time, things were worse..."* story whenever things get tough – to remind me that things are not that bad. I am also fortunate to have strong and supportive good friends in my division. Sometimes, after a bad day at work, it really helps to have a meal together and have listening ears.



Station Inspector Saleha Binte Sani, Deputy Officer-in-Charge Fatal Accident Investigation Team, Traffic Police

- 12 years in service
- Once rode 14 hours from Singapore to Hatyai, Thailand
- Inspired to sign on by her NPCC days in school
- Programme Subcommittee member, Celebratory Dinner

Tell us about your work.

I am currently the Deputy Officer-in-Charge of the Fatal Accident Investigation team. My duty is to manage fatal accident scenes, investigate the cases and deliver the results to the next of kin. I feel a strong sense of duty to bring closure to the grieving family members.

Elaborate on one of your toughest moments while serving with the SPF.

The toughest moment was losing our colleague who met with an accident while on duty. It was a heartbreaking moment and we really needed each other's support and motivation to carry on with our duties as guardians of the road.

What does work-life balance mean to you?

Having that balance means a lot to me. As such, I always keep my focus at work to ensure that I complete my tasks promptly before spending quality time with my family and friends. Whenever possible, I would spend a large part of my free time travelling with them and learning about different countries' cultures.

The Singapore Police Force's First Certified International Post Blast Investigator

By Syam Roslan
(Photos: Public Affairs Department)

Rapid changes in the Singapore Police Force's (SPF) operating environment have given rise to new operational challenges. To address these challenges effectively, the SPF has been constantly reviewing and refining its workforce strategies and resources to ensure the continued safety and security of Singapore. One of the outcomes from the reviews was the setting up of the Career Transition Office (CTO) in 2016. The CTO aims to provide timely and effective career transition support and services to help retiring and retired officers to remain valued and respected asset to the nation.

Many retiring officers have benefitted through this scheme, and one such officer is Superintendent of Police (Supt) Geraldine Tan, Commanding Officer of the Technical Command from the Police Coast Guard (PCG). With the help of the CTO, Supt Tan was able to pursue the Certified International Post Blast Investigator (CIPBI) Programme in Toronto, Canada and became the first ever CIPBI from the SPF! Police Life caught up with Supt Tan to find out what motivated her to pursue this journey.



Photo: Supt Geraldine Tan

With over 29 years of service in the Force, Supt Tan is a 50-year-old veteran policewoman who has served in various units, including in the Public Affairs Department, Training Command and Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Prior to her current stint in PCG, she was the Assistant Director (AD) of the Bomb and Explosive Investigation Division (BEID) in CID. It was during this stint that sparked her interest to pursue this field of expertise as Supt Tan firmly believes that such skillsets will help her to remain relevant in this current high security tension climate, and even beyond retirement.

As a member of the International Association of Bomb Technicians & Investigators (IABTI), an established non-profit association known to the bomb technicians and post-blast investigators worldwide, Supt Tan learned about the CIPBI course through their website and interactions with fellow IABTI members. Armed with strong determination and family support, Supt Tan then approached the CTO on the possibility of pursuing the course, where she needed to attend a five-day in-service programme and sit for a certification examination in Toronto, Canada. With the support of the CTO, Supt Tan obtained full sponsorship for the training fees and even time off to attend the training.

"CTO has been very supportive from the start. Without the CTO, I would have to pay the training fees out of my pocket and consume my leave to attend the training," said Supt Tan.

While she was in Canada for the training, Supt Tan recounted two challenges. "I had to show proof to the Examination Board that I have

the required practical knowledge. Fortunately, my experience and learning in BEID for over four years, including numerous post-blast investigation exercises conducted both locally and overseas, prepared me well for the big day," shared Supt Tan.

Other than the skills-related challenges, Supt Tan had to also overcome the emotional challenge of being away from her family. "Though it was not a long period, I did miss my family very much. However, such sacrifices were inevitable as this was something that I was determined to achieve. So I chose to focus on the positive side of things, such as the opportunity to meet new people and learn new stuff from the practitioners. I also got the chance to tour Toronto, which I have never visited before," Supt Tan exclaimed.

