Stories from our Grandparents - A Singapore Story

In our fast-paced society, many grandparents and grandchildren are not close as spending time with grandparents is not a regular family practice for most people. Young people today are usually very busy and do not engage their grandparents in meaningful conversation. Some do not meet their grandparents unless during family celebrations such as birthdays, weddings or on sad occasions such as relatives’ wakes. Even so, only a few cordial greetings are exchanged.

Recognising the need for intergenerational bonding, The National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA) Gold Award Holders’ Alumni (GAHA), with the support of the NYAA Council and Our Singapore Fund (OSF), embarked on a journey in early 2018 to capture the Singaporean stories that form our nation’s history from our pioneer generations, and also to support the next phase of the Founders’ Memorial Project.

The project, titled Stories from our Grandparents, hopes to highlight 100 selected stories from pioneer Singaporeans on their struggles in the early days, challenges they face in nation building, their struggles and contributions.

“Through interviewing my grandmother, I realized Singapore’s history is very important to me. I also realized as part of the next generation, we need the wisdom of our seniors like our grandparents to guide us.”

The stories will also allow these pioneers to express their wishes and aspirations for younger Singaporeans, which we hope will inspire them to strive for excellence in whatever their fields of endeavours and contribute in their own way to take Singapore into the future.

Through the Stories from our Grandparents project, we will be able to showcase the hard work, dedication and sacrifices that our pioneers have put in to build the Singapore that we have today.

NYAA Council has received more than 300 stories submissions and the 100 most inspiring stories have been selected and compiled into a book for our archive.

Students who have participated in the project have expressed that they are closer to their grandparents after spending time to interview them. Ms Tan Yu Feng Grace from ITE College West interviewed her grandmother, Mdm Lee Ho Yong, 74 years old, who started working at the age of 11 to support the family. She also recounted those kampong days where she had to plant vegetables and raise livestock for survival.

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Mr Chua Heng Lee, 68 years old
Grandfather of Chong Yong Xiang
Pasir Ris Secondary School

Grace’s grandmother, Mdm Lee Ho Yong is currently working at McDonald’s and wants to continue working to keep herself active.
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We are fortunate that Singapore today is not in a constant state of war and has increased its preparedness for any external threat.

I am proud we have progressed this far and I feel that the most important things in my days were the good values that I learnt. I hope that future generations will also experience a fulfilling life by pursuing a career they enjoy, as I feel that if you enjoy what you do, you will do it well with integrity and honesty.

Mr Edward Yong Men Win, 79 years old
Grandfather of Yong Yi Tze Elliot
NCC Anglo Chinese School (Independent)

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“Singapore is very modern and technologically advanced. It is clean and safe. Singapore provides good education and produces competent citizens to man the workforce. Singaporeans today live longer lives because of efficient and professional healthcare services. We Singaporeans are lucky.

Anybody can be anything he wants, if he is driven, determined and willing to make sacrifices. Also, age is not a barrier. It is just a number.”

Mr Yoong Tat Fook Peter, 79 years old
Grandfather of Elijah James Ng
NCC (Land) St. Patrick’s School

National Cadet Corps (Land) St Patrick’s School student Elijah James Ng’s grandfather, Mr Yoong Tat Fook Peter remembers hiding under a table with his mother and bomb splinters flying everywhere.

Mr Yoong has retired in the year 2000 but is still keeping himself busy. At present, he is an Aikido martial arts instructor and plays badminton every week. He also has a message for the next generation of Singaporeans.