

SETIA DAN BAKTI

50 Stories of Loyalty and Service

POLICE PIONEERS SPECIAL EDITION



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“Indeed, the harmony, order and stability that we all enjoy today would not be possible without our Pioneers’ contributions and sacrifices. You did your duty without fear or favour. You helped to make Singapore a safe and secure home for all of us. ”

Mr Teo Chee Hean

*Deputy Prime Minister, Co-ordinating Minister
for National Security and Minister for Home Affairs
Tribute to Home Team Pioneers, 28 May 2015*

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Foreword

This special edition of *Police Life* is dedicated to our pioneer officers – the pillars on which the modern day Singapore Police Force is built.

As Singapore celebrates her 50th birthday, it is an apt moment for us to look back and take stock of our rich history and heritage. Such an opportune moment also allows our pioneer officers to recollect and reminisce the times when they donned their Police uniforms. At the same time, it allows the younger generation to learn more about how our pioneer officers had painstakingly built a safe and secure Singapore for everyone.

‘*Setia dan Bakti*’ was published to honour the contributions of our pioneering officers who laid a solid foundation for today’s Singapore Police Force. The title, which means loyalty and service in Bahasa Melayu, was the motto of the police in post-colonial Singapore. It remains a clarion call to all men- and women-in-blue to their sacred duty of safeguarding our home, and also a fitting tribute to the critical role our pioneers played in the nascent years of our nation.

On this note, I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to these pioneer officers for their selfless effort in building our nation. The editorial team deserves special praise as well, for tirelessly putting this special edition of *Police Life* together.

Hoong Wee Teck
Commissioner of Police

Introduction

Throughout the history of Singapore, the Singapore Police Force has played an integral role in upholding the law, maintaining order and keeping the peace. Our pioneer Police officers dedicated their lives to the safeguarding of Singapore, even in the face of immense danger. They spent most of their careers in the Force patrolling the beat and solving crime without seeking recognition. Through this special edition of *Police Life*, we share with you their first-hand experiences of policing in those tumultuous years, and pay a special tribute to their sacrifices and their indelible legacy.

‘*Setia dan Bakti*’ features the stories of 50 pioneer officers who are aged 65 and above. Over the course of the past two years, the team at the Police Public Affairs Department initiated an extensive research on our pioneer officers and conducted a series of oral history interviews to document their stories. There were many more with equally or more distinguished careers in the Force, whose stories could have rightfully made it to this special edition. We regret that we are not able to feature every one as we strived to showcase a representative selection of officers, respect wishes for privacy, and meet the age and number-to-feature criteria set in the spirit of SG50. Their contributions mean no less to us.

Although the setting, context and specific challenges faced in the past were evidently very different from today, the nature of policing remains immutable. The success of our mission to prevent, deter and detect crime requires a firm commitment to our core values of Courage, Loyalty, Integrity and Fairness. Through these stories, we hope that the Force will continue to build on the legacies left behind by our pioneers.

Melvin Yong
Director, Public Affairs Department



The Police Headquarters was located at the Upper Barracks in Pearl's Hill from 1989 to to 2001. It was built in 1934 and used as accommodation for married officers from the Sikh Contingent then.

They Led the Force

THE POLICE COMMISSIONERS

Times have changed. 30 years ago, those who joined the Police Force had no expectations of rising to command positions. It is not so now. But it took some time to get the older Police Force officers to accept a component of good university graduates into their officer cadre. Some graduates left the Police Force, partly because they did not have the strength of character to withstand the earlier ganging up against them. But quite a number have survived the trials and have got themselves accepted in their own right, on the strength of their character and ability. In the end, it is strength of character and performance that count. The Commissioner of Police is Commissioner not because he is a non-graduate or a graduate, but because he is the best man for the job.

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew

*Speech at the Senior Military and Police Officers' Dinner at the Istana
10 February 1972*

SERVED FROM 1939 to 1967

The First Asian Police Commissioner John Le Cain



“You should win the confidence and respect of the people. This is highly essential because no Police Force, however efficient it may be, can be fully effective without public co-operation.”

It was 8 August 1965. As night fell, Commissioner of Police John Le Cain arrived at Sri Temasek, summoned by Singapore's Prime Minister (PM) Lee Kuan Yew. Technically, Commissioner Le Cain did not take orders from the Singapore Government; his boss was the Federal Minister for Home Affairs Dato Dr Ismail Rahman in Kuala Lumpur. That was about to change. PM Lee told him that Singapore was separating from Malaysia the next morning and handed him a letter from Dato Ismail. It informed Commissioner Le Cain to take his instructions from the Singapore government.

Commissioner Le Cain returned to Police Headquarters and working with Special Branch chief Mr George Bogaars, who had similarly been forewarned by PM Lee, drew up an operational plan to maintain law and order without alarming the public. The Singapore Government was afraid that UMNO Malay extremists might go on a rampage to protest against the separation.

A year earlier, two violent race riots had rocked Singapore. Kuala Lumpur had to deploy military troops to help the Singapore Police restore order. Commissioner Le Cain was not about to allow violent rioters free rein again.

The next day, on 9 August, PM Lee proclaimed independence at 10 am and in the afternoon, a silent calm fell on the city centre as office workers packed

up and went home, watched over by the Police Reserve Units. The new Republic was born without incident.

Just two years earlier, Mr Le Cain had become the first Asian to head the Singapore Police Force, a role previously held by British officers only. The new chief said of his appointment, “I am conscious not so much of the privilege accorded me of commanding such an important organisation as I am of my responsibilities to the people and the Force.”

After acting as Commissioner for 15 months, he was promoted to the rank in July 1964, barely three weeks before the island state erupted in violent race riots.

The press at that time made much of the fact that Mr Le Cain was “the first Asian” to be appointed Police chief in Singapore. He was in actual fact a Eurasian, a member of a small but influential community that in the early post-war years dominated the senior ranks of the Singapore Police.

John Le Cain was born in Bangkok in 1912 and spent the first two years of his life there before moving to Singapore. The Le Cains had been in Singapore since the 1870s, and young John followed in his father's footsteps and attended Raffles Institution, where he was a school prefect and top athlete. He competed for but failed to win the Queen's

Scholarship in 1931 and took a job clerking at a law firm. In 1939, deciding that it was “futile” for him to continue in the law profession, he joined the Straits Settlements Police Force as a Probationary Inspector, and was posted to the Special Branch on the eve of World War II.

Mr Le Cain spent the war years in Japanese internment camps at Changi Prison and Sime Road. When he returned to the Police Force, he was one of four Asians promoted to the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) in 1948. He showed management potential early on when he successfully merged two Police Divisions a year later. He went on to command the Police Training School, Corrupt Practices Investigations Bureau and Marine Police.

Mr Le Cain's tenure as Police chief bracketed the most turbulent period in Singapore history: Indonesian Konfrontasi, merger with Malaysia and Independence, race riots, communist-led student and labour unrest, and kidnapping gangs. It was also a period of rapid expansion for the Police, which in September 1963 became a component of the Royal Malaysia Police under merger.

When separation came two years later, Mr Le Cain discovered that he had lost two-thirds of the officers in his Reserve Units, the core of the Police's anti-riot capability, when they returned to Malaysia. He ramped up recruitment and rebuilt the Police Training School to cater for more than 900 recruits a year, almost three

times its normal intake. More than 600 officers were drawn from other units and trained for Reserve Unit duties. In eight months, the Force made up the critical numbers it had lost.

At the passing out parade in April 1964 of the first batch of 264 Police Constables trained in newly independent Singapore, Mr Le Cain noted that the unprecedented response to the call for service “shows that Singapore is not without young men who are prepared to come forward and do their bit for the nation”. And he reminded them that their conduct and integrity must at all times be above reproach.

“A most important requirement is that you should win the confidence and respect of the people. This is highly essential because no Police Force, however efficient it may be, can be fully effective without public co-operation.”

Mr Le Cain retired in 1967 and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in the National Day Honours List. He became Chairman of Singapore Pools in 1968 and took up post as Counsellor (Defence) at the Singapore High Commission in London, the following year.

John Le Cain passed away in 1993 at the age of 80. To honour his memory, the Police Heritage Centre launched the John Le Cain Collection on 21 November 2005.



SERVED FROM 1941 to 1971

The First Police Constable to Become Commissioner of Police

Cheam Kim Seang



“it is for their benefit that the Police function and it is therefore not unreasonable to expect the public to extend their co-operation to the Police in the fight against crime.”

Constable Cheam Kim Seang's first key assignment was not crime-solving but sabotage. World War II had broken out and recruits were being sought for special operations in Malaya. Along with a group of nine other Police Constables and non-commissioned officers (NCOs), Mr Cheam travelled to Pahang in 1942 to help Force 136 sabotage the Japanese army. An underground unit created by the British Special Operations Executive after the Japanese invasion of Malaya, Force 136 needed Chinese recruits for its commando teams as well as to gather intelligence.

The Singapore Police team could not, however, make contact with Force 136 on arrival in Pahang, and were then tasked to be liaison officers with the Australian army.

Mr Cheam returned to Singapore in 1945 to rejoin a Police Force decimated by the Japanese Occupation, bereft of equipment and officers, and reviled by the public as running dogs of the enemy because local policemen had been forced to continue running their stations and patrolling their beats wearing Japanese-issued headgear.

The Force recruited and rebuilt itself with military help. In 1948, Mr Cheam was promoted to Inspector, a rare advancement for Asian NCOs. That year, he

was commended for bravery when he confronted and captured a man with a loaded revolver. It was the beginning of a crime-busting career that saw him lead the CID in the early 1960s, when Indonesian saboteurs and secret societies terrorised the streets of Singapore. With rising young officers like then-Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Goh Yong Hong running operations, CID put an end to a wave of kidnappings. At the same time, it hunted down Indonesian saboteurs, arresting more than 200 of them between 1963 and 1965.

When John Le Cain retired in 1967, Mr Cheam became Acting Commissioner but it was another two years before he was confirmed in the top post by the Republic's Internal Security Council. His promotion made Singapore history, for he was the first Police Constable to rise from the ranks to the highest post – Commissioner of Police.

On his watch, the Police embarked on a massive reorganisation in 1969. The Force was structured into six departments and seventeen operational units, with greater emphasis placed on operations, planning and public relations. The Police Training School was elevated to the status of Police Academy in 1970, its programmes expanded to provide pre-service, in-service and advanced training. The khaki Police uniform was replaced with the dark blue uniforms still in use today.

Mr Cheam also pushed for greater cooperation between the Force and the community in order to more effectively combat crime. He revived two initiatives that had been shelved since 1958, launching in May 1970 the Crime Prevention Campaign, followed by Police Week a year later. At the opening ceremony of the Crime Prevention Campaign, Mr Cheam pointed out that, “The Police exist to serve the people – it is for their benefit that the Police function and it is therefore not unreasonable to expect the public to extend their co-operation to the Police in the fight against crime.”

When he retired in July 1971, fellow officers paid tribute to him as “an inspiration to the Police Force and an example of what could be achieved through zeal and dedication to duty”.

And Mr Cheam continued to make Police history, becoming the first retired Police Commissioner to be appointed an Ambassador of the Republic of Singapore.



SERVED FROM 1945 to 1979

The Toughest Civil Servant the Communists Tried to Assassinate Tan Teck Khim



“... impress upon our people
that the police is their
friend and helper.”

It took Mr Tan Teck Khim only 25 years to rise from Constable to Commissioner, but the route was a circuitous one, involving two major detours that changed Singapore.

He first came to public notice in October 1948 when a magistrate's court heard how Inspector (Insp) Tan “wrestled for three-quarters of an hour with a 55-year-old woman found counting ‘chap ji kee (Hokkien for 12 digits) slips’”. The woman was very violent, he was quoted as saying, whereupon the magistrate found her guilty of assisting in the management of a public lottery and fined her \$600.

That perseverance and zeal in carrying out his duty put Insp Tan on the fast track. In 1953, he was one of the first two Asian officers who joined the Police Force after World War II as Police Constables, to be promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP). Put in command of the Police Reserve Unit in 1956, he was awarded the Colonial Police Medal for Meritorious Service for combating the violent riots that year. In 1963, he became the youngest officer in Singapore's history to be promoted to the rank of Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Police at the age of 38. When merger meant the Singapore Police took orders from the Federal Minister, he was sent to Police Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur to join the planning staff of the Inspector-General of Police of Malaysia.

In 1965, when Singapore became independent and assumed control of its own security and defence, Mr Tan was seconded to the Ministry of Interior and Defence to serve as its first Director of General Staff. He became one of the key officers responsible for the implementation of a sound defence policy and the birth of mandatory national service. Although Mr Tan never had any formal military training, he brought to bear his experience of running the Police Training School, Reserve Unit and CID to the crash build up of the Singapore Armed Forces, working closely with then Minister for Defence, Mr Goh Keng Swee.

Three years later, when the government needed the toughest civil servant for the job of making Singapore the cleanest and healthiest city in Asia, Mr Tan was conscripted for the job.

Appointed acting Permanent Secretary (Special Duties) in the Health Ministry, he built the Public Health Division into an efficient and well-disciplined organisation responsible for encouraging greater civic-mindedness amongst Singaporeans while enforcing new public health laws, including the licensing of itinerant hawkers. In recognition of his efforts, Mr Tan was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in 1971.

That same month, he was named Commissioner of Police. Like his immediate predecessor Cheam Kim Seang, he

embarked on a comprehensive reorganisation to improve the Force's crime-fighting capabilities, beefing up CID with a Criminal Intelligence Unit, Commercial Crime Division, Crime Prevention Branch and Scene of Crime Unit.

He also brought in lessons learnt from running the Keep Singapore Clean campaign. In his first year of office, he launched the Police Force's first two national campaigns to keep Singapore Crime-Free and Accident-Free. His aim was “to impress upon our people that the police is their friend and helper”.

The 1970s were peaceful compared to the turbulent 50s and 60s but the threats remained. International terrorism struck an unprepared Singapore in 1974 when a Popular Front for Palestinian Liberation-Japanese Red Army team hijacked the ferryboat Laju. Although the quick response of the Marine Police officers under then Superintendent (Supt) Tee Tua Ba and the courageous leadership of then Director for Security and Intelligence Division (SID), Mr S R Nathan, prevented the hostage crisis from escalating, the Singapore government eventually allowed the terrorists to leave for another country.

The communists were also still active and in 1974, a splinter faction of the Communist Party of Malaya began targeting top police officers to boost the morale of its members. After assassinating the Malaysian Inspector-General of Police and the Chief Police Officer of Perak, the cell turned its sights on the Singapore Police Commissioner. A few days before Chinese New Year in 1976, the communist team carried out surveillance on Mr Tan's office and residence as well as his travel route between home and office. Fortunately, the plot was foiled when two of the plotters were arrested in Malaysia.

In 1979, Mr Tan retired from the job he had dreamed of as a child. When he died in 2003, his successor Mr Goh Yong Hong described him as “a good role model for all officers and [who] really cared for the welfare of his men”.

He might have been the toughest civil servant, and as he said, “not a very good story-teller”, but to his men, Mr Tan Teck Khim was someone who cared for them even as he expected all police officers to maintain the highest levels of personal discipline, conduct and dedication.



SERVED FROM 1961 to 1992

The Gang-busting Cop Who Introduced Community Policing

Goh Yong Hong



“I have a sense of satisfaction and achievement. I am going away with things to remember and treasure.”

He may have hung up his uniform in 1992 but the legacy of the late Commissioner of Police Goh Yong Hong lives on in today's Community Policing System (COPS).

More than three decades ago, Mr Goh changed the face of policing in Singapore to counter a disturbing crime trend: A seemingly unstoppable rise in housebreaking and other petty theft-related offences.

Appointed Commissioner in 1979, Mr Goh realised a new gameplan was required. During the 1970s, Police organisations worldwide had learned a key lesson. By deploying officers in patrol cars, they lost their contact with the people. The Singapore Police Force, Mr Goh decided, needed to galvanise the community to partner it in the fight against crime.

He also saw that for a community-oriented policing system to succeed, the Force needed more than the support of the community leaders and the community. “The attitudes and approach of Police officers must also be appropriately attuned,” he said. The Police accordingly revamped its training doctrine and methods to reflect the change in policing philosophy.

On Mr Goh's watch, a string of initiatives geared towards active crime prevention were rolled out in quick succession between 1981 and 1983. They included the Neighbourhood Watch Groups made up of residents, Crime Prevention Committees for commercial building operators, Police Boys' Clubs to engage with wayward youth, the National Crime Prevention Council to encourage captains of industry to work with the Police on new anti-crime measures, and the ubiquitous Neighbourhood Police Posts (NPPs). These NPPs, which were rolled out in housing estates island-wide, were manned by officers who conducted foot and bicycle patrols as well as house visits.

These programmes reflected a radical change in policing strategy at the time – from one that was reactive when officers were known only to respond when calls were received, to an approach that was proactive – characterised by crime prevention and involving the community.

The NPP initiative, partly based on the Japanese Koban system, had a significant impact on the community. A 1991 survey on public attitudes towards the police showed that two out of three Singaporeans felt that the setting up of NPPs had helped reduce crime.

Those results reinforced an earlier study in 1987 that showed residents had a more “positive orientation towards the police”, and regarded them as friends and not mere law enforcers. Many residents also felt more safe and secure. And this was just one year after the NPPs were introduced in their neighbourhood.

In less than a decade, Mr Goh had brought about a fundamental change in policing and law enforcement and transformed the police's image. Paying tribute to his efforts, former Home Affairs Minister S Jayakumar said, “A policeman today is no longer regarded as an unapproachable enforcer, but a helpful officer who is part and parcel of the community.”

Mr Goh was an unlikely crime-buster in the turbulent 60s. He had graduated from law school at the University of Malaya alongside former Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong and Ambassador-at-Large Tommy Koh.

He surprised many of his friends and family when he joined the Police Force in August 1961 after seeing an advertisement in the newspapers calling for recruits who had graduated with honours. He felt that his training as a lawyer could prove useful as a policeman and decided to forgo a promising career in the legal service, to fight crime.

Singapore was in the throes of socio-political turmoil at the time and Mr Goh found himself having to deal with problems ranging from violent anti-government protests, to brutal secret society rampages and firearm robberies.

After stints in various police stations, he was posted to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) where he investigated murder cases and ran operations against gambling syndicates. As head of the CID Special Investigation Section (SIS), Mr Goh led the now famous raid on Loh Ngut Fong, a notorious criminal behind a spate of kidnappings in the 1960s.

Mr Goh retired after 13 years at the top, making him the longest-serving police chief. He continued public service as vice-president of the Singapore National Olympic Council from 1986 to 2002.

“I have no regrets,” said Mr Goh on the day his retirement was announced in 1992. “I have a sense of satisfaction and achievement. I am going away with things to remember and treasure.”

Mr Goh passed away in April 2015. His daughter Dawn, told The Straits Times that he had spent his retirement years with his family, including his eight grandchildren.



SERVED FROM 1967 to 1997

From Terrorist Negotiator to Chief of Three Home Team Departments

Tee Tua Ba



“The trust and confidence of the public built up over recent years can be easily undermined by the actions of a few errant officers.”

“Keeep one bullet in your Browning automatic and hold it against my temple,” said Mr Tee Tua Ba as he held the terrorist leader’s hand, guiding the gun the Palestinian gripped to his own temple.

It was 1974 and Mr Tee, then Officer-in-Charge (OC) Marine Police, was the point-man in one of Singapore’s earliest encounters with international terrorism. Four terrorists from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Japanese Red Army had on 31 January attacked the Shell Oil Refinery on Pulau Bukom Besar with firearms and explosives. In their bid to escape, they boarded the ferryboat Laju and ordered the crew to sail towards international waters, only to be stopped by police patrol boats.

Mr Tee’s job was to prevent their escape, and negotiate with the terrorists for the release of the hostages. After eight days of prolonged negotiation in an apparent intractable situation, a deal was struck for the terrorists to release their hostages and surrender their explosives in return for the safe passage to Kuwait. The terrorists, however, insisted on keeping their small arms until they boarded the plane.

Mr Tee now had a most delicate mission: Disarm the four terrorists before they boarded the flight along with 12 of Singapore’s top security officials accompanying them as a guarantee of safe passage.

It was a perilous endeavour. “Everyone knew it and we were prepared for a shoot-out if the hijackers adopted a hard line with regard to the arms. If unsuccessful, there would be no doubt that I would not be living to tell the tale,” recalled Mr Tee.

Ground zero for the handover operation was the VIP lounge at the old Paya Lebar Airport, where heavily-armed officers from the elite Police Task Force surrounded it, lay in wait close-by and ready to move at a moment’s notice. “The task force had already been told that if they hear firing inside, (it would mean) I was shot (and) then the shooting can start,” said Mr Tee.

To convince the terrorists to give up their firearms, Mr Tee was to offer a show of good faith by letting the Palestinian leader of the hijack team point a gun to his head. He added, “The Palestinian became emotional and said...brother I trust you and that it was not necessary, they would give up their arms to me.”

At 1.25 am on 8 February, eight days after the terrorists first struck, they left Singapore on a Japan Airlines airplane sent by Tokyo after another group of terrorists had stormed the Japanese Embassy in Kuwait and took the ambassador and his staff hostage. The terrorists in Kuwait had threatened to execute the Japanese Embassy staff whom they had seized, unless the terrorists who had attacked Singapore were released and safely delivered to them.

On board the plane as guarantors of safe passage were Mr Tee and a Singapore contingent led by then Director for Security and Intelligence Division (SID) Mr S. R. Nathan, who later became the Singapore President. A bloodbath on Singapore soil was avoided and the crisis, dubbed the ‘Laju Incident’ by the press, has gone down in history as one of the early victories in Singapore’s counter-terrorism efforts.

Mr Tee moved on to tackle other challenges with postings at other Police Land Divisions and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), among others. He also helmed two Home Team agencies - the Central Narcotics Bureau and Singapore Prison Service - before taking over as Commissioner of Police in 1992.

A law graduate, Mr Tee’s ambition was to become a Police officer. The law graduate joined the Force in 1967 and within a year, he was hunting kidnappers with the Special Investigation Section (SIS) of CID. One raid he took part in was the massive operation to arrest notorious kidnapper Loh Ngut Fong and his gang who were hiding out in a house in Yio Chu Kang. Loh, who used the moniker ‘Ah Seng’, was the kingpin behind a spate of kidnappings in the 1960s.