The years of post-blast training and exercises with BEID and self-studying to build knowledge in explosives and ordinance eventually paid off. Supt Tan is now part of an exclusive group of about 700 CIPBI post-blast investigation experts worldwide. Being the first ever CIPBI from the SPF,

Supt Tan could not contain her pride and joy. "I am happy that I made it. This certification is an assurance that our post-blast investigation training is on the right track to international recognition," Supt Tan mentioned.

With this certification, Supt Tan hopes that she can continue to contribute to the SPF's post-blast investigation work and impart the skillset to like-minded officers who are interested to pursue this field of expertise and certification. "Now that I am a CIPBI, I know that my work is recognised by like-minded individuals internationally and it certainly helped to boost my confidence, an important trait to have in this field," Supt Tan said. When asked what are the essential traits of a CIPBI, Supt Tan highlighted that a good post-blast investigator must be observant, meticulous, systematic and open-minded.

As the interview came to a close, Supt Tan mentioned that she would continue to deepen her expertise by picking up more practitioner skills outside of the post-blast investigation scene to stay relevant and employable beyond the Force. When asked for any advice or learning lessons she wishes to impart to fellow officers, she said, "When I was in Toronto, a senior IABTI official gave me a medallion that says 'Long May Your Big Jib Draw', a famous nautical slang for 'May your next journey be swift and easy'. Through this saying, I learnt that it is important to never stop learning, no matter how old you are. As long as you continue to develop your skills, you will be in a strong position to prepare yourself for whatever life puts you through."



Photo: Supt Geraldine Tan

Sportswomen in the Force

By Hadi Hafidz

1950s marked the turning point for Singaporean female athletes when we had our first female Olympian, Tang Pui Wah, who participated in the 1952 Summer Olympics. Fast forward to more than 60 years later, female athletes now make up a large group of those involved in competitions such as the 2017 Southeast Asian (SEA) Games. Amongst them are our very own Singapore Police Force (SPF) female officers who have been balancing their work commitments to keep our nation safe and secure while contributing to Singapore's sporting achievements.

In celebration of 70 years of women in policing, Police Life caught up with our National Sportswomen, Senior Staff Sergeant (SSSgt) Yushmanwati and Sergeant (Sgt) Nur Atiqah to find out more about their sporting journeys.

Learning the Ropes



Photo: SSSgt Yushmanwati

SSSgt Yushmanwati (first from the back), the anchor of her tug of war team.

SSSgt Yushmanwati knew little about tug of war prior to her signing on with the SPF 16 years ago. Never would she have expected that a brief attempt at the sport would eventually lead her to the world championships. She was first exposed to the fundamentals of tug of war during a try-out session for the SPF's inter-division competition back when she was in Ang Mo Kio Division. Although it was immensely tiring and painful pulling the rope, SSSgt Yushmanwati thoroughly enjoyed herself.

"Tug of war is not only a game of strength but it is also a tactical battle which requires strong teamwork to execute the plan. We could be either immediately pulling backwards together at the start of the match or collectively digging our heels and hold on while waiting for our opponent to lose their strength before we

begin pulling. The camaraderie which we forged is the reason why I love the sport," explained SSSgt Yushmanwati, who currently serves in Woodlands Division.

The positive experience during the try-out session motivated her to train hard and her efforts paid off as she was eventually selected to be part of the team. After pulling their hearts out in the gruelling day's competition, SSSgt Yushmanwati and her team ultimately won the gold medal!

"At that point of time of winning the gold medal, I did not foresee a greater goal just yet. I was just extremely happy that my hard work paid off," shared SSSgt Yushmanwati.

Pulling Out All Stops

SSSgt Yushmanwati continued training with the team and won several more gold medals from the following years' inter-division competitions. With every gold medal won, SSSgt Yushmanwati became more serious about competing in larger-scale competitions. In 2014, SSSgt Yushmanwati, along with other pullers from Ang Mo Kio Division, attended try-out sessions for the Tug of War Association Singapore, a Tug of War Club formed in 2012 to compete in the Tug of War International Federation (TWIF) Indoor World Championships.

