

WE BUILT THIS CITY

As *Prestige* turns 21, we take a nostalgic ride back in time to honour 21 local names and institutions that have contributed greatly to the Singaporean identity and landscape. Compiled by Mavis Teo, this tribute highlights the pioneers who were the OG start-up trailblazers, as well as the little-known stories of the places – even those you least expected – that grew up (and old) with us.

SHAW THEATRE LIDO

A much-loved brand that resonates across a few generations of Singaporeans, Shaw Theatres started screening movies in Asia in 1920s out of makeshift cinemas, using bed sheets as screens. These cinemas were later upgraded and became household names like Capitol, Rex, Sky, Oriental, Hoover, Royal and Queen.

The most iconic of them was Shaw Lido. Shaw Lido first opened its doors in 1959, costing over \$2.4 million to build. It was a single-screen cinema equipped with Frick air conditioners, four/six channel magnetic stereo surround sound systems, and convertible 35mm/70mm water-cooled Simplex projectors. It closed in 1989 after screening *Batman* starring Michael Keaton, for a major upgrade. It reopened in 1992 with five screens. Lido was the first to introduce advanced audio-visual systems THX, DTS (Digital Theatre Systems) and SDDS (Sony Dynamic Digital Sound) to moviegoers and they were launched with Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*.

In 1996, in response to rising demand, a game arcade space was converted into another three halls, expanding the total seating capacity to 2,000. Lido has hosted many premieres graced by Hollywood and Asian celebrities including Tom Cruise, Tom Hanks, Jackie Chan, Donnie Yen, Hugh Jackman, Michelle Yeoh and Patrick Stewart. The next biggest overhaul was in 2010, which saw Shaw Theatres Lido outfitted with 10 all-new halls and Singapore's first digital IMAX hall.



The original Shaw Lido in Orchard Road

Vintage ads by Leung Kai Fook



PHOTOS: SHAW THEATRES (OLD LIDO CINEMA), LEUNG KAI FOOK MEDICAL COMPANY (VINTAGE ADVERTISEMENTS)



AXE BRAND

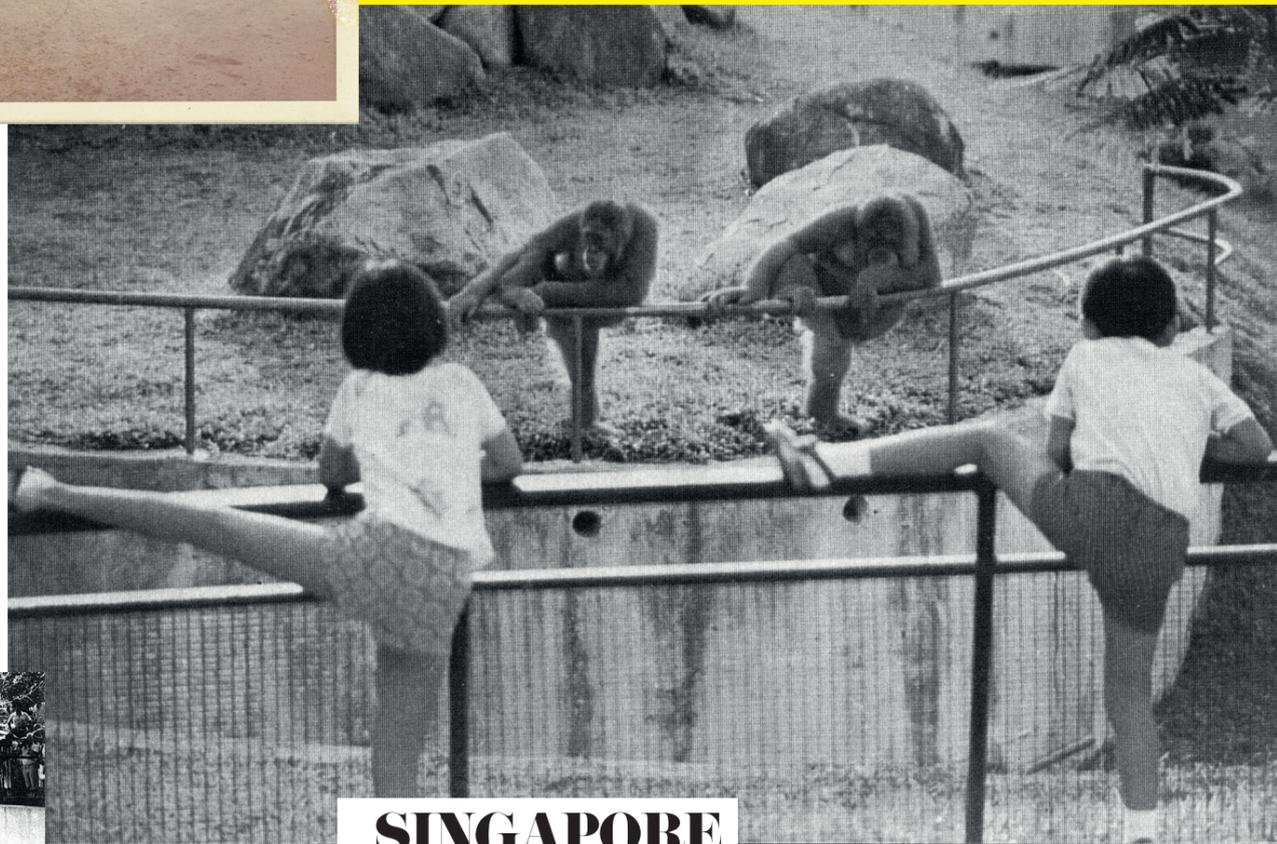
For more than 90 years, Axe Brand Universal Oil has been relieving sore muscles and clearing blocked noses around the world. While the product looks like a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) remedy, the herbal formula featuring ingredients like menthol, camphor and eucalyptus oil actually originated from a German physician. The doctor, who felt the formula would be suitable for tropical climate ailments, had given the recipe to businessman Leung Yun Chee when the latter moved to Singapore in the 1920s.