As 300 police officers surrounded the hideout, Mr Tee took cover in a drain outside the house. Rather than surrender, the gangsters engaged in a shoot-out with the Police, which ended in Loh’s death. “That’s what we used to deal with back in those days,” he recounted. “When was the last time we had an armed robbery in Singapore? It’s so different now.”

Mr Tee’s 30-year Police career may have had more adrenaline-filled operations than officers in today’s Singapore will likely ever see. Mr Tee strongly advocated the concept of empowerment in order to develop a more operationally-attuned Force. He firmly believed that in operational situations, when time is of the essence, Police officers must exercise initiative, think on their feet and act swiftly.

Mr Tee’s belief in effective community policing was firmly based on the need to earn and keep the support and trust of Singaporeans, which directly affects the ability of the Police to fulfil its mission. “The trust and confidence of the public built up over recent years can be easily undermined by the actions of a few errant officers,” said Mr Tee in 1996. “Police powers and the individual officer’s right to exercise discretion require a set of core values as a reference point. Officers imbued with these values will have a standard to live by and thus be in a position to exercise judgement and make decisions in the organisation’s and public’s interest. This is a necessary foundation for successful empowerment.”

Since retiring from the Police Force in 1997, Mr Tee has been Singapore’s envoy in Brunei, and Egypt with concurrent accreditation to Jordan, United Arab Emirates and Cyprus. He presently serves as non-resident Ambassador to Switzerland and is also chairman of the Singapore Red Cross Society.



They Quelled Riots and Confronted Saboteurs

The *ang chia* rolled often in post-World War II Singapore. The 1950s and 60s were so turbulent that no one who served in the Police then was left unscathed by the violence. After the Maria Hertogh riots in December 1950, where 18 people, including a local Police Inspector, were killed in one day of violence, the Singapore Police Force formed the Riot Squad in 1952. The Reserve Unit, as it was later called, saw much large-scale action in its first two decades - the Hock Lee Bus riots in 1955, the Chinese Middle School student riots in 1956, the Pulau Senang prison riot in 1963, and race riots in 1964 and 1969.

Then there were the labour strikes, where our officers had to facilitate dispute negotiations as well as prevent opposing groups from fighting. During the Singapore Glass Factory strike in 1960, an entire Police Division was mobilised for 73 days to keep the peace and protect the factory - Singapore's sole manufacturer of glass containers - from shutting down indefinitely.

Merger in 1963 brought not only political tension, but also saboteurs sent by Indonesia under its Konfrontasi policy. Over two years, more than 20 bombs exploded around the island; the MacDonald House bombing in 1965 killed three people. Quick Police action led to the arrests of more than 200 saboteurs, and the discovery of arms caches.

Those who came face to face with the violence never forgot the experience.

SERVED FROM 1949 to 1980

Tuan Sabeer Zain



“The Police Force did a good job, otherwise there would have been bloodshed.”

“Charge!”

Tuan Sabeer Zain yelled as he ran towards the 200 rioters outside the Cold Storage on Orchard Road. As some in the crowd ran off, Mr Zain turned round and stopped short.

“I realised that I was charging alone. They just stood there.”

His team of constables refused to move. They watched as the rioters closed in on their inspector. In those tense moments in December 1950, Mr Zain knew that if he made a mistake, he would die. He had six bullets in his revolver. There were dozens of rioters. “Fortunately, God was with me. From my face, the rioters knew I meant business. They were cowards. They ran away.”

Mr Zain knew the protestors were angry not with the Police, but with the British for deciding that the Dutch child known as Maria Hertogh would be sent to Holland. The atmosphere was explosive. Almost all uniformed policemen then were Malay Muslims, who felt their loyalties torn between their community and their British supervisors. Most did not want to act against fellow Muslims. But there were also many Malay Muslims, like Mr Zain, who believed the Police had to be neutral, to enforce the law and stop the violence.

Mr Zain was born in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and always wanted to return to the land of his forefathers. In 1947, as a sergeant in the military police unit of the British Army, he was transferred to the General Army Headquarters in Singapore. In 1949, as he was due to be demobilised and sent back to Sri Lanka, he applied for jobs with the Singapore Police, Ministry of Education teaching service and Shell. The Police was the first to respond. He went through three interviews and was offered a job as an Inspector. Mr Zain accepted, returned to Sri Lanka to be demobilised from the British Army and took the first boat back to Singapore.

His first Police salary was \$40 a month, with a \$35 allowance. The next month he was given \$10 more for his ability to speak English, a rare skill in the 1950s when most Police officers spoke either Chinese or Malay.

What if the teaching service or Shell had called him first? Mr Zain would still have chosen to be a Police officer. “Everybody respects you as a policeman because they expect you to help them. Everybody wants to be a policeman’s friend,” he said.

Facing down mobs during the Maria Hertogh riots was the first of several communal riots Mr Zain and his colleagues had to handle in the 1950s and 60s. The Maria Hertogh riots ended after three days when the Police

Special Branch smuggled the child out of Singapore and arrested the key instigators behind the violence.

“The Police Force did a good job, otherwise there would have been bloodshed.”

Mr Zain’s courage and loyalty did not go unnoticed. He went on to take on more challenging tasks, including postings to the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and the Police Prosecution Branch, before retiring in 1980. Even then he continued to dedicate himself

to public service, chairing and raising funds for the Children’s Aid Society, for which he was awarded the Public Service Star in 1992.

Mr Zain died on 11 August 2014. Asked in an oral history interview by the National Archives in 2011 how he saw his 30-year career in the Singapore Police Force, he replied:

“I carried out my job with honesty and integrity. I had the respect of my colleagues and the public.”



The Cold Storage supermarket on Orchard Road in the 1950s.

Lionel Robson



“So, I don't expect to be rich. You join the Police Force for the love of it. If not, don't do it.”

“The first riots in 1956, was the Chinese students' riot. I was a cadet Inspector, still under training – very raw – and I was deployed. There were four of us with one Sergeant. First, we were sent to the old Orchard Road Police Station, at 10 in the morning. One hour there, then we were told to quickly take our lunch. And we were sent to Chinese High School, in Bukit Timah. We were told to guard the side gate, beside which was the Orchid Garden. We had no food, no water throughout the night. A good Samaritan from outside threw in some biscuits and we were so happy! But after that, we had no water so we suffered.

Anyway, we guarded the side gate. In the morning, a group of 800-strong students linked elbows and came marching, singing some Communist song. My Sergeant turned to me. I said, 'We can't run – we're cornered.' The students went around the school compound, marching around the school, but now they were marching towards us. It was like Custer's last stand, we stood by the flag through the night. There were 800 of them and only 4 of us! So, I told my Sergeant, you don't follow what you were taught in the range. Shoot selectively, aim for their legs. Maybe if they see that they are injured, we can stop them. But, we were lucky. When they were about 20 metres away, the Reserve Unit came in between us

and we were saved. If not, I don't know what would have happened.

I was also put in charge of guarding the Elgin Bridge, to prevent mobs and rioters from congregating. I first had three policemen. The Chinese threw bottles at us! The Chinese hated the Police. They called us the running dogs – at the beck-and-call of the British. That's why we were called *tua kow* - big dogs.

The next day, I had one Gurkha with me. When I walked, all the windows shut! One Gurkha! I didn't need five policemen. Very effective.”

“In this work, decisions need to be made. It is better to make decisions and be wrong rather than sit and not make any decision at all. You want to ask me what is success? Success is made of dedication, loyalty, and diligence – coupled with common sense. Any Police work, especially investigation, is all about common sense. If you have average common sense, you apply it, with diligence and you should get somewhere. Be loyal – don't talk bad about the organisation. Don't be disgruntled. Whatever extra jobs they give to you, accept it.

But, sometimes, you got to stand up and be assertive. You cannot be a yes-man all the time. You cannot be a goody-

goody person all the time. But word will get around and you will create your own reputation or character. I read somewhere that reputation is what you fall for but character is what you stand for.”

“Why did I join the Police Force? When we were in school, we used to play Police and Thief, Cowboy and Red Indian... and we always wanted to be the hero, the knight in shining armour, coming to rescue the damsel in distress. When you are young, there are all these noble sentiments and ideas.

There was this one day, when this woman came crying at KK (Kendang Kerbau Police Station). Her husband had beaten her up when she asked for marketing money. We were told that in such cases, you have to go to the house, even if it is a non-seizeable case. We would go to caution and advise the husband. So, I went there and asked the

husband, 'Why did you hit your wife? Not like she did anything wrong. She naturally has to feed the family. You're a drinker, you're a gambler!' He kept quiet. I said, 'You know, you've got heavy hands. If you hit her on the face, especially the nasal bone, you break the bone, you get charged for grievous hurt. You go to prison. Worse! Who's going to feed your children?' He kept quiet. The next week, she came back to thank me. That's the reward, knowing that you helped to settle this thing.

When you join the Police Force, you don't expect to be rich. At the end of the day, you can only console yourself that you've served the public well. That's all. So, I don't expect to be rich. You join the Police Force for the love of it. If not, don't do it. You'll be a disgruntled man, you'll be grumbling.

I liked the job.”



Built in 1929, the Elgin Bridge was the first bridge across the Singapore river and connects North Bridge Road with South Bridge Road.

Selwyne Terrance Amerasinghe



“Every hour, on the hour, the Police HQ Operations Room would in turn issue a “Sitrep” consolidating all the incidents that had occurred throughout the island.”

When Selwyne Terrance Amerasinghe was asked to write an essay in 1964 to justify his selection for the Intermediate Command Course at the British Police Staff College at Bramshill, he said: “I am in the midst of the evolving history of Singapore and I have a role to play in this.”

Like most pioneers who served in the 1950s and 60s, quelling riots was but one of the roles he played in securing the new nation. When race riots broke out in July 1964, Mr Amerasinghe was attached to ‘E’ Division, the epicentre of the riots. In his memoir, he accounted the events:

“In the initial days of the rioting, there was a rash of incidents that had occurred all over Singapore, both during the day as well as at night. Pedestrians and motorists traversing our roads, and hawkers and housewives at the market places were randomly attacked with sticks and stones and in some cases even with dangerous weapons, by hit and run gangs and individuals from both race groups.

In order to keep tabs as to what was happening around the island, all Police Divisions were asked to submit half-hourly “Sitreps” (Situation Reports) to the Police Operations HQ (Headquarters), setting out all the incidents that had occurred within their respective Divisions, during that period. ... Every hour, on the

hour, the Police HQ Operations Room would in turn issue a “Sitrep” consolidating all the incidents that had occurred throughout the island, in order to give the Divisions/Units an overview of what had been happening throughout the island in the past hour. ...

Despite the curfew and our extensive patrolling, however, the incidents of hit-and-run assaults and vandalism within ‘E’ Division remained up. Studying our Area Map on which these incidents were plotted, I noticed that though they were centered around certain trouble spots, they were peppered throughout the 24 hours of the day. In view of the curfew, it was evident that the perpetrators of these incidents could not travel very far, hence I drew the conclusion that they must be holed up within these trouble spots and had been playing a cat-and-mouse game with our patrols. It, therefore, occurred to me that the way around this vexing problem was for us to carry out a house-to-house search and weed out the probable troublemakers. ...

We, therefore, formed search parties and decided to concentrate on two of the trouble spots, namely, the Bukit Ho Swee housing estate and the area around the Bukit Timah and Sixth Avenue junction - two known secret society strongholds in the Division. ... I led these search parties and within an hour we completed searching each of the units in four of the HDB blocks and detained some 30 suspects.

These suspects were male Chinese aged between 18 & 35 years, who though found within certain units of these blocks, were not resident there. They had the appearance of being secret society members - some sporting tattoos on their limbs and torsos - and could not give us good explanations as to why they were in the area. They were neither living nor working in the area but claimed that they were visiting relatives. We didn’t buy this hence we brought them back to the station.

Back in the station, we had them charged for being suspected secret society members and screened them for their criminal and secret society antecedence. It turned out that all had secret society connections and some even had past criminal convictions. This gave us grounds to detain them for a maximum of 48 hours under the Secret Societies Act, and I had every intention to make full use of this provision of the law. ...

The next morning we carried out a similar operation in the Bukit Timah-Sixth Avenue area. From the residences in Annamalai Avenue, we detained some 10 male Indians and from the Turf Club workers quarters along Dunearn Road, we detained 5 male Malays - actually from their accents, I thought they were more Boyanese than Malays. These persons too were thuggish in appearance and were not residents of the area and could not furnish cogent reasons as to why they were there. All claimed that they were merely visiting with friends. When we had them screened after charging them, it turned out they too

were on record for being secret society members and most also had criminal records against them.

Even in the first 24 hours that we had these persons in custody, the number of incidents within these two areas, and hence also within the whole Division, dropped dramatically and we took some pride reflecting this in our half-hourly “sitreps” which we submitted to the HQ Ops Room.

As there were still sporadic incidents occurring within these two areas, though very few in number, we continued with mopping-up operations. ...

With this the incidents in these two areas all but ceased, but we did not let up on these areas. Having cleaned them out, we did not want to see fresh infiltrations of troublemakers, so we patrolled them extensively and occasionally inspected a premise or two, not only to ensure that no mischief-makers were being harbored within them, but also to keep up our psychological operations within these areas. After having quelled these two hot spots, we then focused on other areas where incidents had been occurring.”

Mr Amerasinghe’s tactic worked so well that the Police HQ Ops Room soon put out a teleprinter message to all divisions instructing that they round up secret society members found in their trouble spots and deal with them as ‘E’ Division had done. The riots stopped a few days later. In September that year, Mr Amerasinghe left for his course in England.



SERVED FROM 1941 to 1978

Niaz Mohamad Shah

“I would like to advise young recruits to apply themselves to their career with dedication and to exercise their responsibilities without fear or favour.”



The strikers spat in his face when he ordered their arrest. But Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Niaz Mohamed Shah was not about to be deterred or provoked. He continued to supervise the arrest of the 39 people who had formed a human barricade outside the Singapore Glass Factory to “beset the approach” (to persistently block) to the Henderson Road building.

The strike, which started on 28 August 1960, had been going on for more than 70 days. The strikers were unruly, obstructed workers reporting for work at the factory, and twice resorted to violence. When they disobeyed direct orders from the Minister for Labour and Law to not disrupt the movement of vehicles in and out of the factory, he ordered their arrest. The strike ended on Day 73.

Throughout the saga, DSP Niaz and his team of 300 officers used minimal force but prevented damage to property and lives. Commissioner of Police A. E. G. Blades later praised the officers and men of Tanjong Pagar Division for “exercising patience, tact, firmness and impartiality for the benefit of all, in extremely trying circumstances”. It was the first time an entire Division had been commended in this fashion, the papers reported, noting approvingly that DSP Niaz, the “bespectacled commanding officer” stepped up to receive the commendation certificate with a token Force of six men behind him, each of whom had played a role in maintaining order during the strike.

On the advice of his father, who was a policeman in the Federated Malay States Police Force before World War I, Mr Niaz joined the Force in 1941, among the first batch of 25 Senior Cambridge students recruited. The policy then was that no one would be promoted directly to the Inspectorate; they had to work their way up the ranks, which Mr Niaz did. A national rugby player, he became a media darling, reported as much for his prowess on the field as for his arrest record. He was also adept at using

the media to portray a positive image of the Force; at one point he was made acting Police Secretary (who spoke to the media on behalf of the Force).

In 1967, he was appointed Commandant of the Police Cadet Corps and Commander of the Traffic Police in 1971. He initiated what was perhaps the first road safety campaign in Singapore. With more cars on the roads and more accidents, he told his men to “instil the image of the new Traffic Police – that we are a courteous corps of men to help and advise road users on how to practise road safety rather than one which is to issue summons indiscriminately”.

Mr Niaz was seconded to the Singapore Armed Forces as Commanding Officer of the Provost Unit from 1972 – 1974. There he laid the foundation for a staggered system for those wishing to visit the servicemen under sentence. The system allowed better control of visitors with less manpower and is still in use today.

Mr Niaz also served the nation in other capacities – as President of the Singapore Rugby Union from 1971-5, and as chef de mission when Singapore hosted its first South-east Asia Peninsular (SEAP) Games in 1973 and, again at the 1975 SEAP Games in Bangkok.

During his presidency of the Rugby Union, he formed the first Rugby National team in Singapore with local talent instead of the usual expatriate players. The team brought glory to the country when it emerged fourth in a nine-nation Rugby tournament held in Hong Kong in 1972.

Mr Niaz retired from the Force as Superintendent of Police in 1978. He passed away on 15 August 2012 at the age of 90. To the end, he believed policing to be a very responsible job requiring a high sense of impartiality. “I would like to advise young recruits to apply themselves to their career with dedication and to exercise their responsibilities without fear or favour,” he once said.

SERVED FROM 1953 to 1988

Thambiah Letchamanan

“... always stay alert and never take peace for granted.”



Thambiah Letchamanan remembers the 1964 race riots vividly. He was on leave the day the riots started in July, and was recalled to the Beach Road Police Station, where he found himself in command. His Officer-in-Charge (OC) and other senior officers were overseeing the Police response to a riot in Geylang Serai.

Then another riot started at Queen Street. As his officers waited for orders, Senior Inspector Thambiah knew he did not have much time to come up with a plan as the rioters were becoming more violent, and the students of Raffles Girls School were caught in the middle.

“Back then, Raffles Girls School was located at Queen Street... The girls had just ended school and were stuck in the middle of hundreds of people fighting,” he recalled.

Prioritising their safety, he called the Singapore Armed Forces for trucks to transport the girls back home safely and opened his station as a temporary shelter while waiting for the trucks.

“The kids were stranded so it was the most obvious choice to me to use the station as a shelter. We made calls to the now closed Satay Club to have them come over and provide food for the people in the shelter,” he said with a smile.

Mr Thambiah also sent as many officers as he could find to the Boyanese settlement at Crawford Street that was at risk of being attacked by Chinese rioters. He was determined to make sure that no more lives were lost that day. “The Boyanese people were the minority in an area that was populated by the Chinese. It was our responsibility to make sure that they were protected.”

His handling of the July riots – which went on sporadically for almost two weeks – caught the attention of his

superiors and he was immediately promoted to Acting Deputy Superintendent of the Beach Road Police Station. In that role, he set up three Police posts in racially sensitive areas like Gammon Road and Jalan Senang to make sure that peace was kept between the Chinese and Malays. He encouraged each community to look past their own differences and convinced them to protect one another in the event of another violent riot. He also took charge of the peace committee established in each constituency by the government to bring together leaders of the Malay and Chinese communities to maintain communal harmony.

After that traumatic demonstration of his command presence, Mr Thambiah was involved in virtually every major event in Singapore’s post-war history, from the Spyros disaster in 1978 to the Hotel New World collapse in 1986.

When the Greek tanker Spyros exploded at the Jurong Shipyard on 12 October 1978, killing 76 people and injuring 23, Mr Thambiah had to oversee the rescue efforts as Acting Commander (Detachment). He set up a main communications centre so that all the departments could coordinate their rescue efforts.

“I was there for the entire period of the rescue efforts to make sure everything was under control, answering queries from the media and the public, and most importantly, ensuring that the people who were trapped inside the ship got home safe,” he recalled.

Mr Thambiah retired as Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Police in 1988, but he still keeps his Police uniform hanging proudly in his wardrobe.

“One thing I’ve learned from all those years is to always stay alert and never take peace for granted,” he said.

SERVED FROM 1952 to 1980

Karthegasu Thamby Rajah

“We knew we were in it together and we wouldn’t allow them to do anything to Singapore.”

As Officer-in-charge of Rural West in the early 1960s, Mr Kathegasu Thamby Rajah, or K. T. as he is known, would go on supervisory rounds to check on his men. At some locations, he had to sign the *buku* – the book chained to a post in a mandatory patrol area to serve as an official record that an officer had patrolled the area. His little boy Raja often accompanied him.

One night, Mr Rajah passed by Pasir Laba Camp during one of his rounds. All was quiet. The next day, several arrested Indonesian saboteurs revealed under interrogation that they had been lying in wait near the camp and had Mr Rajah in their sights. They could have killed him, but for some reason they did not take the shot.

“It was a close shave,” his son Mr T. Raja Kumar was to note with relief years later. Perhaps because of the nightly patrols, the son had followed the father into the Police Force after law school and rose to be Deputy Commissioner (Policy) before taking on the job of Chief Executive of the Home Team Academy and concurrently Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Despite the very real risks policemen faced then, Mr Rajah never thought of giving up.

“We were very united. We knew we were in it together and we wouldn’t allow them to do anything to Singapore. ... As locals, we were trained to be tough. We were never afraid because we always went into each mission as a team.”

Mr Rajah was inducted into the newly formed Police Reserve Unit soon after completing basic Police training in 1952. The Unit, originally known as the Riot Squad, had been formed in the aftermath of the Maria Hertogh Riots in December 1950. An inquiry commission had



found the Police performance dismal and recommended the formation of a multi-racial squad of 60 policemen.

As the Reserve Unit grew to include three troops of 50 men each, Mr Rajah was put in charge of Troop C. Commanding alongside him was the future Police Commissioner Cheam Kim Seang, who was in charge of Troop A. Their troops made frequent trips to Kuala Kubu Bahru in Malaysia for intensive training lasting a fortnight each time.

The Reserve Unit was always on standby, the troopers armed with wicker and rattan shields, and the officers with megaphones, riding in jeeps. “We were fearless. All of us in the unit were involved. We pushed forward, and went with no sleep for nights just to round up brutal gangsters, triads and rioters, sometimes at 2 or 3 o’clock in the morning.”

When Mr Tan Teck Khim became Commissioner in 1971, he made his former fellow trooper Staff Officer. Mr Rajah once again displayed the fierce loyalty that had bonded them more than a dozen years earlier. When the Commissioner received death threats, Mr Rajah got himself trained in firearms at the Security Branch so that he could provide close protection as he escorted his boss to and from work every day.

As Staff Officer, Mr Rajah also looked after foreign guests such as General Fidel Ramos, former President of the Philippines, when they visited the Commissioner. “I enjoyed this role a lot,” he said.

“I was very blessed. They gave me the opportunity and it was the best job. I loved the work and carried on to do a good job. It was fantastic.”

SERVED FROM 1951 to 1987

Eugene Wong Kum Choon

“There was no second explosion, but you take action. ... Civil servants should have this instinct.”



When the bomb went off at Macdonald House on 10 March 1965, Eugene Wong was an Inspector in ‘A’ Division. He recalled being the first officer on the scene.