After sacrificing her day off, training extremely hard, she finally received the selection results. *"When I was told that I had been chosen to be part of the Tug of War Association of Singapore, I was over the moon as I knew then that I would be able to compete against pullers from all over the world,"* exclaimed SSSgt Yushmanwati. Although her team did not emerge victorious in the competition, SSSgt Yushmanwati was glad to have gained exposure at the international level.

In 2018, upon hearing that there were plans to form a national tug of war team to enter the upcoming TWIF Indoor World

Championships, SSSgt Yushmanwati did not hesitate to go for the tryouts. Together with a team of experienced Singaporean pullers, SSSgt Yushmanwati was not only selected to be part of the team, but her dedication, ability and leadership skills led to her being chosen as the team captain.

For months leading up to the competition, SSSgt Yushmanwati's off days were dedicated to intense physical exercises such as pulling a tyre attached to a rope for 30 metres, with a heavier teammate seated on it. However, nothing was as challenging as the dieting process.

"I remember that during our journey to Nanjing, we were only allowed to take a few sips of water as we needed to adhere to the weight limit which was taken only the day before the competition," shared SSSgt Yushmanwati.

After all that was said and done, the national team finished the competition in 7th position. SSSgt Yushmanwati and her team were proud of the result, considering that it was the national team's first international competition together.

Passion Ignited with a Goal



Photo: SportSG

Sgt Atiqah (at the foreground in red attire) attempting to regain possession of the ball from her opponent.

Sgt Atiqah was nine years old when her teachers first encouraged her to take up a sport as her Co-Curricular Activities (CCA) in school after seeing her win the gold medal during her school sports day 100-metre race. After trying out several sports, Sgt Atiqah realised that her interest was in hockey after a practice match amongst newcomers.

"I remember freeing myself from the opposition's defence and having the ball passed to me. I looked up and noticed that it was only the goalkeeper that was standing between me and the goalpost. I gave my hardest swing and scored a goal! I will never forget the joy when the ball hit the net. Since then, I constantly trained with the school team to improve my skills," shared Sgt Atiqah who currently serves in Woodlands Division.

Her hard work paid off when she was selected to not only represent her school, but also the youth national team. As a result of that, she gained experience and improved her abilities from playing in various competitions with these teams, which ultimately landed her the opportunity to be part of the national team. However, just when all seemed to go according to plan, her progress came to a sudden halt in 2016 when a ligament injury suffered during training forced her to withdraw from the World Series League 1, a competition that was merely two weeks away.

Giving All They Had

Nonetheless, Sgt Atiqah kept her chin up. Upon recovery from her injury, she trained extremely hard and was eventually included in the national team that participated in the 29th SEA Games in 2017. The experience, however, left her with bittersweet memories. Having won their first match in the group stages, hopes were high and after subsequent matches, the team only needed a draw in the last group match to qualify for the finals. However, the team lost the match and only managed to secure a spot for the bronze medal match instead.

"After dusting off our disappointments, we shifted our focus towards the bronze medal match. During the match, we constantly pressured our opponents when they had the ball and when we regained possession, we attacked their defence with all we had. Although completely gassed out by the end of the match, we threw our hands up in celebration knowing that we thoroughly deserved our win," exclaimed Sgt Atiqah.

With the Hockey Series Finals looming close, Sgt Atiqah shares that she mostly trains on her off-days to prepare for it. Although balancing work and training is extremely challenging, she explains that the support and understanding from her family, colleagues and the national team, is something that keeps her going in spite of her hectic schedule.

Finally, Sgt Atiqah gave her advice for those who are interested in taking up the sport. *"No sport is easy to learn and no one is born with athletic skills or knowledge. It comes back to the person's desire and passion, especially when you have to manage both work and training. The beginning is always the hardest. At the end of the day, when you look back – you will realise that it was all worth it."*

We would like to wish our national athletes all the best for their future competitions, and thank them for their hard work with the SPF to help keep Singapore safe and secure!

Did You Know?

The SPF is also home to several former national athletes. Let's take a look at some of them and their achievements!



Inspector Stella Tay Xinyin, former dragon boater

- Police Security Command officer
- Competed in SEA Games 2011

"We exert an enormous amount of force every time we push the paddle into the water. It is physically exhausting, but doing so actually builds our resilience which helps me to endure the physical and mental rigours of my policing duties."



Sergeant Noelle Lee, former track runner

- Community Policing Unit officer, Bukit Merah West Neighbourhood Police Centre
- Bronze Medallist for 4x400m at Taiwan Open Athletics Championship 2015

"As track runners, we constantly aim to improve our timings. However, we are only able to achieve that by staying completely focussed during training. I think that developing such focus helps me in carrying out my policing duties effectively."



Inspector Azhmeera Shasha Jan, former footballer

- Investigations officer, Jurong Division
- Competed in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations University Games in 2012

"Soccer is more than just a sport. It builds character and, more importantly, has made me a better team player which is critical for our policing work."

Hasta La Vista

— Spreading A Sparkle of Joy!

By Irwan Shah
(Photos: Hasta La Vista)

25 April 2015 was a day of destruction and sorrow for the people of Nepal after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake destroyed their homes. Humanitarian organisations from around the world joined forces to alleviate the suffering of the Nepalese people, including 'Hasta La Vista', a private volunteer group formed by the Singapore Police Force (SPF) officers from Ang Mo Kio Division. Formed on 15 July 2015, 'Hasta La Vista' aims to reach out to the less fortunate and spread joy to them. *Police Life* caught up with the members of 'Hasta La Vista' to learn more about the group's early days and their volunteering efforts.



SSSgt Logeswari (second from the right), SSgt Nagaraj (front row, kneeling, second from the left) and Insp Omparagas (last row, third from the left, wearing a cap) striking a pose with the volunteers from 'Hasta La Vista'.

The Early Days

Senior Staff Sergeant (SSSgt) Logeswari Balakrishnan had only one thought in her mind when the news of the quake reached Singapore – to help the Nepalese people. Together with her cousin, Inspector (Insp) Omparagas S/O Superyah, they managed to gather eight officers from Ang Mo Kio Division to join their cause. Donations amounting to about \$8,000 were also collected from their families, friends and colleagues.

Having engaged the help of Mr Madhav, a local contact based in Nepal, who frequently goes trekking with the SPF officers during their overseas leadership programme, the small team of volunteers jetted off for their first mission to a village near Kathmandu. There, they helped a village by purchasing daily necessities, such as groceries and clothing for over 120 families who were affected by the calamity. During that period, they also supported an orphanage by providing them with similar assistance to the village and subsequently becoming its primary benefactor.



Formation of 'Hasta La Vista'

Upon their return from Nepal, the group of volunteers decided to continue to expand their volunteering efforts to orphanages and nursing homes, both in Singapore and overseas. To do so, they had to formalise their group and increase their manpower to better cater to their missions. The group then named themselves 'Hasta La Vista', which means 'See You Soon' in Spanish as it relates well to their mission – to reach out to the less fortunate with the best of their abilities and make them smile again. Along with their new name, the group also set up an official fund to manage the group's accounts.

Through word of mouth and social media platforms, the group recruited more like-minded individuals to join them. The small group of eight quickly expanded into its current strength of 45 members, with most of them being current and former police officers from Ang Mo Kio Division.

"A lot of these officers wanted to volunteer for a cause but were unable to find the right avenues to do so. When we shared with them about the work that we do, they were keen to support our cause and decided to join us," said SSSgt Logeswari.

Apart from the SPF officers, the group also managed to recruit "external" volunteers and established new partnerships with individuals from Singapore and its neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Myanmar. One of their significant partnerships is with the National University of Singapore (NUS). NUS donated a total of 16 bicycles for the group's mission to an orphanage in Myanmar in 2018 and six more bicycles for their mission to Nepal in 2019.

Overcoming Challenges

Setting up their volunteer group was only the beginning. The next step of the challenge was to sustain their volunteering operations and that would mean having a sustainable operating fund. To do so, the volunteers would contribute a certain amount of money every month to their operating fund.

"Since everyone's money is in the fund, we always discuss how best to use it. Once we have decided to use the money to purchase something, we will send a copy of the receipt and the exact details of our purchases, such as the items bought and their quantity, to our Whatsapp group. By doing so, we assure our members that the money from the fund is appropriately used," elaborated SSSgt Logeswari on the importance of transparency and trust which is critical to maintain the integrity of the group.