“I was the first officer to go there from the ‘A’ Division, even before the CID. Of course the Radio car was first and then the Police Reserve Unit and all came in, and they cordoned off the area. Very quickly, I assessed that there was a bombing and people were injured. I left it to the Radio Division personnel and ‘A’ Division personnel to deal with the injured. I knew CID would be activated and would come, because it was a big case. I had this feeling that there could be another bomb. In case there was another bomb, I ran up the steps into the building to tell the occupants to leave the place. I said I wasn’t sure, I said in the event of another bomb, it was better to be safe, so all of you go down. I remember I went to the Australian High Commissioner...”

The High Commissioner told me that they had a lot of secrets, they had to leave one officer. He told me not to worry, and he will take responsibility. He said the rest would go down, not to worry; he would speak to my Police Commissioner, who was John Le Cain. And he spoke to him. And then he passed the phone to me and John Le Cain spoke to me. He said: “It’s alright, you carry on and leave the fellow there.” I was very impressed with Commissioner Le Cain, because he was a very calm person.

There was no second explosion, but you take action. ... Civil servants should have this instinct. ... Like it came to me, there might be another bomb. So Police officers and even army officers, we should not only deal with the incident, we should think about the side effects on the population and take charge of everything.”

Two women were killed and 33 injured in that bombing, carried out by Indonesian commandos during Konfrontasi. A third person died of his injuries a few days later, and the saboteurs were caught, convicted and sentenced to hang in 1968.

Mr Wong moved on to other postings. One attachment was to the National Police Cadet Corps (NPCC) in 1967, at a time when the Police Force was to assume full responsibility for the student group. Working with the new Corps Commandant, Acting Superintendent Niaz Mohamad Shah, Mr Wong took charge of the training of the cadets while helping to establish the NPCC in more schools. With another Ministry of Education officer, he trained over 100 teachers, teaching them drills, police procedures and basic police laws. They were also responsible for purchasing the uniforms, bags, shoes and berets that the cadets needed. They set up small shooting ranges in the schools so the students did not have to travel all the way to the Police Training School to practise shooting. In two quick years, the NPCC grew into a 3000-strong organisation that impressed at events like National Day Parades and Youth Festivals.

Although Police Day was first introduced in 1958, it became an annual event only from 1971 onwards. Mr Wong took the lead in coordinating the Police Day carnival at Police Academy in 1975, arranging for many stalls and inviting his own Police units to contribute a dish each. He introduced the use of coupons in generating publicity and increasing the outreach of the event through schools in the NPCC network. It was a success; even Mr Tony Tan, then a minister, attended after his son bought a coupon in school.

“It was a lot of work, strenuous work, but I loved doing it,” he said.

SERVED FROM 1967 to Today

Omar Bin Mohamed

“We managed to control the situation. We managed to save our minister!”



Omar bin Mohamed had just come in from his coastal patrol that May evening in 1969 when the three alarm siren went off at his Reserve Unit base in Queenstown. There was a strike in Geylang, his troop was told. When their *ang chia* (Hokkien for the red anti-riot bus) reached Paya Lebar and they got out, Mr Omar was shocked to see that they were in the middle of two groups about to go to war.

“We felt shocked because from the Tai Seng side, they were all Chinese ... on the other side, we saw the Malay group from Geylang. We were in the middle. My Officer-in-Charge (OC) said, ‘This time, whether you die or we carry on, we do what we can tonight.’ We managed to call another troop. It came in from the back and formed an outer cordon. We were still in the centre. But when the groups saw the other troop, they dispersed. Where they went, we don’t know because it was at night. But we patrolled until the next morning. At about 9 am, they allowed us to go back and wash up, then we came back in because there was a shortage of manpower everywhere.”

After five years, race riots had hit Singapore again on 31 May 1969, spurred by communal violence in Malaysia following the country’s general election. With Chinese and Malay gangs clashing in Singapore, troops from the

Police Reserve Unit were tasked to cordon the sensitive areas while suspects were flushed out. The violence subsequently subsided 7 days later.

But that first night, Mr Omar’s troop of 54 men had to play peacemaker between two groups armed with parangs and changkuls.

“They wore black, all of them. ... We managed to go to the nearest mosque where we asked the people, ‘Please can you go and talk to your friends...?’ They knew one another because of the kampung spirit, so they assisted us to disperse the Malay side. The groups were still rowdy. They threw stones at us. The other troop at the Joo Chiat side had some injuries. ... We remained there for about 3 days, staying in that area. We made sure the situation was under control.”

Mr Omar joined the Force in 1967 because he had enjoyed shooting as a police cadet in school. His first posting with the Police Reserve Unit saw him facing rioters, strikers and killers, but he never had to shoot anyone. When his troop was deployed to deal with the Malayan Plywood strike, they were instructed not to carry their weapons or riot shields when then Minister for Home Affairs, Chua Sian Chin, arrived to speak to the workers, who

numbered between 2-300 and were carrying equipment from the factory. Mr Omar asked his OC if he could carry a gas gun.

“True enough, after the minister talked for about half an hour, they (the stirkers) were not happy, so they threw bricks at our group. ... We dressed up and my OC unit Mr Hardial Singh said, ‘Go to your vehicle.’ The vehicle was parked about 50 meters away, so I told him, ‘Sir, I have 3 gas launchers. Do you want to use it or not?’ He took it and he fired. ... All three gas guns were fired. The crowd dispersed because of the gas. We managed to control the situation. We managed to save our minister!”

Mr Omar was next deployed to the Police Academy as a field instructor, where he oversaw the intake of the first batch of Police National Service men. He was later promoted to Guard Commander, in charge of security at the Academy. Along the way he also met his wife, Madam Choi Mei Kuan, a fellow Police officer.

After he retired from the Force in 1993, Mr Omar returned as a civilian attached to the pension section of the Administration and Finance Department for ten years before joining the Police Logistics Department, where he still serves today.



They Busted Gangsters and Kidnappers

There was a time when secret societies ruled the streets of Singapore. Then the Phantom Squad took the fight to them in 1959 and the triads went underground. In the chaos of the 1960s, a breed of violent criminal gangs took to kidnapping towkays and robbing banks, killing anyone in their way, and refusing to surrender even when surrounded by the Police. The 1970s saw the rise of the Magnificent 10, a group of Police officers who individually and with partners displayed courage under fire. Rogue gunmen learned that there was no surviving a shootout with them. These 10 officers received Police Gallantry Medals in June 1975. Because of their fearlessness and those of officers who came before and after them, Singapore is safer today.

Ponnaya Ganesan



“That was all that we carried. We did not have any warrant card or anything else. We just pulled out our guns and shot, because when your life is in danger, you have to shoot to escape.”

“Police awards for famed Phantom Squad gang-busters,” the newspaper headline announced on 4 October 1959. All the members of the squad were being commended for their “courageous and enthusiastic participation in a team volunteering for duty against secret society gangs which were confronted and dispersed with excellent deterrent effect”, the paper reported. As a result of four successful ambushes, 29 gangsters were in prison and a large collection of weapons seized, it added.

The true story of the Phantom Squad is even more astounding. In 1959, a desperate Police Force recruited a team of constables barely out of the academy, gave them some rudimentary training in secret society activity, and sent them dressed like gangsters into the middle of gang-infested areas to draw out the secret societies. Inevitably the gangs came out to defend their turf, with weapons, and in larger numbers than the police team. In the ensuing fight, any gangster left standing or injured was arrested.

The Phantom Squad lasted only six months, but the bravery of its members left a chilling effect on the secret societies, most of which stopped operating openly.

Perhaps no member of the Phantom Squad is as well-known in the Force as Ponnaya Ganesan, or P. Ganesan

as he is known, who shared how he was trained to be a *pie kia ang pai* (Hokkien for gangster undercover cop).

“As a constable, I was selected to be one of the Phantom Squad members. That was the greatest thing, I can say, that happened to me when I was a constable. We were given special training at Mount Vernon.

Each of the eight divisions selected seven officers. Our main task, after the training, was to suppress the secret societies, as the government had promised after it came to power in '59 to suppress, or completely eliminate them. This was not easy. We could not just arrest and charge them. You had to do the actual combat with them, go and fight them and disperse them. We formed the *pie kia ang pais*.

We had physical training. We had to climb hills, with ladders and all that. We had to do shooting, target shooting, moving targets as well as stationary ones. The secret society experts came to lecture us on the various secret societies, how they behave, how you tackle them and when you should tackle them. We had seven inspectors in each division, and some of them were very tough characters. One inspector was himself a thug. I believe in his school days, he was a member of the secret society.

We would go in a big gang and have clashes with the secret societies. I was stabbed. You can see all the marks here. We attacked with bottles. Those days there were no plastic bottles, all were glass bottles. We just hit them and smashed them. They were frightened.

We would ask them, ‘Do you still want to challenge us?’

That was one of the tactics to handle them: Toughness meets toughness. The gangs had their own secret triads, blood and all other secret rituals. We had the law with us.

In those days, the gangs were a lot into extortion. There were plenty of gang clashes. Every day we had fighting, rioting, gang clashes. You see parangs, you see bottles, but you see nobody. There is no one you can arrest. Even if you arrest them, you may not have evidence. How do you handle them?

Well we can call it striking fear. We went there boldly. Seven of us will smash up another seven or ten of them. They fight, we fight. ... In gang clashes, your life is in danger. People come with parangs and attack you with spears. Spears, parangs and bottles will come flying above your head. We had no helmets. We had no Police signs. We were also dressed like gangsters. The only thing we had were our guns, with 18 loaders. ... That was all that we carried. We did not have any warrant card or anything else. We just pulled out our guns and shot, because when your life is in danger, you have to shoot to escape.

I think that the Phantom Squad was very effective, because after six months there were no more secret societies on the streets. The hawkers and all no longer faced any extortion. The gangsters went to their hideouts. They went into hiding and disappeared.”

Despite its success, Mr Ganesan has no desire to see the return of the Phantom Squad. “I don’t think that you would like to go back to the past. It looks exciting, but on hindsight, we don’t want the era to come back.”

After the Phantom Squad disbanded, he became an Investigation Officer leading the Secret Society Branch in several Land Divisions. In 1989, he was promoted to Superintendent and given command of ‘A’ Division.

He retired two years later, but to this day, remembers his 3Ds of Policing: Duty, Dedication and Discipline.

“For a Police officer, duty is very important. You must do your duty and perform it with dedication. To do your duty and to be dedicated, you have to have discipline.”



SERVED FROM 1954 to 1974

Ng Woon Poh

“I had no doubt then that he was the collector, and before he could draw his pistol I pulled my revolver from the paper bag.”



“You are a marksman, a man with sharp reflexes, and above all, your build and facial features resemble those of Shaw Vee Meng. You have been chosen to pass off as Shaw Vee Meng to confront a seven to eight member kidnapping ring. Your role is to meet them and pay the ransom money.”

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Director looked at Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Ng Woon Poh as another senior officer picked up the narrative.

“The hostage is Shaw Vee Chung, the youngest son of Asia Film magnate Sir Run Run Shaw. However, being calm and alert, Shaw Vee Chung managed to escape while in the custody of the kidnappers. He is in safe hands now. But the gang members are frenzied and still making threatening phone calls to Mr Shaw’s eldest son, Shaw Vee Meng, demanding ransom and specifying the location to the hand over the money.”

“Woon Poh. You are to apprehend the kidnappers, whether alive or dead. Are you confident?”

It was Saturday, 2 October 1971. Barely an hour earlier, ASP Ng had been reading magazines in the Police Training School library when he was instructed to report to the

CID Conference Room post-haste. Now he was being asked to pretend to be a film director and negotiate with armed kidnappers who had shot their hostage when he resisted their attempts to seize him.

A CID officer told ASP Ng that there was a 50-50 chance that he could end up as a hostage himself or be killed.

Shooting it out with armed men was not new to ASP Ng. Before he joined the Singapore Police Force in 1954, he had been an Inspector with the Malaysian Police Field Force, fighting armed insurgents in the Malaysian jungle. In Singapore, he had served in the CID, Narcotics Bureau and on promotion to ASP, was appointed a Police spokesman because of his proficiency in several languages and dialects.

ASP Ng moved into the Shaw house while the Shaw brothers flew overseas. Pretending to be Mr Shaw Vee Meng, he negotiated with one of the kidnappers over the telephone and they finally agreed to a “compensation” of \$100,000, to be delivered on Sunday, 10 October in the car park of the Shangri-La Hotel.

Before the deadline, 30 detectives were in ambush positions in and around the hotel. ASP Ng briefed his colleagues.

“If the gang comes in a big group, you are to do what is deemed necessary. Do not be concerned about my safety. I will take care of myself. However, if only one gang member appears, you are to let me handle him.”

ASP Ng declined the use of a bullet-proof vest so that his movements would not be hindered. As 4 pm arrived, a detective drove him to the carpark in a Mercedes Benz owned by the Shaw family. When he stepped out of the car carrying a paper bag containing two books and his service revolver, a taxi pulled up and a man alighted and walked towards him carrying a paper parcel. It was Soo Tang Hwat, a gangster who had previously been jailed for armed robbery.

Mr Ng later recounted the events in a coroner’s court.

“I questioned him and he replied that he had come to collect the money. I told him that if he was the right man, he should identify himself. Very reluctantly he tore open the paper parcel and exposed the binoculars. I asked him how he could prove they belonged to Harold Shaw. He appeared annoyed at my last question and abused me with an indecent phrase. He reached for his waist and lifted the hem of his shirt. There was a pistol tucked

in his waistband. I had no doubt then that he was the collector, and before he could draw his pistol I pulled my revolver from the paper bag.

I pointed it at him and instructed him to raise his hands. He faltered a few steps back and reached for his gun. I fired a round. The bullet hit him in the chest.”

Despite his injury, Soo tried to grab a sub-machine gun from a detective and struggled with another as they rushed to subdue him. He was shot two more times before they could disarm him. Soo succumbed to his injuries and died that night.

For his “coolness and exceptional courage” in this case, Mr Ng was awarded the Police Gallantry Medal in June 1975. Reflecting on the incident years later, he said he felt no fear at that time. “After reading the newspaper account the next day, I was stunned that I was engaged in such a highly dangerous situation.”

Mr Ng retired from the Police Force when he reached the retirement age of 45 and joined a local bank as head of security. He passed away in February 2011 at the age of 80.



SERVED FROM 1953 to 1988

Ying Yoke Chang



“They came over in dribs and drabs, planted a bomb here and there and then went back to Batam.”

“Singapore’s leading gang-buster” – Ying Yoke Chang has been called that and more. A highly decorated officer, he cut his teeth at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in the 1960s taking down secret societies and smashing local gambling syndicates, including the extensive network of *chap ji kee* (Hokkien for 12 digits) lottery promoters that ran havoc in Singapore then.

His career, however, could have been cut short during a raid to nab a suspect in March 1969. Acting on a tip-off, Mr Ying took a squad of detectives from the Secret Societies Branch and cornered the suspect in a Ganges Avenue flat. During questioning, the 19-year-old gangster, who went by the alias Ah Tai, pulled a .25 Mauser automatic pistol on him.

“The first thing I did when I saw the pistol was to grab his hand,” recounted Mr Ying. A shot was fired during the struggle that ensued but the bullet missed Mr Ying by mere centimetres.

He was an accidental policeman. “It never crossed my mind to become a Police officer but one day, one of my friends said: ‘Eh, Police Force looking for cadet Inspectors,’ and... I decided to sign up,” said Mr Ying. “To be honest, I didn’t know what I was signing up for.” He became a cadet Inspector in 1953 and discovered he was good at the job.

During Konfrontasi, he learned that Indonesian saboteurs would sneak into Singapore by sea. “They came over in dribs and drabs, planted a bomb here and there and then went back to Batam.” How the weapons were brought into Singapore was a mystery. It was Mr Ying who, while investigating an armed robbery, discovered that a fisherman was being used by the saboteurs to smuggle arms and explosives into Singapore. “The Indonesians gave the weapons to him and said, ‘Bring it back to Singapore, and hide it. Whenever we want them, we will go over and take from you.’”

And there was the riot on Pulau Senang, which had in 1960 been turned into an experimental penal settlement where prisoners were allowed to work and roam freely, and live a relatively normal life. Mr Ying’s team was called in when three men, including the Superintendent of the facility, were killed during a riot by the detainees in 1963. “It took us months to investigate this case and in the end, 18 were convicted and sentenced to death. So ever since then, the island was abandoned,” he noted.

From hunting down violent criminals, Mr Ying moved to reassuring air travellers that Changi Airport’s X-ray machines could detect weapons concealed in fibreglass when he was appointed Commander of the Airport Police Division in 1982. This was after it was reported that Hezbollah terrorists behind the 1985 hijacking of TWA flight 847, had smuggled weapons pass scanners at the airport in Greece by wrapping them in fibreglass.

Mr Ying retired from the Force in 1988. During his 35 years of service in the Force, he experienced many major incidents. Two incidents, however, that stood out personally for him - his encounters with suspects he had put behind bars.

“One day when I was at the barber, I noticed him staring at me... until finally he couldn’t stand it and said, ‘You don’t remember me, ah? You were the one who arrested us,’ and there he was happily shaving my beard with a blade in his hand!” said Mr Ying.

The other incident, which Mr Ying described as “one of the best things” that ever happened to him, was during a chance meeting with Ah Tai after he had served his time in prison. “I recognised him and I asked, ‘How are you? What are you doing now?’ and he replied, ‘Oh now I’m a pastor!’ He had completely turned over a new leaf.”

SERVED FROM 1962 to 1987

Tan Lee Keng

“He opened fire at me, but apparently the bullet was defective and did not cause serious injury although I was bleeding.”

“Most wanted gunman shot dead” – the headlines screamed on 25 November 1972. Lim Ban Lim, who had been on the run for six years, had a bounty of \$17,000 on his head. An ambidextrous sharp-shooter who once gunned down three detectives, he was wanted on both sides of the causeway for armed robbery and murder.

But for the Detective Constable who took down Lim, it was just another day on the job. Mr Tan Lee Keng and his partner, Detective Police Constable (DPC) William Chow Kin Loo, were awarded the Police Gallantry Medal in 1975 for their bravery. Mr Tan is, however, a reluctant hero, who felt that he was just doing his duty. He had joined the Police Force at age 18 because with only a Secondary 2 education, his job prospects were limited. As a Constable he spent much of his career with what was then the Rural West Division, first in uniform and then as a plainclothes detective after 1969.

His encounter with Lim Ban Lim could have cost him his life, but luck and his own quick reflexes saved him, allowing him to continue serving the Force until 1987, when he retired as a Sergeant.

Mr Tan recounted, “Based on a tip-off that wanted criminals Lim Ban Lim and Chua Ah Kow aka Ter Gia were planning to rob a grocery shop at Margaret Drive, Officer-in-Charge (OC) Henry Edwards led an operation to ambush the gunmen. Some planning was done beforehand, and my partner DPC Chow Kin Loo and I staked out at a small coffee shop near the grocery shop.

At about 8 pm that night, we spotted two men walking along Margaret Drive, one in front of the other. I only recognised Ter Gia but didn’t know the man behind him was Lim Ban Lim.

I went up and confronted Ter Gia and caught hold of his hand. Lim Ban Lim sensed something was amiss and realised they were being confronted by the police. He then ran towards a carpark and hid behind a car. He opened fire at me, but apparently the bullet was defective and did not cause serious injury although I was bleeding. I had to let go of Ter Gia’s hand at this time and I remember picking up the bullet.

Lim Ban Lim fired more shots at us from behind the car. A gun battle ensued. I fired two shots at Lim Ban Lim and then chased after Ter Gia. I fired another two shots at Ter Gia but he managed to escape.

Meanwhile, my partner also fired at Lim Ban Lim, who later died of his gunshot wounds.”



Source : [The Straits Times] © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reproduced with permission.

Anthony Low Boon Eng

“I told them, this case is quite bad. With their assistance, we dug up and managed to go through all the pictures of criminals.”

“Why do you want to risk your life looking for me? Today is my day or yours.”

Gia Kang told Sergeant (Sgt) Anthony Low Boon Eng as he held a revolver to the detective's temple. The secret society fighter had jumped onto Mr Low on the thirteenth floor of Block 148 Alexandra Road and seized his service revolver. A case of extortion had now become a hostage crisis and the victim was the Police officer who had once put the gunman behind bars. Mr Low recounted the events.

“The woman that Gia Kang had extorted from, Agnes, was involved in an unreported kidnapping case where she got a dividend of the ransom. But then the news spread later when Gia Kang was in prison. So when he came out from prison he went to look for Agnes. Gia Kang told her that he'll go to the office to collect the money at noon.

Agnes was shocked that gangsters were coming after her. Left with no choice, she called the Police. It so happened that I was in CID, so I was asked to go with another two chaps to check out the case. I pretended to be a clerk in Agnes' office, taking over a counter directly facing the main gate. A short while more, our good friend walked in. He was wearing a singlet, a pair of slippers and a pair of shorts. He looked left and right



and then he spotted me. The moment he spotted me, he quickly turned around and walked out. So I was thinking, this one *kachang puteh* (Malay for peanuts), I know him too well. He went towards Block 148 and disappeared. There's no other place he can go. Vacant land you know, all surrounded by vacant land. He must have gone upstairs. So I decided to try and look for him at the upper floors. In my heart I said, even if he's there, he knows me so well, he'll throw away the gun or weapon, he wouldn't be so daring. Never mind, just take it easy, I know him, he wouldn't dare to do more to me.

So I walked up alone. So confident. I was too confident. I thought that even if he hadn't disposed of the gun, he must be hiding at one of his friend's house. I walked up to the thirteenth floor. Before I reached the top floor, which was the fourteenth floor, he ran down barefooted from the back and hit my head with a gun. Then I 'kenna'. He beat me up. He asked me, 'Why you come back again? You are not scared of death, ah?' I tried to pacify him, you know, soft method, but it didn't work. So at last my gun was taken away. I've got no choice, because I received so many blows to my head with his gun. He kept his own gun and I was held at gun point with my own gun! He told me, 'Today is my day or yours. Either you or me.' Then he told me to follow him down to the ground floor. I don't know why, all of a sudden,

I suggested going down by the lift. He got worried and said, 'No, we go down by the staircase.' If I had kept quiet, and we went down by the lift, he would have escaped and I would have been shot dead.