The group must always be prepared to overcome unexpected challenges that may arise while carrying out their missions. Such was the case when they visited their adopted orphanage in Nepal for the second time. The volunteers received news that the orphanage was relocated to a new home. When the volunteers arrived,



they discovered that the condition of the place was less than conducive. The house was nothing more than a simple hut with a thatched roof. Its walls were made of thin zinc with barely any furniture inside. After assessing the gravity of the situation, the volunteers decided that they need to improve the living condition for the children. They proceeded to buy new furniture such as a dining table, new beds and thick carpets, in addition to their usual grocery contributions.

Helping the Region

'Hasta La Vista' has lent a helping hand to many orphanages and nursing homes across the region. Their most recent volunteering effort in Nepal brought them back to their adopted orphanage where the members rekindled their old friendships with the children (some of them are already in their early teens) by taking them on a hiking trip. It was a memorable experience for everyone, and especially for Staff Sergeant (SSgt) Nagaraj S/O Balasubramaniam who was in Nepal for the first time with 'Hasta La Vista'.

"As we were travelling back from Nagarkot Hill, one of the children started singing a Nepalese folk song and before we knew it, the bus was filled with their voices. This was perhaps one of the best melodies I have ever heard. It was such a simple tune and yet so touching that it goes deep into your heart," recalled SSgt Nagaraj.

For the members of 'Hasta La Vista', volunteerism is more than simply helping the needy. They believe that it is their way of contributing back to society. *"It gives me a sense of fulfilment whenever I am able to help someone. I think that is the true meaning of happiness. It brings me joy seeing everybody come together to give their all for the less fortunate,"* said SSSgt Logeswari.

As they plan for another trip to Nepal next year, the members of 'Hasta La Vista' hope to organise more activities for the children from the orphanage. It is especially heart-warming to see how the group rallied both police officers and members of the public to join them in their cause, bringing a sparkle of joy to those in need, wherever they are.



The Bonding Force

By Irwan Shah
(Photos: Public Affairs Department)

“Family is not an important thing. It’s everything.”
— Michael.J.Fox

Working as a police officer can be an admirable and rewarding career. However, most, if not all, would agree that being a police officer also involves lots of sacrifices. Ask any officer to name one distinct pillar of strength that keeps them going, family would likely be the most common answer. More than just a pillar of strength, family members are also a source of inspiration for many. In this issue, we give you a peek into the lives of two duos – a mother and daughter as well as a pair of sisters – who are intimately ‘bonded’ by the Force.

Meet Senior Staff Sergeant (SSSgt) See Toh Sok Yin and her daughter, Inspector (Insp) Amanda Lee Wei Ann. The mother-daughter duo has a combined service of more than 38 years in the Singapore Police Force (SPF), going back all the way to 1981 when SSSgt See Toh first joined the Force.

What motivated you to become a police officer?

Insp Lee: I grew up listening to stories from my mother about her life in the SPF and how it had shaped her as a person. Even though she could not reveal details of her work, the stories that she shared were enough to spark the curiosity in me. Apart from my curiosity, I was also inspired by some of the stories that revealed the kind of dedication and sacrifices that our police officers go through to keep our homes safe. I wanted to experience and see the world through a police officer’s lens and experience their action-packed lives. I wanted to do my part to keep our homes safe too.

What was your reaction when your daughter expressed her interest to follow your footsteps?

SSSgt See Toh: I was grinning from ear to ear when she told me that she wanted to join the SPF. Though policing work has become increasingly challenging over the years, I firmly believe that this is a good career for her to pick up useful life skills, experience life and understand how fortunate she is to be able to enjoy the peace and harmony that we have now.

How was it like growing up in a family of police officers?

Insp Lee: My parents were strict with my upbringing. I was often banned from doing certain things or going to certain places. Initially, I could not understand why, but after joining the Force, I realised that my parents only wanted me to be safe and not be led astray. Their strict upbringing also shaped me to become a disciplined individual and that really helped me ease in to my training regime and my job.

What was one of the memorable moments you have together in the SPF?

Insp Lee: The most memorable moment was when we took a family photo together at my Passing Out Parade. I felt a huge sense of satisfaction in knowing that I am officially one of them – a family of police officers.

What are some of your challenges working together in the same organisation?

Insp Lee: As both of us are from different departments, we need to be conscious about the things we talk about for operational secrecy reasons.

SSSgt See Toh: Due to our hectic work schedules, it is sometimes hard to even meet each other at home for a chat. So whenever there is an opportunity, we will call each other to catch up.

How do you feel about having each other in the same organisation?

Insp Lee: I am fine with working in the same organisation as my mother but maybe not the same department. Sometimes, when my mother’s colleagues are transferred to my department, they will give me a shout out and say, “Hi. I know your mum.” I think it is cool because it eases the introduction process and makes it easier for us to work together.

SSSgt See Toh: Now that Amanda is in the Force, I feel that I can better share and relate with her my experiences and challenges as a female police officer. We are each other’s mental support. I would also not be overly worried if she were to come home late from work since I understand her work commitments.



Meet Station Inspector (SI) Joanna Rosman Ismail and her younger sister, SSSgt Maria Rosman Ismail from the Police Coast Guard (PCG). The two sisters joined the SPF back in 2002 and 2004 respectively, but a twist of fate recently brought them together under one roof at PCG’s Brani base. Currently, SSSgt Maria is a Crew Commander who is temporarily posted to PCG’s National Servicemen Branch, while SI Joanna is an Assisting Logistics Officer at PCG’s Logistics and Administration Branch.

What motivated you to become a police officer?

SSSgt Maria: When my elder sister joined the SPF in 2002, I was still in school. Whenever we had family dinners, she would share stories of her training experience. I found it very interesting to listen to her experience and challenges going through the different courses, such as the Steersman Course, to be part of the PCG. As I learnt more and more about the SPF, it made me more eager to become a police officer as I wanted to be part of all the action! In 2004, I took the plunge and began my journey with the Force.

What is it like working together in the same organisation?

SSSgt Maria: We always have each other to confide in and my sister will give her advice whenever I face certain issues or problems. It gives me an unknown force of strength and confidence to keep myself at ease when doing my job. The best part is, we get to attend events such as Dinner & Dance (D&D) events together.

SI Joanna: Being in the same unit puts us at the same wavelength and helps us to keep up with each other’s ‘frequency’-conversation for that matters. To add on to what my sister said about D&D, we even engaged a hairstylist to come over to our house to style our hair because the theme was glamour night. We never fail to dress up at almost every D&D event. There was once that we clinched the 2nd (SSSgt Maria) and 3rd place (SI Joanna) for the “Best Dressed” category. My sister is the perfect partner for such events.

How do you find quality time with each other outside of work?

SSSgt Maria: One of the biggest challenges that we face is finding quality time for each other. Being a frontline crew commander

requires me to work on shift hours and it can be difficult for me to spend time with my sister since she works office hours. For instance, during public holidays, my sister usually has the day off while my days off are dependent on my scheduled roster for the week. Thus, to spend some quality family time together, we usually try to plan in advance.

How has your bond evolved during your time in the SPF?

SSSgt Maria: We come from a very close-knit family, so we have always been very close. After joining the SPF, I found that my sister and I have more common topics to talk about. We can better relate to each other as we share about our day at work or the kind of cases we face. Working in the same organisation brought us closer!

SI Joanna: My sister is very active in the arts while I am keen in outdoor activities. When she shared with me about her theatre performances at Kallang Theatre, I just could not relate. The same goes for me. When I told her about my hiking experience at Mount Ophir, I knew she could not fully appreciate the experience that I was sharing even though she listened. Now, we have a better connection as we share similar experiences and stories from our work. Having said that, siblings will always be siblings and we will still have moments of sibling rivalry between us.

Tell us about your proudest memory of one another at work?

SSSgt Maria: My sister is actively involved in the Police Sports Association sporting competitions. She excelled in both bowling and dragon boating. When her team clinched first place during the SPF inter-unit dragon boat and bowling competitions, I felt a sense of pride and joy when people pointed out and said, “Hey, that is your sister!”