From the thirteenth floor, we went down slowly. I told myself that I had no choice but to try my best and fight it out. It was not going to be easy to take me away like that without a fight. I tried to snatch the gun on many attempts but failed. So I waited for my opportunity. When I was two flights of stairs from the ground floor, I managed to grab hold of the chamber of my gun. In the process of taking my gun back, I had broken his finger. However, in that moment, he didn't feel the pain from his broken finger. When we were three steps away from the ground floor, he jumped backwards and pulled out his own gun. As he did so, I quickly fired at him. He was still holding a gun in his hand but he could not fire as, as unknown to both of us then, I had broken his finger earlier. I shot three times and he died on the spot when one bullet went straight into his chest.”

Sgt Low was awarded the Police Gallantry Medal in June 1975 for his heroism in taking down Kia Gang. The gun recovered from Gia Kang was later identified as having been used in three previous murders.

But for Mr Low, the memorable cases are the ones where his painstaking study of modus operandi and case file details allowed him to identify suspects, build rapport with them and convince them to confess. He had hardcore criminals cooperate by threatening their own friends to give up stolen goods. And at a time when criminal records were kept on index cards, he cracked cold cases by combing through them to find those fitting descriptions provided by victims. The Bugis Street serial rapist who preyed on school girls between 1983 and 1985 was caught when Mr Low re-interviewed witnesses and used their description of a tall man with a huge nose and big eyes to identify him.

“I went to do a search with the Criminal Records Office (CRO). The admin staff are my old friends. I told them, this case is quite bad. With their assistance, we dug up and managed to go through all the pictures of criminals. It took a lot of time. We worked on it for many days, until eventually I found one picture which could be the one,” he recalled, noting with satisfaction that the rapist was convicted and sent to jail.

After retiring in 1993, Mr Low continued to work with the Force until 2002. He is currently with the Ministry of Manpower as a Senior Employment Inspector.



They Were No Ordinary Women

The first 31 women to join the Singapore Police Force in 1949 – as special constables – probably never thought they would see the day when a woman would attain the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police (AC), then the third highest rank in the Force. And yet, not only have women been ACs for several years now, two of the seven Senior ACs currently serving in the Singapore Police Force are women – SAC Zuraidah Abdullah and SAC Florence Chua.

Today's trailblazers know they stand on the shoulders of pioneers like Mary Quintal, Mandy Goh, Lois Lim and the first five women Investigation Officers (IOs) in the Land Divisions. Their successes made it possible for a woman to win the first "Tied to Police Service" Overseas Merit Scholarship in 1983 and two women university graduates – Ng Guat Ting and Wong Ee Eu – to join the Force as direct entry senior officers in 1984.

The women pioneers did not just take up postings as telephone operators, traffic control officers and lock-up guards for female prisoners and juveniles. Trained as rigorously as the men, albeit separately, they were decoys in street operations, bodyguards to families of our leaders and others under threat, and served on the riot squad's front lines whenever students and women were involved in protests. As Evelyn Wong said, there were so few police women in the early days that they were drawn into every contingency, and loved every moment of it: "We stayed in the station, bathed in the station, slept in the station. We rested in the storeroom on a plank. ... I don't know how we coped, we just did!"

SERVED FROM 1949 to 1974

First Officer Commanding of the Women's Squad

Mary Quintal nee Voon



“... those days we didn't have all these modern technology except for the radio and I think the women police did exceptionally well and were accepted by the society.”

With her pretty face, extremely small hands and feet, well-spoken English, the way she looked in a cheongsam, young Mary Voon was an instant hit with the press, which found it hard to see her as a tough police officer. As did the criminals, more than one of whom made the mistake of thinking she was an easy target, only to find themselves under arrest.

Madam Voon, better known later by her married name Mrs Mary Quintal, was a pioneer in an experiment begun by the Singapore Police in 1949. That year, 31 English-educated women joined the Special Constabulary. On 1 January 1950, 10 of them signed on as regulars and became the first females in the Civil Service to receive the same pay as their male counterparts. One of them was Mrs Mary Quintal.

A sportswoman who was runner-up in the 1948 Singapore badminton championship, Mrs Quintal knew she never wanted to work in an office all day “or do anything in the least boring”. She thought she might be an interior decorator or a physical training instructor, until a family friend who was a Police officer told her she was just the type of girl the Police wanted. Over the objections of her mother, who wanted her to go to medical school, Mrs Quintal enlisted and embarked on an intensive training programme at the Police Training School that included law lectures, marching, shooting and unarmed self-defence. She liked the judo classes so much she took

up private lessons every day for a month with a black-belt instructor and became so proficient she ended up fracturing his toe.

As she had a Senior Cambridge school certificate, Mrs Quintal was promoted to Inspector after five months, and shortly after, sent to England to see how women police were organised there and to bring back applicable ideas. She became an instant media star, greeted by photographers and columnists on her arrival in London.

“The Inspector hit London with a bang. ... Her attractive smiling face appeared in the national dailies with snippets of her life story and admiring comments on her cheongsam and her well-spoken English,” *The Straits Times* reported in September 1950.

Unaffected by the publicity, Mrs Quintal focused her attention on her work, which she did not find appealing as the top crimes committed by Singapore women were gambling, suicide and prostitution, whereas her English colleagues had to deal with shop-lifting, drug-trafficking, and confidence tricks. Undeterred, she obtained permission to attend an instructor's course as her job on returning would include lecturing, supervising, recruiting and training.

The course proved to be very useful, for on her return, Mrs Quintal was made Officer Commanding (OC) of the Women's Squad, a job she held for the next 21 years.

In that role, she was responsible for the welfare of all women officers, checking in with their male supervisors on their work performance, arranging duty rosters for jobs that required women officers, such as guarding hospitalised female suspects. She also drew on the lessons she learned during her attachment to Scotland Yard to push for women Police officers to be posted to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), specifically the Gambling Suppression Branch, Anti-Vice and Secret Societies units.

Throughout her career, Mrs Quintal advocated for the rights of women to join the Police, the need for better educated recruits and the improvement of gender relations within the Force. Asked to sit on a committee to redesign the Police uniform following independence, she not only argued for a more comfortable material and functional design, she also went against explicit orders and introduced trousers for the women Police mobile squad contingent that was being set up.

“My fear was the injuries to my girls if there should be an accident ... With trousers their legs would be protected but with skirts, their lower limbs would not be protected. ... And the Deputy Commissioner said they shouldn't fall. I said, ‘Well, accidents happen, you cannot prevent accidents.’”

Her dedication inspired numerous young women to join the Police. At the same time she continued to take part in operations, often as a decoy to nab street criminals. She felt she had to have the courage to do a job herself before assigning it to one of her girls.

Mrs Quintal often took delight in telling stories of how she would surprise offenders who were not expecting to encounter a female Police officer. Once she had to struggle with a young snatch thief in the early hours as the back-up team waited nearby because the whistle she was to use to summon them was covered by a handkerchief and made no noise. As the thief grabbed the whistle, she gripped it with her teeth and continued to blow until it finally let out a piercing scream. The thief was arrested and Mrs Quintal received a commendation.

As a pioneer in a largely all-male Police Force, Mrs Quintal found herself hitting a glass ceiling; the establishment rank of the OC Women's Squad was Inspector and she had already been one for more than 10 years. Only after she indicated she was considering a job with the Hong Kong Police Force, whose top rank for women was Superintendent then, was the bar raised for Singapore policewomen. In 1961, at the passing out parade of Police recruits, including a squad of women Constables, then Singapore President Yusof Ishak announced that the post of Commanding Officer of the Women Police Contingent would be raised to the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP).

Mrs Quintal was promoted to ASP soon after, a rank she held until she retired in 1974.

For being the first woman senior Police officer, Mrs Quintal was inducted into the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame in 2014.



First Women Investigation Officers



The life of an Investigation Officer (IO) in the 1980s was extremely tough, marked by 24-hour shifts every five days, handling a multitude of cases that ranged from housebreaking and theft to sexual offences and robberies. For more than a century, IOs were all men. That changed in 1980, when five women were appointed IOs in the Land Divisions.

The five – Madam (Mdm) Irene Lim, Mdm Patricia Giaw, Mdm Shariffa Fatoum Alsagoff, Mdm Salmah Binte Shariff and Mdm Wong Lan Yang – were posted to ‘C’, ‘E’, ‘G’, ‘D’ and ‘F’ Divisions, respectively, after completing the training course for Police Inspectors at the Police Academy.

They were already seasoned Police officers. Mdm Giaw and Mdm Shariffa had been security officers to the Prime Minister’s family. Mdm Salmah was one of the first women to be appointed Assistant Duty Officer. Even the youngest, Mdm Wong, had already accumulated eight years of service. As Mdm Giaw jested, they did not have university degrees, but they each had “a QBE – Qualified By Experience”.

The IO’s job required them to interview witnesses, interrogate accused persons, investigate at scenes of crime, prepare crime reports and investigation papers, and make arrests as well as supervise the junior officers who perform investigative duties on the same tour as them. As one of their supervisors, a Divisional Officer-in-Charge Crime, told *Police Life* in 1980, they did “what the male officers do – there is no favouritism or special treatment”.

The five women IOs knew they were setting an important precedent for their gender if they were to break into the other all-male domains of the Police Force. Until then, women largely performed desk jobs – as telephone operators and radio operators – although that was slowly changing with two troops of women officers being trained for riot and crowd control and the formation of the Women Task Force the previous year.

“It was put out as a test, so that the younger generation (of women) could take over,” recalled Mdm Salmah of their appointment as IOs. “That’s why we never gave up. Die, die, we will do.”

It was a challenging job that required personal sacrifices, as the women were also wives and mothers and the 24 hour shifts and irregular overtime work meant they would not be there for their children at some key events. So they learned to organise their time, for, as Mdm Shariffa said, they were determined “to prove that it’s possible for women to do IO work”.

The women were posted to different Divisions, the sole pioneer in each station, but they formed their own support group, sharing ideas and grievances. For two years, they were the only five women in the same job. Their shared experiences bonded them and they kept in touch with one another through the years.

SERVED FROM 1961 to 1996

Patricia Giaw Yin Yin



Madam Patricia Giaw

“I was posted to Tanglin, which had many posh and sophisticated residents, but also many crimes. We noticed that some cross-dressers were pick-pocketing people on the streets. They would hug their victims and take their wallets. As IO, I had to interview them and have them searched for stolen items. Usually the women officers would stand by because we were not sure if they were men or women.”

SERVED FROM 1961 to 1998

Irene Lim



Madam Irene Lim

“As an IO in ‘C’ Division, my job was rather interesting, with ups and downs. I found it satisfying when I could solve a case. Once a family of tourists reported that they had lost their wallet in the hotel room. We searched the staff lockers and found the stolen property and solved the case in a few days. There were also terrifying times. Once, this lady came running into the station claiming that she had been robbed by two men behind Desker Road. I went there with a detective. We saw two figures in the dark alley and asked them to follow us back to the station. They complied, but when I checked them, they had large knives! I realised I was very lucky that they were compliant.”

I learned a lot, including when a body with a big slit in the stomach with the intestines hanging out was not murder but a suicide case, because when the wind blew, the body hit the building and got cut. I learned a lot from the men. I worked together with them as a team and learnt how to interrogate suspects. The men were understanding.”

SERVED FROM 1963 to 1994

Shariffa Fatoum Alsagoff



Madam Shariffa Fatoum Alsagoff

I was attached to 'G' Division, based at Joo Chiat Police Station. My first case was a suicide case – a wife who had family issues. She wore all white; it looked like a wedding dress. When I attended to the case, members of the public questioned my decision to do this job, as a woman. ...

As a police officer, there is a lot of variety in the work you do – admin, investigation, etc. You get a complete picture.”

Madam Salmah Binte Shariff

My job as IO was quite challenging. I was posted to Queenstown Police Station, the largest constituency at that time and it was difficult to cover all the areas. Later, they divided up the sections. As an IO, when you are put on duty for 24-hours with all the men – imagine, the men are all under you, you are the IO. It was challenging for the men too, working under a woman IO recently posted there. We had difficult cases, like rape, murder, housebreaking in the middle of the night, taking place at times when you're tired but you have to go to the scene. I remember all those death cases – suicide, dead babies, hanging, drowning.”

After two years as IOs, the five officers were posted to the new Crime Prevention Branch as senior Crime Prevention and Community Relations Officers.

To this day, they are proud to have been pioneers, to have broken the glass ceiling, paving the way for female graduates to be recruited in 1984 as direct entry senior officers, where like the men, their first posting is to be an IO in a Land Division.

Said Mdm Salmah, “I have no regrets, because we gained experience. We learned a lot.”

Mdm Giaw almost quit the Force several times when being an IO got too arduous. But she persevered and was rewarded to find that she changed lives. Relying on her own instincts as a mother, she once decided to let a 15-year-old boy, who shoplifted out of peer pressure, off with a warning. She is proud that he is today a practising lawyer and doing well. Similarly, Madam Salmah has had people she arrested come up to her to express their respect for the way she carried out her duties. “They recognise me for doing my job, even when they were on the wrong side of the law.”

SERVED FROM 1968 to 1999

Salmah Binte Shariff



SERVED FROM 1963 to 1989

Chong Pak Yin

“Because we had so many records, it took a tremendously long time ... a few years to computerise everything.”



There was a time when criminal records were kept on index cards in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and it was Chong Pak Yin's job to check if an accused had a criminal record.

“If he/she is a repeat offender, we will need to put up a report to be submitted to the court so that the court is able to give a fair sentence. So we need to do our job with due diligence. That's what we did at CRO and that was the most important thing,” she said.

Then soon after she joined the Criminal Records Office (CRO), there was a push in 1972 to “bank” the records on a computer server. It was an extremely tedious task as Madam (Mdm) Chong and her colleagues had to input the records on punch cards and tapes, incorporating both old and new NRIC numbers.

“It was even more troublesome,” recalled Mdm Chong. “Because we had so many records, it took a tremendously long time ... a few years to computerise everything. It wasn't easy. We did it through shift duty. When we had an accused, we had to check his/her name against the cards, and also on the computer, so it was double work.”

Through the efforts of Mdm Chong and her colleagues, the records of more than 20,000 known secret society

members and other convicted felons were computerised, making it possible for Police officers at key installations – the Airport, Causeway and Police stations – to check the records of suspects in seconds, from computers at their desks. The computerisation effort then was hailed for bringing the Singapore Police Force into the modern era, in line with Police Forces in other major cities, which had begun to turn to data processing techniques to help combat crime.

Mdm Chong started her police career in the Traffic Police in 1963. As there were not many traffic lights and zebra crossings then, one of her roles was to control the traffic outside schools to ensure the safety of school children when they went to school. There were also other very mundane but pivotal tasks, such as counting the number of vehicles at specific locations so that planners could determine where to install traffic lights.

Although women officers were usually kept off the frontline then, the occasional outbreaks of communal violence meant they too had to be trained for riot control duties to provide extra manpower. To this day, Mdm Chong still keeps the helmet she was issued during her Riot Squad training days; it bears her service number “3847”. It is a small keepsake from a career she really enjoyed.



SERVED FROM 1963 to 1994

Evelyn Wong Ah Chai



“If I was younger, I would not mind going back and going through it all over again.”

When Evelyn Wong Ah Chai joined the Force in 1963, there were few postings available to women Constables. Yet, because there were so few women and the Force was chronically short-staffed, she found herself pulled into many different jobs.

“In those days there were not that many policewomen. When needed, all the female officers would be recalled from all over Singapore. You can’t say I don’t want to. No way,” she said. So in the first 10 years of her career, she did riot control, guard duty, bodyguard duty and decoy operations, in addition to her routine duties at Paya Lebar Police Station.

When an operation was mounted in 1964 to crack down on left wing students in Nanyang University, Madam (Mdm) Wong was called up. “The few of us female officers in our Division were only told by our Sergeant to wait at the Police Academy at 3 am; we had no idea what was going on. At about 4 am, the *ang chia* (Hokkien for the anti-riot red vehicle) arrived and we followed in a Black Maria to the University. Together with the Police Reserve Unit (PRU) officers, we formed a cordon around a hostel block to prevent anyone from entering or leaving while officers searched the place for anti-government brochures and papers. We had angry students throwing

glass bottles at us. Luckily we managed to duck and the PRU officers had shields.”

Being a trained markswoman, Mdm Wong was also deployed to be the personal security officer to the principal of Zhong Hua Girls’ School for almost 2 years during the wave of protests by Chinese school students against the government. The principal was assumed by students to be working to abolish the Chinese education system and there were fears they would attack her. Mdm Wong remembers the mission for the long hours. “I had to pick her up from her home, see her to school, see her home after school, and sometimes when she had meetings after school, I had to stay with her, and at times I would reach home after mid-night.”

At Paya Lebar Police Station, she was often called on to perform undercover and decoy jobs. If there were spikes in snatch thefts, she would have to loiter in the likely hot spots, adorned with jewellery, to lure the thieves. There were also operations to nab drug traffickers. “I was quite fearful during such operations, especially during those days when drugs were common. We would be in plainclothes, follow the detectives, act as a couple and watch out for drug peddlers in pubs and discos.

During the 1969 Jalan Kayu riots, Mdm Wong did not roll with the *ang chia*, but her calming presence in the Police station was reassuring for the people who streamed in with injuries, looking for help and protection. “People kept coming in and going out, running up and down. Some had to be sent to the hospital, some had to be arrested. Others were coming into the station for protection, so even when we had not finished recording statements from one group, another group would come in. It was just very messy and very hectic.”

In 1971, she was posted to Radio Division as a radio operator, then spent two years at the Police Academy as a telephone operator. Thereafter she served in the Airport Police, first at Paya Lebar and then at Changi Airport when it opened. The jobs tended to be clerical, which Mdm Wong remembered for their tedium.

The most tension-filled time for her was during the SQ117 hijack in March 1991, when she was manning the operations room as a Senior Staff Sergeant. “I was already off-duty, but I got a call at 10 pm asking me to go back to the airport. I thought it was a prank, but when I reached the station, I saw all the tactical teams there, with all the spotlights switched on.”

In the operations room, she oversaw the receipt and exchange of messages by all relevant parties – there was no room for error. “We worked almost 24 hours straight,” recalled Mdm Wong. “It was only until the next afternoon that everything was over, that the operations room stood down.”

Mdm Wong retired in 1994 and still misses the work. “If I was younger, I would not mind going back and going through it all over again.”



They Protected Leaders

Marksmen, martial arts exponents, and athletes - often the best the Force had to offer when the call came for volunteers willing to take a bullet to protect Singapore's leaders and visiting heads of states. The men from the old Security Branch (SB) were that and more. Some like former SB chief Tan Kah Wan were thrust into the deep-end, ordered by then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to set up a team of bodyguards for Singapore's first Cabinet. Mr Tan literally raised the SB from scratch; its successes paved the way for its evolution into today's Security Command (SecCom), an elite unit in the Singapore Police Force.

Mr Tan and his band of fledgling bodyguards wrote the book on close-protection operations for future generations of SB and SecCom officers. And their personal stories of service reveal a deep sense of loyalty and commitment to Singapore and the founding leaders of the young nation.

SERVED FROM 1951 to 1981

Tan Kah Wan



“There are so many of them I can’t remember all.”

Iknew him closely... He was an upright man, a good man,” former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew told reporters at the funeral wake of Tan Kah Wan in December 2011. Mr Tan was the former Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the Security Branch (SB), and Mr Lee’s personal protection officer, or SO, from 1965-1971.

The first Singaporean Police officer to attend the FBI National Academy run by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation in Quantico, Virginia, in 1965, Mr Tan was tasked by Prime Minister Lee to select and train a team of Police officers to protect Singapore’s first cabinet. He set up a comprehensive security and protection service not only for VIPs but also vital installations.

And he accompanied the Prime Minister on many of his overseas trips. When Mr Lee went on a six-week sabbatical at Harvard University in the United States of America in 1968, Mr Tan went along as his security Aide-de-Camp. As Mr Lee was later to note, “we kept in touch even after Harvard”.

In his role as OC of SB, Mr Tan oversaw the security of 30 Heads of State during the Commonwealth Leaders Conference in Singapore in 1971. The next year he was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Gold). The citation read: “He built up the Security Branch with devotion and ability until it became a professional outfit. That the Security Branch could quietly and efficiently undertake the responsibility for the security of visiting dignitaries, including over 30 Commonwealth heads of government in January 1971, was primarily because of Tan Kah Wan’s hard work and leadership.”

Joining as a Constable in 1951, Mr Tan, a school boxer and rugby player, served in every operational unit of the Force, rising to the rank of Assistant Commissioner – then the third highest rank in the Police Force, in 1977. As Commander (Detachments), he founded the Police Tactical Unit (or SWAT) in 1978 in response to the growing threat of hijacking and international terrorism. He also introduced the FBI “fast draw” shooting style to the Force, an approach that compared to the colonial static standing stance, allowed officers to respond faster to armed gunmen. And there were many SWAT operations led by Mr Tan where they were shot at. One resulted in the death of Malaysia’s top criminal Yong Kwee Kong, and the other the capture of two members of the notorious pan-Malaysian Botak Chin gang.

Mr Tan had so many missions that when he was asked which was most memorable, he said: “There are so many of them I can’t remember all. I don’t want to sound boastful.”

His most memorable operation, he eventually revealed, was not one that involved gunfights, but cracking down on the bookies who were operating openly at the Singapore Turf Club in the late 1950s. “I was the first officer to re-organise the anti-gambling branch of the CID in 1959. ... We launched a big blitz and rounded up these bookies.”

Despite a career that often took him away from his family and put his life at risk, Mr Tan never regretted joining the Police Force. “I have enjoyed every minute of it and would re-join it if I were a young man again,” he told a reporter in a pre-retirement interview in 1980. “It’s a challenging job which requires total commitment and lots of sacrifices and dedication.”

SERVED FROM 1952 to 1986

Edwin Oliver Thompson



“He warned me to be careful, to take a different route back, and not to get too involved in the office.”

A marksman, Edwin Oliver Thompson was selected to join the Security Branch right out of Police Training School and entrusted with the safety of Singapore leaders such as Governor Sir John Nicole and Chief Ministers David Marshall and Lim Yew Hock. That early experience came in useful when he was appointed an Honorary Aide-de-Camp to the President and had to look after Emperors and Prime Ministers.

Among the world leaders he escorted were the Emperor Halle Selassie of Ethiopia, Richard Nixon (who was then a former Vice-President, having not yet been elected US President), and Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai. Mr Thompson still remembers the visits of the Ethiopian and Indian leaders for the food advice they gave him. During his visit to Singapore in 1968, the Emperor told him the coffee in Singapore was bad, and that he should get coffee sent in from Ethiopia. Mr Desai, who came in May 1978, hated the hotel food, so Mr Thompson had to send his men to Little India to buy food for him.