SI Joanna: I felt really proud of my sister when she was featured in an article by our local Malay newspaper, Berita Harian, a few years ago. The article was about women who are from uniformed organisations and their experiences. In addition to that, my sister also used to be the ‘poster girl’ of the PCG back then and you could see her face on the PCG posters. People would come to ask me if the girl is my sister and I would be secretly proud of my sister while responding “Yes, that is my sister.”

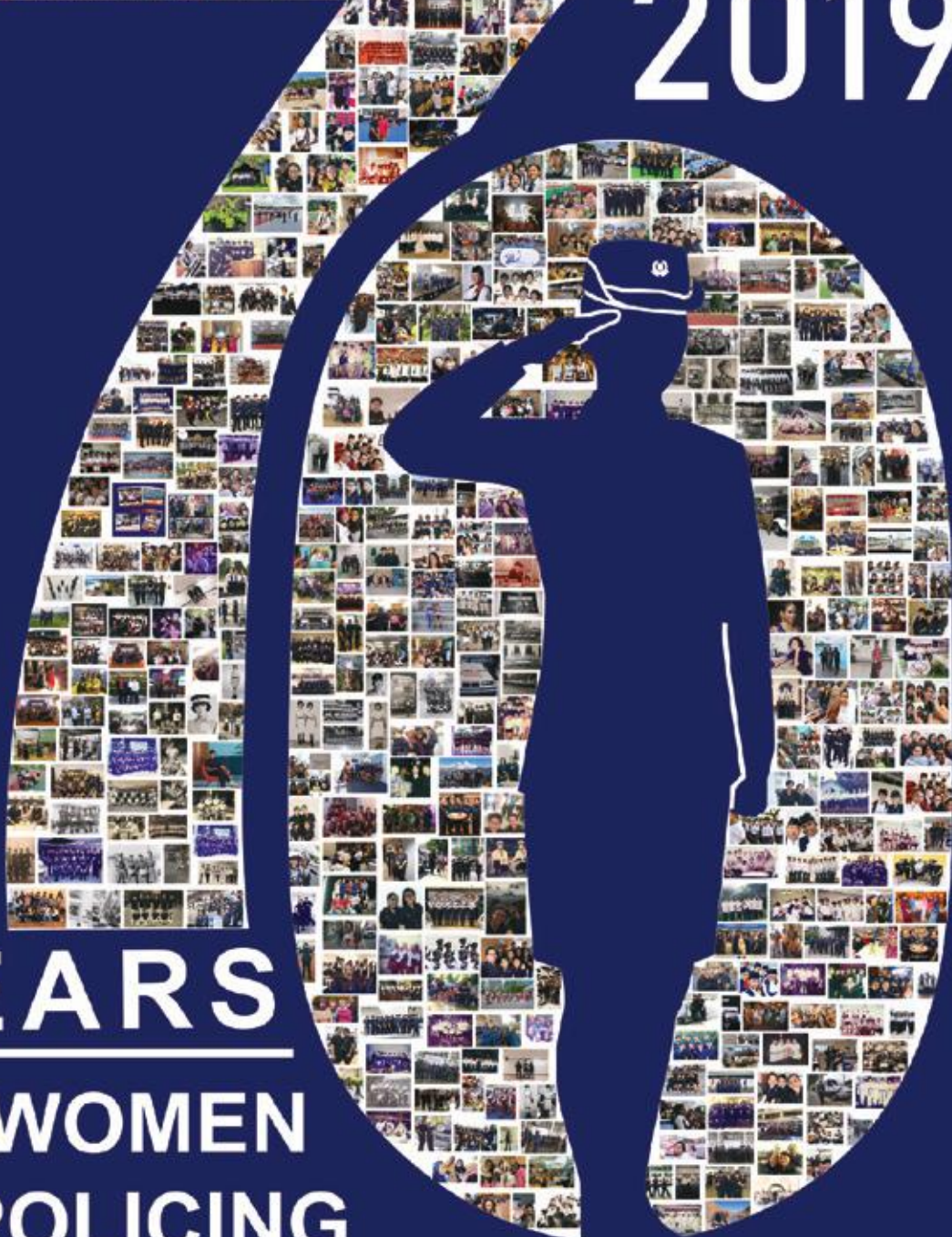


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