Soon after he was posted to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in 1970 to supervise administration

and several of the operational units, he found his own personal safety at risk.

“One day in my office, I had a call from the director of CPIB ... a straightforward man, no fooling around with him. He told me to see him personally. He warned me to be careful, to take a different route back, and not to get too involved in the office... This was because quite a number of the detectives in the Secret Societies Branch were involved in corruption. They knew I was strict and not inside the group, and wanted to get rid of me. Somebody tampered with the electrical power switch in my office, which could have electrocuted me. However, I managed to spot the exposed wires in time. I think it was an inside job.”

Mr Thompson was subsequently seconded to the Prisons Department as its Deputy Director, from where he retired in 1986.

To this day, he does not regret quitting teacher training college to become a police officer. “I liked my gun very much,” he said.



SERVED FROM 1953 to 1987

Robert William Woodworth

“22 people running after a ball posed a serious danger to the President’s safety.”

When the football organisers asked if the President would step into the middle of the field and kick off the match by kicking the ball, Robert William Woodworth’s immediate response was “No”. As the Aide-de-Camp (ADC) to President Yusof Ishak from 1966 to 1969, his job included advising the Istana on the security aspects of the President’s programme, and as far as he was concerned, 22 people running after a ball posed a serious danger to the President’s safety.

Mr Woodworth was the first Police officer to be appointed a full-time ADC to President Yusof, his predecessor having been a military officer. Then with Traffic Police, he was never told what criteria an ADC had to meet but recalled being interviewed by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. “I must have passed because I gave the right answers,” he quipped. Character was obviously a key criteria in the selection. Then, as now, ADCs were expected to be constantly by the President’s side and to function as his confidential secretaries. Only men and women of integrity and with good interpersonal and communication skills would be chosen for the job.

For three years, Mr Woodworth accompanied the President to numerous state functions, ceremonies and courtesy calls from foreign leaders such as the Duke of Edinburgh, Australian Prime Minister John Gorton and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. He spoke Malay and was able to forge a strong bond with the President, he believed, as Mr Yusof would occasionally invite him for a private chat and exchange views with him on politics. When his term as ADC ended, he was sometimes invited back to the Istana with his family on Sundays, and asked to accompany President Yusof on personal trips.



After he went back to regular Police work, Mr Woodworth was called back into service in 1979 to 1980 as an Honorary ADC to President Benjamin Sheares. He once again showed how dedicated he was to the safety of the President and his family. At one function at the Istana, Mrs Sheares missed a step while walking down the cobblestone steps to the lawn with the President and lost her balance. Mr Woodworth quickly caught her before she fell. The next day the President sent him a thank you letter.

It was moments like this, when leaders made gestures of thoughtfulness, that Mr Woodworth remembered most of his time as an ADC.

In 1972, when Queen Elizabeth II came for a three-day state visit in 1972, he was tasked to brief her on the ceremonies and functions she would be attending in Singapore. As she was staying on board the royal yacht H.M.Y. Britannia, he was invited to lunch and dine with her on board. When she learned that his wife had given birth to a daughter, the Queen celebrated the occasion with a champagne toast, he said, recalling his “extreme good fortune”.



SERVED FROM 1962 to 1968

David Lim Poh Quee

“And it allowed me to understand why Singapore is what it is today.”

“The experience in the Security Branch was amazing. It was the first time I read anything of a political nature, when I was in the Security Branch. I had the opportunity to know what the ministers were reading. That was the first time I laid my hands on the Far Eastern Economic Review. So I read through it. Oh, so these are what the ministers are reading? I took a liking to politics after that because I used to read these magazines, free of charge. I couldn’t buy them myself, they were expensive in those days.

I was assigned sometimes to the Prime Minister’s team of Security Branch officers, following Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Sometimes I was assigned to be the security officer, just one security officer, for Dr Goh Keng Swee. Or for Mr Devan Nair. It allowed me the opportunity to look at them, close-range. And it allowed me to understand why Singapore is what it is today. Because of leaders like them. I am sure all the other leaders are like that. The sacrifices they made, the simple austere lifestyle they lived. The amount of hard work they put in just to ensure that Singapore would be a better country for people like us, to have a better life and a better future. No compromising at all.

I was tasked with multiple duties including handing out salaries to everybody in Security Branch. In those days salaries was not put into the bank, you know. It came in a pay packet – cold hard cash, inside the pay packet. Tan Kah Wan trusted me, a young man, new in Security Branch, he trusted me to do that. See the confidence and courage? Very few COs in those days would have the confidence and courage in a young man like me, giving me space to grow.



I still remember when he was talking to me about how to deal with corrupt officers. He said, ‘Poh Quee, do you know how to deal with corrupt officers?’ I said, ‘Sack them la, remove them.’ He said, ‘No, don’t do that. Transfer them to a place where they have every opportunity to get corrupted. Send them to either Anti-Vice, Gambling-Suppression Branch or Narcotics.... Send them to any one of these places... Because there will be a lot of opportunities for them to get corrupted. And you can bet on it, within a short time, they will be caught with their pants down with all the evidence.’ That’s Tan Kah Wan, you see. He thinks out of the box. I have such a great admiration for that man.”

Mr Lim went on to serve in the Internal Security Department (ISD), and after 37 years of service in the Home Team, he retired in 1999. After retirement, he went on to craft rehabilitation programmes at Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA) from 2008 – 2015.



They Took Down Crime Syndicates, Killers and Terrorists

The *chap ji kee* and Ah Long San syndicates. Adrian Lim ritual murders. Spyros accident. SQ 117 hijack. Officers from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) handled each one of these major cases - headline news in independent Singapore. As with much of Police work, the cases were varied and the challenges dynamic. But the satisfaction of solving a case and seeking justice for victims and survivors kept our pioneers going. They did not flinch even when they suspected fellow police officers of working with organised crime syndicates; indeed weeding out corrupt cops became as important as putting away crime bosses.

Peter Szeto Yee



“There were 20, 30 of us and we were each given an envelope with names inside and told to get our men and go arrest those people.”

The 60s saw the heyday of gambling syndicates in Singapore. Playing *chap ji kee* (Hokkien for 12 digits) was the pastime of choice for many in the young nation. Based on an ancient Chinese game of chance involving 12 numbers, it was also an illegal lottery rigged to ensure the vast majority of punters always lost. Its popularity meant that at its peak, an illicit system of promoters, agents, bookies, accountants, cashiers and couriers numbering in the thousands were required to support the local *chap ji kee* syndicates.

Efforts by the Police to take down the major syndicates were often futile. Many of the suspects that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officers managed to nab were usually small-time runners - not the big-time promoters who were running the show. The promoters often managed to evade the law by not being involved directly in operations, using trusted aides and through protection from corrupt police officers.

Enter Peter Szeto Yee. A major reshuffle of the Secret Societies Branch in CID in 1967 led to his taking over as Officer-in-Charge (OC) Gambling Suppression Branch from Mr Ying Yoke Chang, who briefed him on the discreet investigations into the *chap ji kee* syndicates he had initiated.

“Yoke Chang and I started covert investigations into *chap ji kee* syndicates after an anonymous petition to the Police,” recounted Mr Szeto. “Turns out the petition was put up by splinter groups trying to eliminate the main syndicates which ... were well connected with powerful friends including officers within the Police Force.”

Undeterred, Mr Szeto's team made a breakthrough when they managed to turn a sub-promoter from a major syndicate. The man gave up the names of most of the key promoters and sub-promoters of the *Sio Poh* and *Shanghai Tai Tong* syndicates – then the biggest groups running illegal lotteries.

The *Sio Poh* syndicate, for instance, had a well-oiled *chap ji kee* machinery. In 1968, its operations were estimated to have generated more than \$300,000 in takings a day. Most of its promoters were headmen in the *Chap Sar Ioh* secret society; a few were also policemen.

The two CID officers decided that it was futile going after the syndicates openly because they always managed to get rid of the evidence before they were raided by the Police. “They did not have to handle the documents, and documents were handled only by trusted aides,” recalled Mr Szeto. “So if we moved against them, we got nothing.”

They decided to apply to the Home Affairs Minister for authorisation to detain syndicate members and kingpins under Section 55, the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act, which allowed for the detention of suspected criminals in the interests of public safety, peace and good order.

“We heard nothing of it for some time, then one day, we were all called up. I think all the senior officers from CID were called up. There were 20, 30 of us and we were each given an envelope with names inside and told to get our men and go arrest those people.”

They were not told who the targets were but when Mr Szeto opened the envelopes, he knew at once they were linked to the *chap ji kee* syndicates. To prevent leaks, the Ministry had decided to turn the operation over to the

Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB), whose director drew up the arrest list.

The joint CID-CPIB operation in 1968 lasted six months. “Over 100 people were arrested... two of them police officers, including a police detective who was also a promoter of the syndicate,” he recalled.

The *chap ji kee* syndicates were totally smashed and never made a comeback. Mr Szeto was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Silver) in 1970. “It was the highest award conferred on an SPF officer that year,” he noted with satisfaction.

Mr Szeto went on to establish the Civil Defence Command in 1981 and retired as Deputy Commissioner of Police (Administration) in 1991.



SERVED FROM 1970 to 2006

Chua Cher Yak



“I always had this hypothesis that he must be protected by somebody in the Force but we didn’t know who.”

The target was Chua Tiong Tiong, a big-time loanshark in the 1980s better known by his gangland moniker Ah Long San. The case against him, however, was hard to crack because his henchmen and runners observed a strong code of silence, mainly because they were afraid to implicate him. Chua Cher Yak, then Director Criminal Investigation Department (CID), was determined to put Ah Long San behind bars and opened a file on him in 1987.

“I had news that he was a big-time loan shark, and wondered if his capital came from proceeds of crime. I always had this hypothesis that he must be protected by somebody in the Force but we didn’t know who.”

It would take more than a decade for a breakthrough. Meanwhile, Mr Chua was seconded to the Prisons Department in 1991, and then transferred to the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) as its Director in 1995.

And that was when Mr Chua finally got his man. The CPIB was able to turn a syndicate insider and persuade him to testify against the crime boss in a string of offences.

Ah Long San was eventually jailed 10 years in 2001 – after three years of exhausting court hearings where his lawyers mounted a fierce defence. The extensive web of his illicit network and the sheer amount of evidence collected meant the case against him was a complex one.

And Mr Chua’s initial hunch was right on the money. Ah Long San did have dirty cops on his payroll. Ten corrupt officers were arrested for accepting bribes to be his moles in the Police, including an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) whom he had helped put through law school in Britain.

“When Ah Long San went to jail, we felt good about cracking that case,” said Mr Chua. “Personally, I felt vindicated because my judgment had been proven to be correct.”

That dogged sense of wanting to get his man was one that Mr Chua had honed during his early years in the Force.

Graduating from the Police Academy as a Probationary ASP, he began his first posting in ‘G’ Division as a Routine Officer in 1971. After a year or so, he found himself going after gunmen as part of the Police Reserve Unit 2.

In such dangerous and high risk operations then, it was all down to an officer’s intuition, said Mr Chua. “There was no doctrine on how you should approach the situation. So you do it on gut feel - that’s where leadership comes in.”

Those were the same set of qualities Mr Chua would count on over his 36 years in law enforcement, whether he was leading adrenaline-filled operations going after illegal drag racers on Orchard Road, or more mundane – but no less critical - work like developing road safety measures while he was at the Traffic Police or introducing the modern Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) when he was at CID.

Even as he contemplated retirement in 2005, Mr Chua told a newspaper: “Old soldiers don’t die. Neither do they fade away. I will probably be active somewhere later on.”

Mr Chua retired from the Force as Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police the following year.

SERVED FROM 1967 to 2000

Jagjit Singh



“I would go so far as to say that at times, the SQ117 drama appeared identical to what we had exercised.”

As Director of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) from 1984 – 1987, Mr Jagjit Singh dealt with many major incidents, including the collapse of the Hotel New World in 1986. Even as rescuers worked to pull out bodies, his CID team had to collect evidence and interview survivors. They had to identify not only the dead, but also trace the living as distraught relatives feared “missing” loved ones were buried in the rubble.

“At its peak, the list of such ‘missing’ persons exceeded 100. CID had to mount a major effort to try to trace these persons. This was done locally through intensive enquiries and overseas through liaison with embassies and Interpol. Within 48 hours CID was able to confirm the well-being of all such persons with the exception of the 33 who died in the debris,” Mr Jagjit recalled.

When he became Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations) from 1987 to 1994, he had important command and control responsibilities in various operation plans dealing with security sensitive terrorist-related incidents.

On 6 March 1991 when SQ117 was hijacked by four Pakistani terrorists, an activation of numerous Government officials was set in motion. All were informed by Police Radio Division and convened at the operation base at the Changi Airport Control Tower. Mr Jagjit commenced operations as Head of the Command and Control Group (CCG). The CCG operated under the Executive Group (EG), which for this incident was chaired by then PS (Defence), Lim Siong Guan.

As Head CCG, Mr Jagjit directed his Ground Commander, Assistant Commissioner Lim Soo Gee, to freeze the area around the plane and to allow no movement in the area without his approval. Mr Jagjit then focused attention on obtaining information on the hijackers and what was happening in the plane. This was accomplished through

negotiations conducted by CCG’s Negotiation Team and through the efforts of the Intelligence Group. They were able to gather all the information that would be crucial for a successful storming (if the EG decided to adopt the storming option).

By 6am, it became apparent that the terrorists were no longer interested in negotiations. They wanted the plane to take off for Australia, though it was very short of fuel, and threatened to start killing the passengers. The EG decided to storm the plane. Mr Jagjit immediately conveyed the storming instruction to his Ground Commander who was co-located with the commandos at the Airport Police Station near the tail end of the plane. The Ground Commander activated the commandos who proceeded to storm the plane.

“From the Control Tower, we could see the shadowy figures of the commandos approaching the plane and climbing up their ladders to the plane doors before they disappeared into the plane. Those were probably the tensest moments in my 33-year career,” said Mr Jagjit. “If the storming failed, the plane may have exploded in a ball of fire. However, a couple of minutes later, we got the message from the commandos that all the four hijackers had been killed. There were no casualties among the crew or passengers either. A moment of silence, and then all in the Control Tower burst into cheers and clapping.”

Looking back on the incident, Mr Jagjit emphasised the importance of training and exercises. “As Head CCG I recall going through some seven or eight aircraft hijack exercises, some of which lasted 36 hours. A variety of scenarios and terrorist demands were exercised. All involved became more confident and familiar with the hijack processes. I would go so far as to say that at times, the SQ117 drama appeared identical to what we had exercised.”

SERVED FROM 1956 to 1994

Sri Kumaran Menon

“If we had not arrested him, Adrian would have killed more children.”



Sri Kumaran Menon, who goes by S.K., has been known to make a suspect cry as he confessed to murder. Other hardened criminals have quivered and found it hard to keep to the lies they made up to cover their crimes when questioned by the veteran CID investigator.

One of them was Adrian Lim, the man behind the gruesome ritual killings of two innocent school children - Agnes Ng Siew Heok, who was nine, and 10-year-old Ghazali Marzuki, in 1981.

Mr Menon and his team from the CID's Special Investigation Section (SIS) had followed a trail of blood to Lim's flat in Toa Payoh. Lim tried to pull a fast one on the cops and insisted that it was wax from a red candle. Mr Menon, however, noticed that there were no red candles in his flat. "Then Adrian quickly said it was chicken blood (but) I was quite sure it was human, so I called the chemist... who confirmed it," recounted Mr Menon.

The sharp investigative instincts of Mr Menon and his men that led to the discovery of those small droplets of blood - later ascertained by forensics to be Ghazali's - prevented the murder of more victims. Lim had planned to kill 10 children below the age of 10, he confessed to Mr Menon. "If we had not arrested him, Adrian would have killed more children."

The details of the case, played out over 41 days in court, shocked the nation. Lim was said to have believed he would attain supernatural powers by killing the children but SIS investigations revealed that the murders were a plot to distract the Police from an earlier probe against him for rape. He had also committed the killings with help from his two "loyal assistants", Tan Mui Choo, his legal wife and Hoe Kah Hong, one of his "holy wives".

All three were later sentenced to death. But for the SIS officers who worked round the clock to crack the case, it was a relief to solve what Mr Menon described as one of the most bizarre cases he had come across in almost four decades in the Force.

Mr Menon signed on as a trainee Police Constable in 1956. His peers recalled that he showed up at work one day with shoulder-length hair, which prompted his supervisors to call him Goldilocks. That nickname did not stick for long.

Like most rookie constables, Mr Menon was deployed to various Land Divisions after completing basic training. One of his first taste of action occurred when he was posted to Queenstown Police Station, where he was involved in a shoot-out with gangsters.

It was not long before fellow officers started calling him "Inspector Secret Societies" after his successes in taking down gangs.

In 1963, Mr Menon was promoted and sent for officer cadet training at the Police Academy, where he was later posted as a law instructor in 1971. He did not enjoy being an instructor and applied to be back at the frontlines again. He found himself at SIS, the corps d'elite of criminal investigators within the Force where he would tackle cases like the Toa Payoh ritual killings, among other major crimes such as kidnappings for ransom and

murders. He also led the Organised Crime Branch for seven years, before returning to helm the SIS.

Paying tribute to his keen investigative acumen, his colleagues in CID dubbed him 'S.K. - Our Crime Buster' in a department newsletter in 1985. It was a well-earned moniker.

Mr Menon, who retired in 1994, revealed then that he enjoyed working in SIS because every case presented a different challenge, where competence, teamwork, speed and total commitment to the job were the keys to success.



They were Teachers

Behind the tens of thousands of officers who have donned the uniform of the Singapore Police Force, are many who stepped forward to train, mentor and impart their knowledge, sharing experiences and values they gained over decades of service to a new generation of officers. Instructors Sri Kanthan and Yunos Salleh are legends who inspired fear and respect in countless trainees, on land and at sea, for more than three decades. They not only set good examples for younger officers to follow, but are also proof that the Police Force is committed to the development of its officers throughout his or her career in blue.

Yunos Bin Salleh



“When we trained senior officers, we required them to be at the Hosburg Lighthouse and remain stationary for two hours to feel the life of a deck hand.”

In the Police Coast Guard (PCG), Yunos Salleh was always *Cikgu*, the seasoned trainer who would not hesitate to fail a senior officer if he could not remain stationary for two hours on the deck of a patrol boat in the waters around the Hosburgh Lighthouse on Pedra Branca, which marks the eastern entrance to the Straits of Singapore.

“When we trained senior officers, we required them to be at the Hosburg Lighthouse and remain stationary for two hours to feel the life of a deck hand,” he explained. “If they are not up to the mark, we just have to fail them, because remember, if you are a crew commander of big ships you have 16 people’s lives under you. We don’t do “half-past-six” training. We are very serious about training.”

Cikgu Yunos spent most of his career in the Force teaching PCG trainees on a daily basis. But he was not always a mariner. He began his career as a Land Division officer, patrolling the streets of Seletar, all the way to Paya Lebar. His affable nature helped him build rapport with the community, and he could often be found playing sepak takraw with men in the community during his days off.

On the first day he reported to Marine Police in 1969, there were massive floods in Singapore. He could only see the roofs of houses, and people perched there. It was also the first day of Hari Raya, and he spent it assisting people to go onto higher ground.

Then there were the months of training and conditioning to become a deckhand. Lessons were conducted under the President Sheares Bridge due to space constraints, and he had to stay on board the boats for hours on end to get his “sea legs”.

After three years, he applied to undertake the helmsman course which would ensure he had the necessary skills to not only effectively helm a vessel, but also led to the beginning of his career as *Cikgu*, for which he credited the old-timers.

“I learned a lot from old timers. At night at sea, it is very quiet. Then suddenly a sound ‘toot-toot-toot-toot’. The old timer would ask me, ‘what boat is that?’. ‘A boat lah’, I said. ‘No, no no, differentiate the boat. It’s a bum boat. Go and see.’ Correct, it’s a bum boat. Another time, another sound ‘tii-tii-tii-tii’ – ‘What boat is that? It’s a fishing boat. Go there and see.’ True enough it’s a fishing boat. How can this old man know everything? He knows even

when there is something wrong with the engine. I was steering the boat like normal and he told me to stop and check the engine. True enough, the water pipe had burst and water was entering the engine. If I had continued to travel for another half an hour, the boat would have become a submarine. There is nothing in the books to tell you these things. It’s just experience.”

Mr Yunos was also proficient at charting, and when his training Sergeant found out, he was assigned to training. Despite his rank of Constable at that time, he was given the designation of Sergeant Training and given the nickname *Cikgu*.

Cikgu Yunos became one of the longest serving Staff Sergeants Training in the Force due to the degree of

specialisation of his vocation. Under his charge and with inputs from his Commanders, the syllabus of the PCG trainees underwent major changes. Swimming became a compulsory requirement, and survival skills were added to the curriculum. He also implemented night navigation that ensured that officers were able to respond to calls regardless of the time of day and visibility conditions.

After officially retiring in 1991, *Cikgu* Yunos signed on for another 10 years with the PCG. A Police officer, he believes, must be honest, committed, disciplined and fair. And as he puts it,

“You can help people, you help.”



SERVED FROM 1971 to 2004

Sri Kanthan Chelliah

“Discipline... that is what made me to be what I am now.”



“Ke-belakang pusing!” That was a command no police trainee wanted to hear while marching back to his or her barracks after a long day of drill practice at the old Police Academy (PA) parade square.

Sri Kanthan Chelliah, however, had no qualms bellowing those words if he spotted a squad of trainees in PA whose steps were out of order, arms not straightened, or backs not stiff and upright while marching.

The strict drill master would personally march an errant squad back and forth along Denham Road in PA until they got it right and then some, just to instill in young trainees, whether they were senior or junior officers, a sense of appreciation for the ‘fine art’ of marching and discipline. After all, this was the man responsible for the training of police officers taking part in major events such as the National Day Parade.

An avid sportsman, Mr Kanthan reported for training at the old PA in 1971 and graduated as the best trainee in his squad. He was first deployed as a Routine Officer at Paya Lebar Police Station but was quickly rotated back to the academy where he would be a permanent feature known among trainees as a strict disciplinarian but one who was highly passionate about his job.

The veteran Police trainer, who retired in 2004 with the rank of Station Inspector (SI), remained fit as a fiddle even as he approached retirement. He was one of the rare instructors who were crossed trained in almost all elements of field expertise required by a police officer.

For the record, Mr Kanthan was qualified in all instructor level courses, including field, firearms, drill and even swimming, which was a programme he underwent on his own time. He was one of the few officers in the Force given the designation of Field Instructor First Class.

Throughout his career, Mr Kanthan held the posts of SI Field, which meant he was in-charge of all field training, as well as SI School and Chief Drill Instructor. Some of his trainees included Education Minister Heng Swee Keat and Second Minister for Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs, Mr Masagos Zukifli.

Although he was a top trainer at PA, Mr Kanthan was well aware that he was still a policeman first, field instructor second. That was why he made it a point to apply for transfers to frontline units where he could gain valuable ground experience as a cop.

After 10 years in PA, he was posted to Traffic Police (TP) where he performed mobile patrols and investigation

tours. It was at TP where he was promoted to Sergeant and made team leader of a mobile squad.

His stint at TP, however, would not last and Mr Kanthan would be “loaned” back to PA where he was tasked to train teachers overseeing National Police Cadet Corp units in their schools, as well as conduct in-service training for TP officers by day, and train Special Constabulary and Volunteer Special Constabulary squads in the evenings.

He also served a stint at ‘C’ or Geylang Police Division as part of a Watch Team from 1991 to 1993, before he was deployed to PA again where he continued as a senior trainer until 1999. At this point, he was already slated

for retirement at the age of 50 but his superiors at PA extended his service for five more years.

The private sector, however, came calling as soon as he retired. He was given the rank of Inspector and was in-charge of training auxiliary Police officers at Aetos, a subsidiary of Temasek Holdings that offers security services, until he left their service in 2014.

Mr Kanthan always believed that a strong sense of discipline was a key ingredient of his success as a trainer and a police officer. “Discipline... that is what made me to be what I am now,” he said. “And I enjoy being in the Police Force, that is why I served 33 years.”



They were the Backbone of the Force

Think Police and images of officers giving chase along back alleys, kicking down doors during a raid and slapping handcuffs on a suspect usually come to mind, no thanks to Hollywood. But for every crime reported, prevented or solved, there is a wide ecosystem within the Force that is needed to ensure success in the fight against crime. They are the Routine Officers, or typewriter warriors who handle investigations based on first information reports; operators who man the '999' hotlines, technicians who ensure that Police radios are in working order, officers who process crime scenes and other cops who engage various segments of society to teach about crime prevention, and many more. Not everyone who dons the Police blue needs to get behind the wheel of a patrol car. The history of the Singapore Police Force has shown that many officers have in fact looked beyond having to wield a Smith & Wesson 0.38 revolver to fight crime. They include officers who saw a need to leverage new technology, engage the community, tap the help of man's best friend, improve work processes and much more, to play their part in keeping Singapore safe.

SERVED FROM 1952 to 1976

Fareed Khan



*“I got no manpower,
so I said never mind,
I go alone.”*

Fareed Khan was so proud of being a Home Team member that he used to say he wanted to remain in the civil service till he died. He was into his 62nd year of active service when he passed away this year.

In an interview with the *Home Team News* in November 2014, Mr Khan said he still recalled vividly the day he was recruited as a Police officer - 5 August 1952. “The officer held my collar and looked at me from my feet to my head, and he held me up by my collar and pushed me out. And I was thinking in my heart, gone case, this fella don’t want me.”

He was wrong. He was told to report to work at 8.30am the next day. “I was so happy I felt like I was going to fly up! I only thought about what my family needed, and that I needed to put food on the table.”

Mr Khan moved to Singapore from Pakistan in 1930 when he was five. Throughout his youth, he struggled to provide for his siblings while sharing a home with 25 other families. He took a job with the Singapore Traction Company and learned to drive big vehicles. Then a close relative recommended him to a Police recruiter. He gave the bus company 24 hours notice and became Constable 3745.

For almost 25 years, he had a ringside seat to history during a career that saw him transit from being a bugler in the Riot Squad to an instructor and driver in the Force Transport Branch.

When workers from the Hock Lee Amalgamated Bus Company went on strike and rioted in 1955, he was there. During the Indonesian Konfrontasi from 1963-6, he was stationed in Mount Vernon on 24 hour standby. And he was there during the Laju ferryboat hijacking in 1974, driving the terrorists from the Marine Police station to Paya Lebar Airport.

And if he could not drive to his colleagues, he ran. During one riot in 1956, he was stationed in his vehicle in front of Chinese High School on a road that was badly jammed when a radio call came in that tear gas was needed at the Middle Road junction of Bukit Timah Road. “I got no manpower, so I said never mind, I go alone.”

Strapping on the riot guns and tear gas, Mr Khan ran from Chinese High to Whitley Road, dashing between the chaotic rioters with only one goal in mind: “I am going to run, I am going to deliver these things.”

And he got the tear gas to his colleagues. Asked what made him do it, he said simply: “They asked for help. If I don’t help, who will help?”

Mr Khan won a special commendation from the Police Commissioner for his efforts in suppressing the riots and was transferred in 1957 to Radio Division at Pearl’s Hill. Since his forte was driving, he soon took over the training of the Mobile Squad. His duties after Independence were no less taxing; he was the designated driver for VIPs for parades and public events and drove Heads of States and Cabinet Ministers.

Mr Khan retired from the Police Force on 31 December 1976, with commendations for bravery as well as a clutch of gold and silver medals he won while representing the Singapore Police in athletics at the Pesta Sukan, a sports festival started in December 1964 to promote goodwill.

He was re-employed as a chief driver by the Internal Security Department (ISD) in April 1977. For the next 30 years, he chauffeured several Directors of ISD, including Mr Benny Lim, who later became Permanent Secretary (PS) for Home Affairs.

To this day, Mr Lim, now PS, Prime Minister’s Office and Ministry of National Development, remembers Mr Khan with much fondness, citing his strong devotion to the Police and public service.

Mr Khan’s last job was with the ISD Heritage Centre, where he maintained the grounds and stores as well as helped in the preservation and restoration of artefacts.



SERVED FROM 1960 to 1995

Seng Kuang Meng

“I recall trading in my uniform for plainclothes on some nights to get a real taste of a detective’s life.”



Unlike many of his police colleagues in the 1960s, Seng Kuang Meng was never a detective tasked with busting gambling syndicates, infiltrating secret societies or going after armed robbers. “So invariably I lost some excitement in life,” he quipped.

However, he found a way to make up for lost time when he rose up the ranks and became Commander of a Land Division later in his career. “I recall trading in my uniform for plainclothes on some nights to get a real taste of a detective’s life.”

Mr Seng signed up as a trainee Police Constable in 1960. Like all rookie policemen, he started his career by walking the beat, conducting patrols, sometimes on a bicycle and on occasion in Land Rovers. And when the Police needed to inform a next-of-kin of a death, he would be the “bringer of bad news”.

Knowing how to approach the subject of death has always been one of the most understated skills required of Police officers. Mr Seng, however, would somehow develop that ability and it became useful when he was at Traffic Police from 1968 to 1975 – his longest posting.

Besides reorganising the way traffic summons were issued and how follow-up cases would be handled at the department, Mr Seng also came across many death cases that occurred on the roads. One incident that stuck in his memory was of a young man who was cycling along South Bridge Road when a driver suddenly swung open his car door. The cyclist hit the door, was flung onto the road and died after he was run over by an oncoming vehicle.

Mr Seng also had to handle gruesome corpses while investigating suicide cases as a Routine Officer. On one occasion he had to walk along the then Tanjong Pagar railway line to search for body parts on the tracks and the nearby bushes after a man committed suicide by lying in the path of a running train. And while with the Marine Police, when a fighter jet exploded in mid-air killing the

pilot, he had to recover body parts floating in the sea. Each of these deaths was, however, not just another statistic for him.

Empathy was a key driver behind his sense of service to the community. A example of his compassion, which stood out for many officers who served under him, was a case of attempted suicide by a drug suspect that he responded to - while he was Commander of ‘D’ Division. During a Work Improvement Team Scheme (WITS) meeting at Alexandra Neighbourhood Police Post (NPP), the watch officer alerted him to the case and he hurried to the scene.

The suspect, who was in his mid-20s, had perched himself on the window ledge of his flat in Clementi West. He wanted to jump to end his life because he had drug abuse and marital problems. Mr Seng waited for hours by the door of the flat trying to reach out to the suspect in an attempt to coax him down.

A breakthrough came when the suspect’s father became Mr Seng’s intermediary, relaying his messages to the young man. “I tried to put it across to the drug suspect that any wrongdoing could be resolved amicably,” said Mr Seng, whose efforts paid off when the suspect later opened up to him. When the young man surrendered, Mr Seng put his hand on the suspect’s shoulder and said, “Let’s go,” before leading him to a waiting patrol car. “Handcuffing him was never in my mind,” said Mr Seng, who continued to counsel the man.

Mr Seng retired from the Force as a Superintendent assigned to Special Duties at Police Headquarters in 1995.

Through his 35-year career in the Police, his guiding principle was that each life matters. “It is not just the life of a particular person who dies that we are talking about,” he once told a journalist. “It’s also the life of those around the person. A person who dies, does not die alone. His death affects his family, relatives and friends. I want to do my part to keep on saving lives.”

SERVED FROM 1963 to 1992

Chew Keng Woo

“If the bomb went off down there we would have been the first ones to be killed.”



As Chew Keng Woo and a Sergeant (Sgt) carried the big Buffalo battery onto Pulau Bukom at 3 am that last January night in 1974, he knew the terrorists had planted explosives on the refinery tanks. “If the bomb went off down there we would have been the first ones to be killed,” he recalled years later. But quelling his fears, he and Sgt Chan Kian continued to set up the command post. The terrorists had hijacked the ferryboat Laju and Police negotiators needed the communications boost to establish contact with the people on board.

The hijack was resolved eight days later and Mr Chew’s role forgotten.

A former telecommunications technician, Mr Chew was posted to the Force Radio Maintenance Unit immediately after graduating from the Police Academy in 1963. His expertise was needed to manage a major project - the transition of all existing Police radios to the newly purchased, more powerful American-made radios to be used in the operation rooms and Police cars. Mr Chew and his team not only had to replace all the old radios with the new ones, but he also had to master the usage of the new equipment and conduct courses to ensure the proficiency of all users. To troubleshoot and resolve all reception problems, Mr Chew scaled telephone towers in his Police uniform, installing transmitters to ensure there were no blind spots.

To this day, he remembers having to carry his weapon even up a pole. “Everybody carried guns in those days, ... even climbing up the mast you must carry, they said. So you tied the gun to the belt hook.”

His next big project was to set up the walkie-talkie system for all ground officers, to enable them to operate

more flexibly and efficiently. Again Mr Chew was responsible for troubleshooting reception problems, but more intensely due to the limited range of the mobile devices. “I was supposed to be in charge to go around the island to communicate and test and mark out all the bad locations, blind spots we called them, where you cannot get reception.”

He was soon promoted to OC Force Communications Branch and then named the Force Communications Officer, responsible for setting up mobile communications command centres to function as the nerve centre of major operations or crisis on-site. The centres allowed Commanders to convey orders and messages to other command centres and to the men on the ground quickly, or as in the case of the Laju incident, between negotiator and hostage-taker.

Police Life paid this tribute to Mr Chew and his unit in 1978 in an article on the full spectrum of their responsibilities: “Telecommunication plays a vital role in the day-to-day operations of the Police Force. And few are aware of the men behind the maintenance of the telecommunication facilities for the Force. ...”

Ong Swee Kee



“One must not only have the knowledge of how to develop and lift good prints at the scene but be prepared to touch and handle decomposed dead bodies.”

His peers in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) dubbed him “Mr SCU”, as in Mr Scene of Crime Unit. Ong Swee Kee was at the founding of the SCU on 1 July 1977 and saw it all - the Spyros accident in 1979, the Hotel New World collapse in 1986, and numerous murder investigations in between. His forte was fingerprint identification, as Adrian Lim the ritual murderer discovered.

CID investigators involved in the 1981 Toa Payoh double murder had collected a copious amount of physical evidence against Lim and his two female accomplices. Samples taken from a blood trail which led officers from the Special Investigation Section (SIS) to Lim’s flat were also traced to 10-year-old Ghazali Marzuki, one of two school children whose lives Lim had cut short.

Proof that Ghazali or 9-year-old Agnes Ng Siew Heok – who was Lim’s first victim – had been in the self-styled medium’s flat before they died was, however, still missing. Finding that final piece of the puzzle was indeed critical for the conviction of the three killers.

Enter the SCU, which specialises in crime scene processing and forensic work. Besides collecting evidence, SCU officers are also responsible for the proper preservation, packaging, transportation, and

documentation of physical evidence at crime scenes, as well as fingerprint identification.

From among the case exhibits seized, Mr Ong managed to find two critical pieces of evidence that put Ghazali in Lim’s home: A notepad with the young boy’s name scribbled on it and a latent fingerprint lifted from a deck of playing cards found in Lim’s house that was a match to the victim.

These two pieces of evidence not only ensured the conviction of Lim and his accomplices for the murders of the two children, but also cemented the role SCU officers like Mr Ong would play in solving crime.

Being an SCU officer was not an occupation one would dream of in 1960s Singapore. In fact, as far as Mr Ong was concerned, joining the Force was something he did out of necessity rather than ambition. Well-paying jobs were hard to come by and policemen were relatively better paid than most. Mr Ong had also heard many action-packed stories from cops – so he decided to give it a shot.

When he was posted to Joo Chiat Police Station after completing basic training, he did not, however, see any of the thrills and spills he had expected to experience

while on duty. It was not until 1969, when he chanced upon an open call for officers to join the Fingerprint Section in the CID that he found his true calling.

Mr Ong underwent three to four months of on-the-job training on how to collect latent fingerprints and match them up manually against existing records, which could take two hours to more than two days before a match could be found - if there was even a match at all.

Although it was an arduous process, fingerprint matching was a challenge that Mr Ong welcomed. Indeed, nothing beat the satisfaction one got from scoring a match after days of scrutiny, said Mr Ong, who soon developed a flair for the job.

In 1972, the notorious gunman Lim Ban Lim was killed after a shoot-out with two police officers in Margaret Drive. The Police had received a tip off that two wanted criminals were planning an armed robbery. They recognised one of the gunmen, but not Lim, who was carrying an identity card with a different name. It was Mr Ong who identified Lim from his fingerprints, closing the case – which had been pending for nine years - once and for all.

“To be a good (SCU) officer, one must not only have the knowledge of how to develop and lift good prints at the scene but be prepared to touch and handle decomposed dead bodies in order to search for evidence,” Mr Ong said.

After his stint at the Fingerprint Section, Mr Ong was transferred to Beach Road Police Station where he took on cases of drug trafficking, possession and consumption, among others. But the CID never forgot how his skills in processing fingerprints had helped in their investigations and promptly brought him back to the department and put him in charge of the newly constituted SCU. The new unit was a gamechanger for the Force because it not only enhanced the crime scene processing capabilities of the Police but also beefed up resources in fingerprint matching.

Mr Ong retired in 1988 after 25 years of service. Anticipating that day, the CID newsletter paid him this tribute: “There are few men like Ong Swee Kee. It will be hard to find someone to fill his shoes when he leaves the Force.”



SERVED FROM 1964 to 1991

Philip Anthony Xavier



“That we, as Police officers can achieve something, that we have helped them, these former dropouts and delinquents, achieve success and start a family.”

Like most young men who joined the Force in the 1960s, Philip Anthony Xavier wanted to be a crime fighter. The scourge of the time were secret societies and the crime syndicates they were running on the streets of Singapore.

By the 1970s, however, the Police had successfully taken down several gangs and smashed the gambling dens and other illicit networks they were behind. While the triads were no longer a clear and present danger to society, there were still concerns that they might resurface in the form of street corner gangs that were emerging in housing estates.

To stem the tide of wayward youths turning to crime, then Commissioner of Police Goh Yong Hong came up with the idea of a police-run Boys' Club – a network of clubhouses in housing estates that offered at-risk kids a safe place to hang out with their friends, take part in social activities and sports while under the watchful eye of a Police mentor.

One of those first mentors was Mr Xavier, who was hand-picked by his superiors at the then 'C' Division in Joo Chiat, to help run the inaugural Boys' Club in Macpherson that opened in 1982. This was in part due to his active participation in sports and experience

in organising welfare activities at the station. Four policemen were deployed to each club, explained Mr Xavier, “One Secretary, two Corporals, and one Police Constable. I was one of the Corporals in that club (in Macpherson).”

Mr Xavier and his team knew that street corner gangs were, at the time, made up of boys from low income homes in the neighbourhood. The boys would join gangs of delinquents who often committed petty crimes such as shoplifting and glue sniffing.

The Boys' Club initiative was a charm offensive by the Police and armed with the tagline of 'Let's be friends.' Mr Xavier and his officers would visit homes to “recruit” members. Their targets: Boys aged 12 to 18, mostly school dropouts and juvenile delinquents who had a higher risk of being drawn into street corner gangs and a life of crime.

The Police would also work with schools to identify at-risk students and speak to the boys and their families, explaining what the Boys' Club was about, said Mr Xavier. “We told them we were there to help them... and explained that it's an open door concept. You can come in, and you can leave anytime you like.”

One of the aims of the Boys' Club was to instil in their young members a sense of responsibility, so older boys with better education and those from more stable families were roped in to help their less fortunate peers as an exercise in leadership.

Mr Xavier said that to motivate troubled youths to turn over a new leaf, he would sometimes give them leadership roles as well. “We had groups in the club, and we appointed leaders for the groups. The leaders were the dropouts who were involved in criminal cases and we counselled them and gave them the responsibility of taking care of their groups. Sometimes they asked, ‘I am the naughty one, how come these people put me as the leader?’ We told them that they must show a good example to the rest of the boys to serve, and become better.”

Boys had to pay \$1 to join the club and another \$1 annually as subscription – a nominal sum hardly enough to fund the running of the clubs which involved setting up facilities for games, organising sporting activities, excursions and visits to Police units and even to passing out parades at the Police Academy.

The clubs also kept the boys occupied with activities such as gardening and on occasion even brought them on trips overseas such as a climb up Mount Ophir in Malaysia where they trekked up to the summit, first with a guide, then solo to build their confidence, said Mr Xavier.

The success of the Macpherson Boys' Club led to the creation of more clubhouses, including one in Geylang

West where Mr. Xavier would be promoted to Secretary in 1985. At its peak, there were about 14 Boys Clubs islandwide that served as a home away from home for thousands of boys – kids that the police largely managed to keep off the streets and away from crime.

Mr Xavier often went beyond the call of duty for the boys, working past his 12-hour shift at the club and sometimes inviting the boys to his home for meals. Over the years, many parents have told him they were thankful that the Boys' Clubs took in their sons, instilled a sense of discipline in them and set them on the right path.

He retired in 1991 as Acting Staff Sergeant. Having served the community since he joined the Force in 1964 as a trainee Police Constable, he continues to volunteer actively with his wife at Willing Hearts, a charity that runs a soup kitchen which distributes meals to the needy in Singapore.

Mr Xavier treasured his time at the Boys' Club because he could see the difference it made to many of the boys. “I was shopping with my wife and we heard this boy calling, ‘Sir, sir, sir!’ He came towards us and behind him were two little ones,” he recounted. “So I said to him, ‘wah must be your adik?’ He said, ‘No lah sir, these are my son and daughter.’

“That's the one thing that sticks in your mind - that we, as Police officers can achieve something, that we have helped them, these former dropouts and delinquents, achieve success and start a family. I was very touched by that meeting.”



SERVED FROM 1969 to 2009

Thiagarajan Kalimuthu



“I love my job as it’s interesting, because I get new challenges all the time from training the dogs.”

Thiagarajan Kalimuthu, and his police dog Prince, were on an illegal immigrant raid with other Police officers in Jurong, when a suspect saw them and took off. Police officer and dog immediately gave chase. With his sight fixed on the suspect, Mr Thiagarajan did not see a small pond in a pigsty and both he and Prince fell into it. Covered in mud and pig faeces, they got up and continued the chase. When they got to 100 yards of the man, Mr Thiagarajan released Prince, who pounced on the suspect, bit and held onto him until Mr Thiagarajan arrested him.

A former carpark attendant with lower secondary education, Mr Thiagarajan, better known as Tiger, always wanted to be a Police officer. When he was recruited by the Force in 1969, he was determined to do a good job. Posted to the Police Dog Unit in 1971 after requesting its then Officer-in-Charge (OC) Michael Chan for a transfer, he quickly picked up the basic dog handling and training skills required for his duties with his first canine partner, Prince. The pair soon earned a reputation for their perseverance in going after suspects during gang raids and other operations. Sometimes their presence was enough to deter criminals.

During a gambling raid at a bungalow in the Katong area, Tiger and his colleagues were called in because the house was guarded by Rottweilers. When handlers and dogs climbed into the compound, to their surprise, the dogs ran away. Tiger and his team subdued the dogs and opened the gate for the officers from the Gambling Suppression Branch to enter the compound to make the arrests.

Four years into his service with the Dog Unit, Tiger realised that he needed to finish his education to advance in the Force, so he began taking night classes. In just one year,

he obtained his ‘O’ Levels and was promoted to Corporal. He was then selected to be one of the first officers to be taught to train narcotic dogs for the Singapore Customs.

In its early years, the Dog Unit, which was later renamed the K-9 Unit, provided rudimentary training; all the handlers needed was to go through an obedience course. Tiger realised that narcotic dogs were very different from the guard dogs that he used to train; they needed to be of a more playful temperament, unlike the aggressive guard dogs. He spent some time training the narcotic dogs before taking them out to search for drugs and other related contrabands.

As the K-9 unit grew, Tiger also became responsible for procuring replacements for the aging Police dogs. He made frequent trips overseas to select dogs of appropriate pedigree to bring back to Singapore. Using his experience, he matched dogs to their handlers, ensuring the animal’s temperament suited its handler’s.

Tiger retired in 2001 as Senior Station Inspector in charge of operations and training. He was re-employed as a trainer and helped with the training of explosive search dogs after the September 11 attacks in the US and discovery of the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist network in Singapore in 2001.

He finally retired from service in 2009. In his 40 years with the Force, the only time Tiger was not with the dogs he loved was when he volunteered and was selected for the United Nations Peace-Keeping Force mission to Cambodia for six months in 1993. Otherwise his dogs provided all the challenge he needed. “I love my job as it’s interesting, because I get new challenges all the time from training the dogs,” he said shortly before his first retirement.

SERVED FROM 1975 to 2006

Vendesana Somo



“Be a professional and serve Singapore with pride. Always ensure you do your job with honesty. Respect the uniform.”

It was 6.15am. Inspector Vendesana Somo was just 15 minutes into his first day on the job at the old Central Police Station when the call came in: It was a “mati case” – or Police jargon for death cases.

As a Routine Officer (RO), Mr Somo’s job was to deal with the initial investigation of cases that were not handled by more senior Investigation Officers (IO). “Initially, I did not know what to expect,” he recounted. “But I took the courage and got the help of a Corporal whose nickname was ‘Mata.’”

At the scene, the deceased was lying in a pool of blood. Mata asked Mr Somo to check the body for injuries and signs of foul play. “Mata was a great help. I was able to overcome my nervousness and did what was required.”

That would not be the last “mati case” he responded to that day. Over the course of his first tour – a 24-hour shift – he would attend to a total of four death cases: two suicides and two natural deaths. “I think I worked more than 36 or 37 hours that day,” he said.

Getting out of his comfort zone, facing the unexpected, working long hours, often with junior officers older and more experienced than himself, would be par for the course during his long career in blue.

As he rose through the ranks, Mr Somo rotated through almost all the Land Divisions in Singapore, starting from his stint as a rookie RO in Central ‘A’ Division, to commanding ‘J’ Division in Jurong. He was also the officer who saw to the decommissioning of the old Toa Payoh Police Station (‘B’ Division) and had the privilege of being the Commander of the new ‘C’ Division when it was moved to Geylang.

Mr Somo believes that at the heart of police work is keeping the community safe and secure – an ideal he began nurturing as an immigrant growing up in the 1950s.

“My family came to Singapore in 1955 and we settled in the Malayan Railway Quarters located at Kampong Bahru Road. It’s an area populated by low-income groups and there were daily occurrences of fights, family disputes, petty crimes,” he recalled.

He witnessed several gang fights in the neighbourhood during the 1964 race riots, where many people were seriously injured and some killed. “These incidents had a telling effect on me as a young boy. And I realised that if I joined the Force, I could play my part in enforcing law and order and serve my community.”

Mr Somo signed up in 1975 and after a stint as an IO, was transferred to Traffic Police to work on streamlining accident investigation processes to minimise malpractices. While on a Traffic Management Course in Tokyo, he was tasked to study the Japanese Koban policing system, which is premised on the idea that residents and Police should work in partnership to keep the community safe and secure. His report led to another team being sent to Japan specifically to study the Koban system and the eventual implementation of the Neighbourhood Police Post system in Singapore.

Mr Somo was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Bronze) in 2001 and retired from the Force as Deputy Assistant Commissioner in 2006. But he remains in public service and is currently Deputy Director of the Community Engagement Unit at the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth.

He believes the experience and exposure he received as a Police officer has made him a better and more determined person. His advice to younger officers:

“Be a professional and serve Singapore with pride. Always ensure you do your job with honesty. Respect the uniform.”

SERVED FROM 1981 to 2015

Richard Quek Seow Huat

“We have attracted a lot of interest from the neighbouring countries.”

Richard Quek Seow Huat found himself part of the Singapore Police Force in 1981 when the Registry of Vehicles (ROV), where he was a driving tester, became part of Traffic Police. He then found himself in Japan for three months, sent with two other colleagues to study the Japanese driver training and testing system. On their return, they transformed driver training and testing in Singapore. Inspired by what they saw at the driving school run by the Toyota Company in Nagoya, they helped develop two driver training circuits – in Kampong Ubi and Ang Mo Kio – which were opened in 1985.

Mr Quek was promoted to Senior Tester, where he was responsible for running a driving centre. Then as Chief Tester and Supervisor of Testing, it was his job to explore new areas for improving the operation for all driving centres. He was like a proud father when the Woodlands circuit was opened in 2010, setting a new benchmark for the driver training and testing industry.

“The Woodlands driving circuit is state-of-the-art design, whereby we have a three-storey driving circuit and a five-storey admin block. It being the only multi-

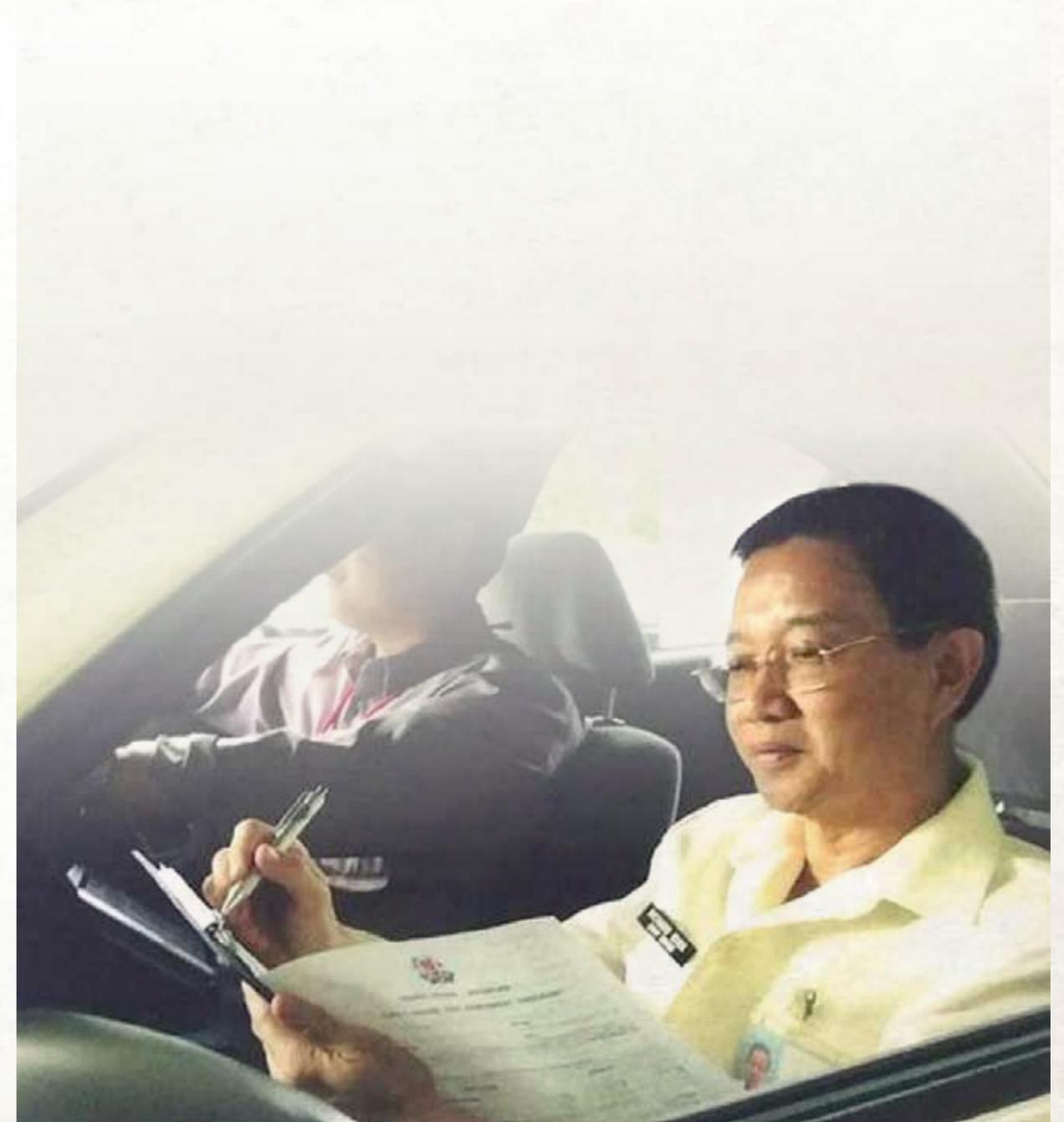
storey centre in this region, we have attracted a lot of interest from the neighbouring countries, which send their delegates to Singapore to study our driver training and testing regime. So I think this is something I am quite proud of,” he told Police Life.

Mr Quek had joined the Registry of Vehicles (ROV) in 1965, where his job was to investigate malpractices committed by licensed taxi drivers, trishaw riders and public bus services. His job scope was quite widely defined. When the existing eleven bus companies were merged into four in April 1971, the entire investigation section was stationed at Kallang Park to manage the sorting of thousands of buses into four separate fleets. “It was a massive operation. It took us 36 hours,” he recounted. ROV was then under the Ministry of Communications. He decided to become a driving tester in 1975 as it offered better pay and career progression. As well as many complaints, he learned, that those who failed would try to find fault with the testing system. He took the fault-finding in his stride, noting: “It is the duty of the testers to justify their decision and make the candidates realise their mistakes.”

The migration of the ROV testing and licensing branch to Traffic Police also brought a new, more pro-active dimension to his job. Over the next 28 years, Mr Quek not only oversaw the building of the first two driving circuits, he also helped introduce initiatives to improve road safety, such as the compulsory expressway familiarisation ride, defensive riding lessons and the revamp of the Driver Improvement Points System (DIPs)

for the retraining of recalcitrant drivers. Training for learner motorcyclists also included ferrying pillion riders on the circuit.

After his first retirement in 2009, Mr Quek returned to the Testing and Licensing Branch in Traffic Police as Supervisor of Curriculum & Audit till he finally retired on 30 April 2015.



They Transformed the Force

The decades following Singapore's independence in 1965 were turbulent times. Social unrest, a rising crime rate, proliferation of illicit syndicates, and the building of a modern city with mass public housing and a network of expressways, meant that the fledgling Police Force had to evolve. Fast. And it did. By the 1980s, the men- and women-in-blue had rolled out a new gameplan - which involved increased community engagement by the Police - aimed not just at fighting crime but preventing it. The Force also leveraged new technology and procured more advanced equipment and vehicles, including a Navy patrol craft, to enhance its core capabilities. Training was improved and expanded. Officers were offered better career advancement, holiday bungalows, cheap loans - to raise morale and retain the best. These transformations would not have been possible without the pioneer police officers who embraced change and came up with new strategies to keep Singapore safe.

SERVED FROM 1952 to 1985

George Henry Palmer



“I could go to your house, and identify the crime risks in your house.”

“Crime prevention is not as glamorous as the policeman arresting the criminal, as you see on TV today. The effectiveness of crime prevention work is intangible and difficult to measure.”

So George Henry Palmer believed, and yet, eschewing the glamour of crime-busting, became a firm advocate of crime prevention, and a key driver of the public-private partnership that now characterises policing in Singapore.

The Singapore Police Force had been holding crime prevention exhibitions since 1968. But it was not until Mr Palmer was sent on a specialised course in crime prevention at the Staffordshire Constabulary in the United Kingdom in 1976 and wrote a plan for the formation of a crime prevention branch that one was set up the next year.

The new unit, located within the Criminal Intelligence Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), comprised eight Sergeants and an Inspector reporting to Mr Palmer. These officers, whom he called his “eight heroes”, would go into the community and educate residents on crime prevention.

Mr Palmer’s team was the first in the Force to study criminal modus operandi and conduct crime risk surveys in order to determine how the Police could

prevent and deter crimes. Tapping on his previous policing experiences, Mr Palmer conceptualised how best to educate the public to guard against crimes of the day - housebreaking, petty theft and crimes against women. The Crime Prevention Branch kept an up-to-date record of all new and sophisticated security devices such as locks, alarm systems and electronic gadgets. It then put together a crime prevention display room that featured the best security systems.

The unit worked closely with the community and spearheaded exhibitions, talks and seminars to raise public awareness of and safeguards against crime. It had a comprehensive outreach programme for community centres, schools and commercial entities such as hotels and factories. Initially Singaporeans were positive, but they also had a “it won’t happen to me” mindset, Mr Palmer recalled.

But his unit soldiered on. After a few years, although the crime rate did not fall but increased through the 1980s before peaking in 1988, there was a noticeable increase in public awareness. “There was great satisfaction in knowing that I had helped an individual to feel safe, to protect his property and not to become a victim of crime. And, if he had already become a victim of crime, to prevent him from becoming a victim of crime again,” he said.

The next challenge was setting up a partnership with industry to both propagate the concept of self-help in crime prevention and lobby relevant industries to put in place measures like safer building designs to reduce crime risk or minimum security standards to deter crime. Mr Palmer thus became the first Secretary of the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) in 1981, and then its Executive Director.

From personal security officers to retailers’ associations, his team tailored seminars, handouts and checklists to meet the various needs of the different sectors. They also engaged with schools and residents to mobilise the community.

As the NCPC was set up as a non-profit voluntary organisation, Mr Palmer also had to help it raise funds. He solicited meetings with the heads of the Shaw Brothers, the Lee Foundation and the Turf Club and persuaded them to make annual contributions to the NCPC.

“I was very fortunate in the sense that I had the full support of my senior officers. ... I also had the support of Mr Chua Sian Chin, former Minister for Home Affairs, who was very passionate also about crime prevention,” Mr Palmer explained.

After he retired in 1985, he continued to work in the security field and also served as Chairman of the Ministry of Home Affairs’ Citizens’ Advisory Committee from 1986 to 2000. From a young man who joined the Police as a traffic officer in 1952 with the simple hope of having a place to stay, meals and an opportunity to build a promising career, he became Mr Crime Prevention - always vigilant.

“I could go to your house, and identify the crime risks in your house. From your windows, your doors, your ceiling, your backyard ... I could, off the cuff, recommend to you what physical measures you needed to take,” he told *Police Life*.



Woon Sian Hai



“Even today they are still trying to play hide and seek with the Police.”

To the uninitiated, the view of the sea from Singapore’s shoreline at nightfall is usually one of calm and serenity. But the sound of waves breaking on the shore masks the deep buzz of smugglers in sampans rigged with powerful motors, trying to sneak illegal immigrants in under the cover of darkness into Singapore from Malaysia or Indonesia.

“They will come at night,” said Woon Sian Hai, who was with the Police Coast Guard (PCG) in the 1990s. “To them this place is a paradise to seek employment, a very big attraction for them despite the high risk of being caught by the authority. Even today they are still trying to play hide and seek with the Police.”

Mr Woon joined the Force as an Inspector in 1966. He was posted to various Land Divisions and units, eventually rising up the rank to take command of the PCG in 1992. It was a time when the waterborne unit was on the verge of a major transformation and upgrading in infrastructure. “It was first called the Marine Police because the jurisdiction was within the Port Limits and only 7-metre patrol boats were deployed,” he said. “But later when we covered the Pedra Branca island, where Horsburgh Lighthouse is located, we needed bigger patrol craft to cover the Singapore Territorial Waters (STW) and the open sea.”

Pedra Branca was the subject of an intense and long-drawn dispute between Singapore and Malaysia which

started in 1989 when Kuala Lumpur claimed sovereignty over the island. The case was referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2003 for adjudication and five years later, the ICJ awarded Singapore sovereignty over Pedra Branca.

“The island is located on the easternmost point of Singapore, where the Singapore Straits meets the South China Sea. The distance and turbulent sea between Pedra Branca and the mainland meant that the smaller patrol craft of the Marine Police were not equipped to handle the open sea journey, much less to secure the waters around the island,” said Mr Woon.

“We had to use a flotilla of bigger crafts which the Singapore Navy transferred to us in stages. After training our personnel to operationalise the patrol craft, we then deployed them to patrol our STW under Police colours in 1993. Since then, the PCG has been able to patrol beyond the port limits and take on additional roles at sea including undergoing joint operations with the Navy, anti-illegal migrant operations, handling foreign government vessel intrusions and watching over the security of Horsburgh Lighthouse on Pedra Branca.

The restructuring of the unit in 1993, however, required a massive training and upgrading exercise involving not just PCG officers but also enhancement of its technological

assets such as the radar system used on its patrol craft and a firearm training simulator. “We had to train our men to operate bigger patrol craft with a 20mm canon and land-based surveillance systems to detect and stop illegal immigrants from entering STW,” said Mr Woon.

To that end, a dedicated training school for PCG officers was set up at the old Marine Police headquarters in Kallang, a stone’s throw from where the Sports Hub now stands. Mr Woon also fought for, and received approval from the Ministry of Finance, for his men to receive a hardship allowance as part of his drive to enhance welfare benefits at the new unit.

The incentive, said Mr Woon, was necessary because PCG patrolmen spent their entire 12-hour shift or 24-hour shift (Pedra Branca patrol) at sea, within the confines of their boats. “Lunch and everything is all done onboard - they buy it from shore and eat during their hours of duty, unlike patrol men at Land Divisions where they can go anywhere for a hot meal. During their daily patrol routine, PCG personnel have to endure the waves at sea, which sometimes can be three metres high, and climb up the ladders on containerships and large vessels to conduct investigations. This is hardship.”

Besides overseeing the transformation of the Marine Police, Mr Woon also worked on many other projects in his 40 years of service, including helping the Force drive

the service excellence movement. While he was in-charge of the Service Development and Inspectorate Department, he convinced the Director of National Parks Board to engage its own private contractors to clear fallen trees instead of relying on the limited resource from the Police Task Force Troops.

In 2005, he was asked to head a newly set up Police Custodial Department to oversee how accused persons-in-custody are managed during medical treatment and escorts for various visits to prevent escape from custody.

Mr Woon also implemented open mobilisation exercises for National Servicemen Key Installations (KINS) units post 9-11. “We needed to have them on standby in case of any emergency,” said Mr Woon, referring to the heightened security climate after the terror attacks in the United States of America in 2001. “We put up a paper to the Ministry of Home Affairs to conduct joint open mobilisation with the SCDF and it was approved. The first such exercise was successfully conducted, so now we are ever ready should the need arise.”

Mr Woon retired in 2006 after serving his last years at the Police Custodial Department. He continues to believe that the policing profession is a calling, and not everyone is suited for it. “You must have the passion for this job. So once you are in, you got to give your best and then you would enjoy the fruits of your labour.”



SERVED FROM 1967 to 2008

Tan Ngo Chew



“I was fortunate to have been given the opportunity to hold key posts at a young age. It gave me the opportunity to implement changes and contribute at an even deeper level.”

Cops on bicycles, foot patrols, a visible ground presence – this might sound like COPS, the Community Policing System launched in 2012. But back in 1983, one Police Division was already using such policing tactics. Its commanding officer: Tan Ngo Chew.

“Way back in 1983 when I was the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the then Paya Lebar Police Station in ‘F’ Division, I had initiated a few police community projects and was selected as one of the officers to visit Tokyo... to study their Koban Police box system,” recounted Mr Tan.

The Police Force was looking for a new game plan, one that would see the police engage closer with the community not just to fight crime, but also to prevent crime. When Mr Tan became Commander of ‘B’ Division, the project moved with him and Toa Payoh housing estate became the site of the first Neighbourhood Police Post (NPP) that the Force wanted to try out islandwide.

The mission then was to set up 91 posts in ten years. It was not only accomplished but also lauded by none other than the Japanese who wrote a book on community policing. “I was part of the party that went back to Japan in 1993,” said Mr Tan. “What was most interesting about the feedback from the National Police Agency officers in Japan was that they were very impressed with our setup

of NPPs. They even adapted modifications of our NPP’s rest-room facilities to their Kobans.”

That the NPP system remains relevant today is testimony to the effectiveness of the plan rolled out by officers like Mr Tan, whom the Japanese government honoured with the “Order of the Rising Sun – Gold Rays with Rosette” in 2006.

When he became Commander of ‘E’ Division, Mr Tan adapted the community policing concept by deploying officers to patrol on foot along the Orchard Road shopping belt during peak hours and festive occasions. The ‘Orchard Beat’ required patrolmen to visit and build rapport with businesses and diplomatic establishments, as well as act as guides to tourists and even counsel youths hanging out in the precinct to give patrons and business operators a sense of security in what was a sensitive area of operation.

Besides Mr Tan’s firm resolve to engage the community, as part of policing duties, he also looked into the professional development of his officers. Under him, junior officers performing investigative duties were given opportunities to develop their command and leadership skills. Those with potential were roped in to cover Watch Commander duties when the Station Inspector (SI) were

on leave. He won the hearts and minds of his officers as he made sure that he was transparent with them and most importantly, he walked the talk. He always stressed to his officers, “Each officer makes a valuable contribution to answer to the call to serve the nation. That Singapore remains safe, is a credit each of us should be proud of.”

Mr Tan joined the Force as a cadet Inspector in 1967 and during a 41-year career, commanded four Land

Divisions. During a stint in the Criminal Investigation Department as Officer Commanding (OC) of the Secret Society Branch (SSB), his team was credited with wiping out the *Tiong Meng Kok, Go Heng Tong* and *Ho Hup San* triads in Singapore.

Mr Tan retired in 2008 with no regrets. “I was fortunate to have been given the opportunity to hold key posts at a young age. It gave me the opportunity to implement changes and contribute at an even deeper level.”



Kui Yong Sin



“This is the most interesting and best job I’ve done so far.”

It was two against a village of angry men and women, and Kui Yong Sin, who was accompanied by only one other rookie Police Constable, did not like the odds. “Both of us were deployed to cover Kampong Chantek, a forested area, and each of us was armed with only a revolver,” he recounted.

The year was 1972, the Dangerous Fireworks Act had just been enacted and Mr Kui – then a newly minted Police Inspector – was assigned to enforce the new law in the Malay village located near the former Turf Club along Bukit Timah Road.

The two officers who were in plainclothes, heard a loud ‘bang’ – the sound of firecrackers being set off – when they arrived at the kampong. “We ran towards the direction where the sound of firecrackers came from but were unable to catch the culprit,” said Mr Kui. But just as it was getting dark, they managed to track down and arrest the two teenage boys who were the culprits.

“Before I could get into my car, we were surrounded by a large number of angry villagers who demanded the immediate release of the two teenagers we arrested,” he recalled. “At that time, we only had five (bullet) rounds in our revolvers and how could we shoot? It was not for us to kill, especially when it was not really a serious

offence. So we had to think very quickly and decided it was best to call out to the family members of the boys.”

Mr Kui said he explained to one of the suspects’ family members that the boys could not be released because they were arrested for an offence but as teenagers, they were not likely to be seriously punished. “I then asked him to tell the villagers to go away and not to interfere, and allow us to settle the matter peacefully as any violence may lead to serious injuries or even death.... He accepted my explanation and suggestion and told the villagers to co-operate and they did. I thanked them all and the rest is history.”

Such were the stories that pioneer policemen in the 1970s like Mr Kui are always happy to reminisce over. But his contributions to the Force would go beyond making such high-risk arrests or dealing with crises like the Hotel New World Collapse in 1986 or even the hijack of flight SQ117 in which he was part of the team recalled that night in 1991 to help resolve the situation.

For instance, Mr Kui was the officer behind the conceptualisation of the “shift work plans”, which was implemented in the 1980s and still used by patrol officers today. It was 1981 and Mr Kui was posted to ‘J’ Division or Jurong Police Division, which was nicknamed Chicago

by officers because like the American city, the area was consistently hit by a high crime-rate.

He then devised a plan to help his officers develop a stronger sense of situational awareness by getting them to draw out hot spots as well as timeslots where crimes occurred most, and then had them plan their patrols around the information. The shift work plans model turned out to be so successful in reducing crime that it was implemented in other Land Divisions.

“It was a very straight-forward scheme and easily implemented. However, the most important aspect was to ensure the supervisors and patrolmen knew the crime situation and planned their moves to show Police presence at the right places at the right time to prevent crime and arrest criminals,” said Mr Kui. “With effective patrols and operations, crime rate was brought down and Jurong was no more Chicago.”

Although he was awarded the Efficiency Medal for the project, his sense of innovation to enhance Ppolice work did not stop there. When Mr Kui was posted to

‘A’ Division in 1994 as Head Investigation, he started the ball rolling to help reduce the caseload at the Division’s Investigation Branch.

Investigators from ‘A’ Division, which handled one of the busiest precincts in Singapore, then took on about 5,000 new cases each year, which resulted in the same number of Investigation Papers or IPs being put up annually. This was about double the average seen at other Land Divisions.

Under Mr Kui’s leadership, the Division managed to reduce its number of IPs from 5,044 in 1994, to 2,139 by 1996. That also resulted in lowering the average number of days taken to complete an investigation from 138.4 days to just 54 days.

Mr Kui, who joined the Force from the Singapore Armed Forces as a Probationary Inspector in 1970, retired in 2004. He has had no regrets trading in his green uniform for blue, adding, “This is the most interesting and best job I’ve done so far.”



SERVED FROM 1970 to 2001

Ng Yow Meng

“one career with many experiences.”



If not for Ng Yow Meng's tenacity in convincing his superiors that investing millions in computing power would transform investigative work, it might have taken the Force a little longer to embrace computerisation. In July 1991, he had the pleasure, as Director of the Electronic, Computer and Communications Department (ECC) of the Singapore Police Force, of rolling out the \$10 million Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS).

AFIS proved his point immediately. Where fingerprint identification used to take up to 15 days and was dependent on the skill of the fingerprint examiner, AFIS took 15 minutes to search through all the records in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) databank to identify possible matches, in order of similarity. Cold cases were solved as fingerprint records were matched to known criminals, leaving the media enthralled as it reported on the closure of old cases.

Earlier, in 1984, as Director Logistics, Mr Ng oversaw the installation of the electronic surveillance system at the Singapore end of the causeway at a cost of \$210,000. Designed to function as extra eyes to help officers nab smugglers, illegal immigrants and wanted criminals, the camera system scored a success within its first month when it helped officers in the control room spot a man attempting to sneak through the Woodlands checkpoint. A decade later, Mr Ng had the system upgraded by integrating the Optical Character Recognition System (OCRS) with the checkpoint cameras. It began flagging up road users who had not paid their traffic fines, allowing a backlog of unpaid fines to be cleared.

A trained engineer, Mr Ng joined the Force in 1970. His first posting as the head of the Police Radio Division workshop showed him how technology could be harnessed for more effective policing. As he climbed the ranks, he began to guide the Force through technological transitions, often upgrading equipment from within. He began the computerisation of the Force by requesting a couple of new terminals for trials. As each computer cost thousands of dollars, he had to work hard to convince his superiors that the initial outlay would be well worth the effort.

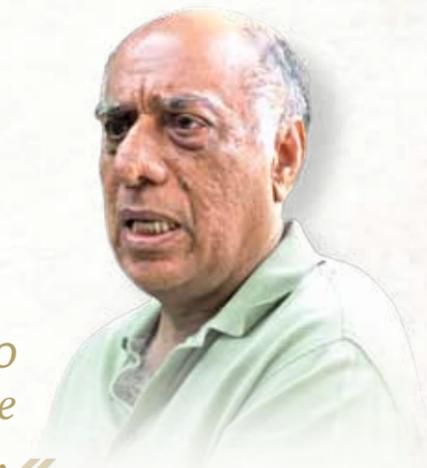
Apart from the budget battles, he also had to overcome resistance from officers, many of whom had never used computers and did not want to change their ways. But, as he proudly noted, as computerisation systems like AFIS proved their worth, and the computer literacy of officers increased, their attitudes towards computers also changed, from resistance to dependence, and sometimes indispensability. By 1997, patrol cars were equipped with mobile data terminals, allowing the operations room to deploy and communicate with patrol officers instantaneously. The Cubicon system facilitated data communications, tracking and screening, essentially putting a laptop computer in every patrol car, and “keeping police one step ahead”.

Mr Ng retired in 2001. Looking back at his time in the Force, he said it was for him and many of his generation, “one career with many experiences”.

SERVED FROM 1978 to 1998

Teffail Mohamed Khan

“If we keep out people who wear glasses, then we are perhaps tapping only the remaining 40 percent and this will be limiting ourselves if we want better-educated people to join the Force.”



Six months after he parachuted into the Police Force as the first civilian Director of Manpower and Administration, Teffail Mohamed Khan introduced two new initiatives: Holiday chalets at East Coast Parkway at nominal rents rates for all officers, and a centralised disciplinary process to investigate, prosecute and punish errant police officers swiftly and fairly.

Both measures were in the welfare interests of officers, Mr Khan said. The formation of a Disciplinary Board reporting to him as well as permanent and separate units under the Staff Inspectorate to investigate and prosecute errant police officers would ensure those falsely accused were cleared quickly while the guilty received similar punishments for similar offences, he shared.

The holiday chalets - with daily charges of \$5 -to \$7 for junior officers and \$7 to \$10 for senior officers - were an instant hit.

Mr Khan joined the Force in December 1978 after serving 18 years with the Ministry of National Development, including a 2-year stint with the Singapore Airport Duty Free Emporium. He was subsequently transferred onto the Police scheme of service and given the rank of Superintendent and put in charge of Police administration, finance, logistics and manpower. But he found that there was no one system for data management. “If you wanted to know what type of manpower you had, how many people were doing a certain kind of work - the data was there, but it was not collated or systemised,” he recalled. So he set out to build a system to organise the data. Eventually he split his Department into three separate entities - Admin and Finance, Logistics, and Manpower, and over the span of his career, headed each of them as Director.

He also introduced a personnel appraisal system after taking a six-month sabbatical at the University of Manchester to study manpower planning. For the first time in the SPF's history, there was now a way to gauge an officer's ability and potential.

Indeed Mr Khan's tenure as Director Manpower was driven by two inter-related concerns - improving staff morale and meeting the increasing and changing operational requirements of a transforming Police Force as it began to emphasise community policing.

In 1983, the Force changed its long-standing policy to take in, for the first time, 100 Constables who wore spectacles. Said Mr Khan of the “new mata-mata”: “If we keep out people who wear glasses, then we are perhaps tapping only the remaining 40 per cent and this will be limiting ourselves if we want better-educated people to join the Force.”

That same year, he announced that the Force would be conducting an attitude survey the next year to gauge morale and help place officers in areas they were best suited for. Career development schemes would also be introduced to ensure the rank and file were able to progress systematically.

The greater emphasis on professionalism was also accompanied by the rollout of several welfare programmes - cheap loans for the purchase of cars and home renovation, group tours to recreational spots in the region, holiday chalets in Malaysia, and a shop within the Welfare Division premises offering discounts on sports and electronic goods on low hire purchase terms.

Mr Khan's ambition to open a police bank before he retired as Deputy Assistant Commissioner in January 1998, however, did not materialise. But he succeeded in bringing home to Police officers the better things in life.

They Made the Ultimate Sacrifice

In order to safeguard Singapore, Police officers are required to serve even in the face of extreme danger. Violence and bloodshed were no strangers to the streets of early Singapore. Officers were often called to make split second decisions even in the most fraught situations. As officers served on the frontline to enforce the law, they constantly grappled with life and death situations. It came with the territory.

Yet, the very eventuality that was most feared materialized when these officers were called to make the greatest sacrifice – they gave up their lives. Their courage, even in the face of death, put them in a class of their own. Their passing served as a reminder of the dangers in the life of a Police officer. Nevertheless, their legacies of devotion and valour continue to inspire our officers today.

SERVED FROM **1957 to 1965**

Allan Lim Kim Sai



Allan Lim Kim Sai joined the Singapore Police Force as soon as he completed his School Certificate examination. His father Inspector Lim Choon Seng was attached to the Police Training School and that was his playground. An avid sportsman, the younger Lim quickly proved his mettle and was promoted to Cadet Inspector six months later, earning his bars in 1961, the same year his father retired.

On 4 August 1965, Inspector (Insp) Lim donated blood for the tenth time. Little did he know that in a few short hours, he would be called to make a greater sacrifice.

The notorious Morgan Teo and his gang, kidnappers trained in sabotage work by the Indonesians under Konfrontasi, had been traced to a house in Siang Lim Park in Geylang. A pre dawn operation involving 140 police personnel was planned for 5 August 1965.

Using loud hailers, police gave the gangsters an opportunity to surrender and when they did not respond, hurled tear gas bombs into the house. Three men and a woman came out and surrendered, but not Morgan Teo, who escaped into another house in the row. As his men surrounded the house, the officer in charge of the operation, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) JS Khosa, and Insp Lim edged in from the front entrance. They were going to give Teo a final chance to surrender. ASP Khosa called out in Malay for Teo to surrender. "I felt Allan tap my right shoulder. I told him to repeat the call in Chinese," Mr Khosa told a coroner's inquiry.

"As he spoke a few words in Chinese, a shot rang out and Allan slumped backwards."

ASP Khosa ducked behind a wall as two other officers stepped into the room and sprayed the ceiling with gunfire. Another police officer, Constable Daniel Hudson, ran in and dragged Insp Lim's body out. Teo threw hand grenades at the remaining officers, injuring them. In the gunfire, Teo was shot in the head and a fire broke out. Two revolvers were later recovered from under his body.

Insp Allan Lim died in hospital at 9.45 am that day.

His death sent shockwaves through the nation. He was just 28 years old when he left behind his young wife and nine month old infant, David.

Today David Lim is a Police Superintendent, following a legacy that began in 1934 when his grandfather Lim Choon Seng joined the Straits Settlement Police Force as a Constable.

Having grown up without a father but with the memories of a doting grandfather, Supt Lim lives by this motto: Cherish your family, as you won't know when bad things will happen.



5 Feb 1968

Detective Munisamy Naidu

He was only 23. The young detective had just arrested a suspected secret society gang member, and had escorted him to a nearby telephone booth to call for backup. Four of the suspect's fellow gang members who had been trailing them, pounced on the detective who fired three rounds injuring one of them. But the odds were against him and he sustained multiple stab wounds and died en-route to the hospital. Detective Naidu's demise was poignant loss to the Force, now deprived of a promising young officer who would have had so much to give.

17 Apr 1973

Detective Police Constable Ng Poh Hock



Twenty-seven year-old Detective Police Constable (DPC) Ng Poh Hock and two other detectives were staking out a gang of robbers for the fourth consecutive night, when he was gunned down as he closed in to arrest one of the robbers. DPC Ng had survived a running gun battle with gang members and armed criminals in the last ten months prior to his death. He was a decorated crime fighter, earning ten testimonials and commendations from the Commissioner of Police in the two years he had been with the Criminal Investigation Department.

12 Jul 1973

Detective Ong Poh Heng



Detective Ong had fearlessly intervened in an argument between a wanted gunman and a bus driver along Still Road. The gunman, Hoo How Seng, alias Botak, was a member of a gang of armed robbers who had pulled off 15 robberies in 1975. 2000 policemen and officers paid their respects at Detective Ong's wake, with hundreds of residents lining the streets as his hearse left his home for the funeral service.

15 Mar 1974

Police Constable Abu Habir Bin Kassim



Police Constable (PC) Abu Habir Bin Kassim had left home at 11pm the night before, expected to return at 8am the next day. But this was not to be, as the police patrol boat he was on collided with a Russian trawler and capsized at the mouth of Sungei Jurong, near Jurong Pier. It sank in a matter of minutes amidst the raging waters, and PC Kassim was unable to escape, trapped and swept away by the strong currents. His body was never found. PC Kassim had served dedicatedly for 17 years and was to have retired in 3 years when he died on duty.

17 May 1978
**Sergeant
Toh Say Tin**

Sergeant (Sgt) Toh Say Tin, who was from the Reserve Unit had been attempting to board a ship from a Police Coast Guard speedboat, when the rough seas caused him to fall into the water. He was just 31. Despite efforts by his colleagues to save him, Sgt Toh was swept away by the strong currents. His body was found a day later, about eight kilometres away from the incident site. Sgt Toh Say Tin was described by his supervisor to be honest, hardworking, and an all-round exemplary officer.



4 Jul 1985
**Police Constable
Mohd Sarwar s/o
Mohd Afzal**

PC Mohd Sarwar s/o Mohd Afzal lost his life after a tragic accident, when the patrol car he was driving collided with a stationary taxi at a road junction. The impact caused the police patrol car to veer left, injuring PC Mohd Sarwar. He suffered internal injuries and cuts to his left eye, and succumbed to his wounds after 10 weeks. PC Mohd Sarwar was only 36 when he passed away.



19 Apr 1979
**Sergeant Mohd
Saad bin Omar**

Sgt Mohd Saad and PC Han Khoe Juan had just arrested a drug suspect, Tan Choon Lin, along Lorong 20 Geylang Road, and were returning to the Beach Road Police Station. Tan, who was sitting alone in the rear of the police car tried to escape. In a bid to stop Tan, Sgt Mohd Saad moved to the back to restrain her. However, in the ensuing struggle, Tan snatched his revolver and shot him, then attempted to shoot herself. Sgt Mohd Saad was rushed to the hospital, but unfortunately died enroute. He was to have retired in 2 years' time when he died.



19 Dec 1985
**Detective Police
Constable
Goh Ah Khia**

DPC Goh Ah Kia lost his life during an arrest, 20 years and 10 weeks from the day he first joined the Police Force. He was attending to what first appeared to be a routine robbery case, when he was shot in the chest and killed by notorious gunman "Ah Huat". DPC Goh was described to be a courageous and dedicated officer, willing to take on additional responsibilities voluntarily. He held exacting standards to his performance, earning the respect of his superiors.



29 Jun 1983
**Police Constable
Abdul Rahman
Bin Abdul Kadir**

PC Abdul Rahman Bin Abdul Kadir was only 35 when he was assigned to escort three RSAF aircrafts travelling by road from Tengah Air Base to West Coast Road. Along the way, the right wing of one of the aircrafts struck PC Abdul Kadir, at the junction of Upper Ayer Rajah Road and Jurong Town Hall Road. He was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. The Force had lost a young and promising officer.



30 Nov 1994
**Station Inspector
Boo Tiang Huat**

On 30 November 1994, while on anti-housebreaking rounds along Newton Road, then-Senior Staff Sergeant (SSSgt) Boo Tiang Huat, was set upon by an axe-wielding man and tragically lost his life. SSSgt Boo who was promoted to Station Inspector posthumously, was known to be unwavering in his drive, highly reliable and self-motivated. His achievements left no question about his dedication to his work and his men.



6 Dec 1984
**Sergeant
Chin Ah Kow**

Sgt Chin Ah Kow was just 18 months from collecting his pension when he lost his life, during what was supposed to be a routine patrol. He was the crew commander of a Marine Police Patrol boat, doing its rounds at the Sultan Shoal area, when he was tragically shot in the head by one of his crew, a Special Constable, and thrown overboard. After an intensive search, his body was never recovered and remained lost at sea.

2 Dec 1973
**Police Constable
Mohammed
Sanusi**

PC Mohammed Sanusi died in an unfortunate twist of events at the age of 26. That night, PC Sanusi had been filling up petrol into a Police van at Paya Lebar Police Station when he saw a Police min-bus sliding down a slope. In his attempt to stop the vehicle, he was tragically run over by the bus.

We Salute You

He (Mr Sri Kanthan) was focused on building leaders out of us. He drummed on us to be exemplary to the extent that during Ramadan he didn't want to see any Muslim cadet eating in public. He led by example - he ran with us as far as we did and performed all exercises together. But most of all I remembered him as a person who cared.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli

*Second Minister
Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

I will always remember and be grateful to Mr Sri Kanthan for being a role model of discipline, commitment and perseverance.

Mr Leo Yip

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs

After retirement, Fareed Khan continued to work because he just needed to be active and engaged. He was devoted to the Police and to the public service. He had tremendous self-discipline and while he may have appeared stern, I know him to be a generous and kind-hearted man with a great sense of humour .”

Mr Benny Lim

Former Permanent Secretary Home Affairs: 2005 - 2011

The late Mr Goh Yong Hong was the Commissioner who modernised the Police. I still remember his words of advice the first time I met him in 1977: “ Find out what is happening on the ground and don't be afraid to ask questions”. He had a formidable reputation for professionalism and integrity, having successfully led the Special Investigation Section and turning in a schoolmate who attempted to bribe him. He was the youngest-appointed and longest-serving Commissioner of Police of the 20th Century. Many of his initiatives, including the National Crime Prevention Council, Neighbourhood Police Posts, Crime Watch and Neighbourhood Watch Groups remain relevant today. He was also a great believer in the new generation of officers, granting them leadership opportunities early in their careers. He was truly an inspiration for me during the first half of my Police career.

Mr Khoo Boon Hui

Former Commissioner of Police: 1997 - 2010

Goh Yong Hong was the Commissioner when I first joined up. He was a much-loved CP, possessing a certain charisma and easy manner that endeared him to all ranks. This was the same grace that I tried hard to emulate when I was Commissioner. May he rest in peace.

Mr Ng Joo Hee

Former Commissioner of Police: 2010 – 2015

It was a privilege for me to serve in the Police Force during my national service which allowed me a preview into his legacy. Being the first Commissioner to rise from the ranks of Constable to Police chief, he was one to be close to the people on the ground and understood the operational issues at hand and how best to tackle them.

Mr Cheam Tze Shen

*Grandson of former Commissioner of Police,
Mr Cheam Kim Seang*

I joined in 1985... my father (Karthegasu Thamby Rajah) had by then retired from the SPF, but I saw how he had made a difference to those around him, and how rich the SPF was in its traditions and camaraderie and I was inspired to join.

Mr T. Raja Kumar

*Former Deputy Commissioner of Police
in a Police Life story in Dec 2014*

I remember former ‘F’ Division Commander, Mr Lionel Robson who scolded and moulded me on how to be an IO. I remember that very clearly because that was the day after my first tour of duty as an AIO (R) – in October 1989. Back then, no one taught us how to brief cases. We learnt everything by ourselves through trial and error. Mr Robson was present during the Morning Panel session and I briefed the cases in my own way and he gave me the required “medication”. I can't forget that. Anyway, that moulded me to be a real IO thereafter.

Senior Station Inspector

N. Kunalan S/O M Nagamuthu

Deputy Officer-in-charge Community Policing Unit, Orchard NPC

One day, I attended Morning Panel Review, which was chaired by then Commander ‘G’ Division, Superintendent Tan Ngo Chew. He emphasised for the first PO attending to incidents, to be more observant and to be able to describe the scene in detail.with the detailed observation made by the first PO,this will aid the investigation and eventually bring the perpetrator to justice. Till today, I strongly emphasise to my subordinates to be more observant while at the scene and to hone their fact-finding abilities.

Mohamat Sallim Bin Juni

*Deputy Team Leader ‘D’
Changi Neighbourhood Police Centre*

Police Crests over the Years



1800s – 1942

Colony of the Straits Settlements (Straits Settlements Police)

The Singapore Police Force had its roots as the Straits Settlements Police. Within the wreath was the lozenge badge of the British Straits Settlements. Their scroll bore the inscription “Straits Settlements Police”. The Crowns symbolised the three parts of the Straits Settlements in 1867: Singapore, Penang and Malacca.



1946 – 1959

Crown Colony of Singapore (Singapore Police Force)

In 1946, Singapore’s status was elevated to that of a crown colony with the dissolving of the Straits Settlements.

In 1953, Queen Elizabeth II ordered the change of the crown design to all emblems, badges, and flags in the British Empire, from the previously used Imperial / Tudor Crown to the St Edward’s crown.



1959 – 1963

Self-Governing Colony of Singapore / State of Singapore (Polis Negara Singapura)

In 1959, Singapore attained self-governance. With that, the new State Arms was introduced. This affected the Police badge and it henceforth featured for the first time ever, the shield as appearing on the present national arms. The scroll however bore the inscription in Malay, Polis Negara Singapura, generally translated as “State of Singapore Police”.



1963 – 1965

Singapore in the Malaysian Federation (Polis Di-Raja Malaysia)

In September 1963, Singapore attained independence from the United Kingdom as a component state within the federation of Malaysia. The police forces of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak integrated to become the new Polis Di-Raja Malaysia (Royal Malaysia Police) and the Royal Malaysian Police badge (1963 - 1965) was used in Singapore and on the Police service flag.

The emblem of that period was based on that of the previous Royal Federation of Malaya Police (Polis Di-Raja Persekutuan). To differentiate between the states, the flag was customised to include a lion’s head to represent Singapore (and some sources also mention Sabah) while a tiger’s head represented the Malaysian Federation. The scroll reads “Polis Di-Raja Malaysia”.



1965 – 2015

Singapore Police Force (Republik Polis Singapura)

The SPF crest underwent yet another change in 1965 after Singapore gained independence. To represent its intrinsic link with the nation, the SPF crest bears the emblem reminiscent of design of our national flag. A blue scroll appears below, with the name of the Force in the National Language (Malay); Polis Republik Singapura translated as Republic of Singapore Police.



2015 onwards

Singapore Police Force (Republik Polis Singapura)

50 years after Independence, in 2015, the SPF updated its crest adopting a three dimensional (3D) look that represents an SPF that both respects its heritage and looks to the future. The crest was simplified and modernised to sit in a wider range of digital applications and communication platforms to better appeal to the younger generation and the generations to come. The modernised 3D SPF crest is now shown in a more impactful way, reinforcing the authority, official nature and importance of the Police as a leader in the eyes of the public.

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Reflection



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