Leung eventually set up Leung Kai Fook Medical in 1928 and began selling the oil. Fast forward to 2021, Axe Brand has gone global with a presence in more than 50 countries including Romania, Australia and the United States. It currently employs 1,000 staff in five factories around the world. Though the founder's grandchildren have joined the business, Axe Brand is still helmed by one of his sons, Leong Mun Sum, who is the managing director.

Interestingly, the Middle East was one of the first overseas markets that Axe Brand expanded into after World War II. Demand from the region had spiked thanks to pilgrims on their way to hajj: They had found the medicated oil the balm to their seasickness (as most pilgrimage trips were made by sea at that time) and sore muscles. Word of the medicated oil's efficacy grew, and so did Axe Brand's reputation and business.



Good ole times at the Singapore Zoo with beloved icons such as Ah Meng the orangutan and Inuka the polar bear



SINGAPORE ZOO

Who knew an enduring attraction like the Singapore Zoo was the brainchild of a young team with little knowledge of wildlife conservation? Led by Dr Ong Swee Law, the chairman of the Public Utilities Board in the late 1960s, the zoo opened in 1973 to resounding success.

Visitors could view beautiful but dangerous animals in their natural settings, sans cages, with some accessible via glass-fronted galleries. In 1998, the Fragile Forest attraction allowed guests to enter a biodome, right into a miniature rainforest to share the same space with creatures like lemurs, mousedeer, bats, birds and sloths. At the turn of the millennium, it opened The Great Rift Valley of Ethiopia where over 100 Hamadryas baboons could frolic and relax amid cliffs and waterfalls.

From being the first zoo in the world to showcase monkeys on narrowly moated islands in the '90s, relying mostly on "psychological barriers" to keep the primates within their habitats, the Singapore Zoo went on to allow monkeys (which had been handpicked for their calmer disposition) roaming within the park. On the subject of primates, the zoo paid tribute to its poster girl, the late orangutan Ah Meng, with a D24 durian tree planted at her burial spot within the zoo in 2008.

PHOTOS: MANDAI WILDLIFE GROUP (SINGAPORE ZOO); CYC COMPANY (CYC STORES & STAFF)



CYC stores through the decades, and some of the pioneering staff (below)



CYC

Chiang Yick Ching and his wife Foo Ah Neok started CYC in Shanghai in 1935. They subsequently came to Singapore where they operated as a hole-in-the-wall outfit before opening their first retail store on Selegie Road in 1945. When Chiang passed away in 1949, Foo managed the business, taking it to greater heights. In 1967, Foo opened CYC's second retail store in a shophouse unit on North Bridge Road, which was Singapore's major shopping belt before Orchard Road. The shop stood at the spot of the current Carlton Hotel.

By 1972, CYC had built a factory in MacPherson Road to make ready-to-wear shirts. Managed by the founders' two sons, CYC's mass production arm grew along with mechanisation. Business flourished. Between the 1970s and 1980s, CYC had seven shops and three franchises. In 1992, CYC, under the management of the third generation, launched CYC Corporate Label to cater to corporate clients. In 1994, the company then known as CYC Shanghai Shirt Co. was rebranded to CYC The Custom Shop (CYC), focusing solely on custom-made clothing. It also opened a flagship store at Raffles Hotel Shopping Arcade.

One of its most famous clients was the late founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew. In 2001, an open call for vintage CYC shirts for the CYC Museum saw the late Mrs Lee donating three of Mr Lee's 30-year-old shirts - one of which he wore at his very first National Day Rally. In 2016 CYC was again rebranded, this time to CYC Made to Measure. During the pandemic, CYC initiated the "300k Mask for Migrants", mobilising volunteers to make masks for migrant workers. Travel restrictions due to the pandemic meant that CYC's overseas customers could not order their shirts in person. Therefore, this year, CYC launched an online tailoring service that allows customers to customise their shirts according to their latest measurements.



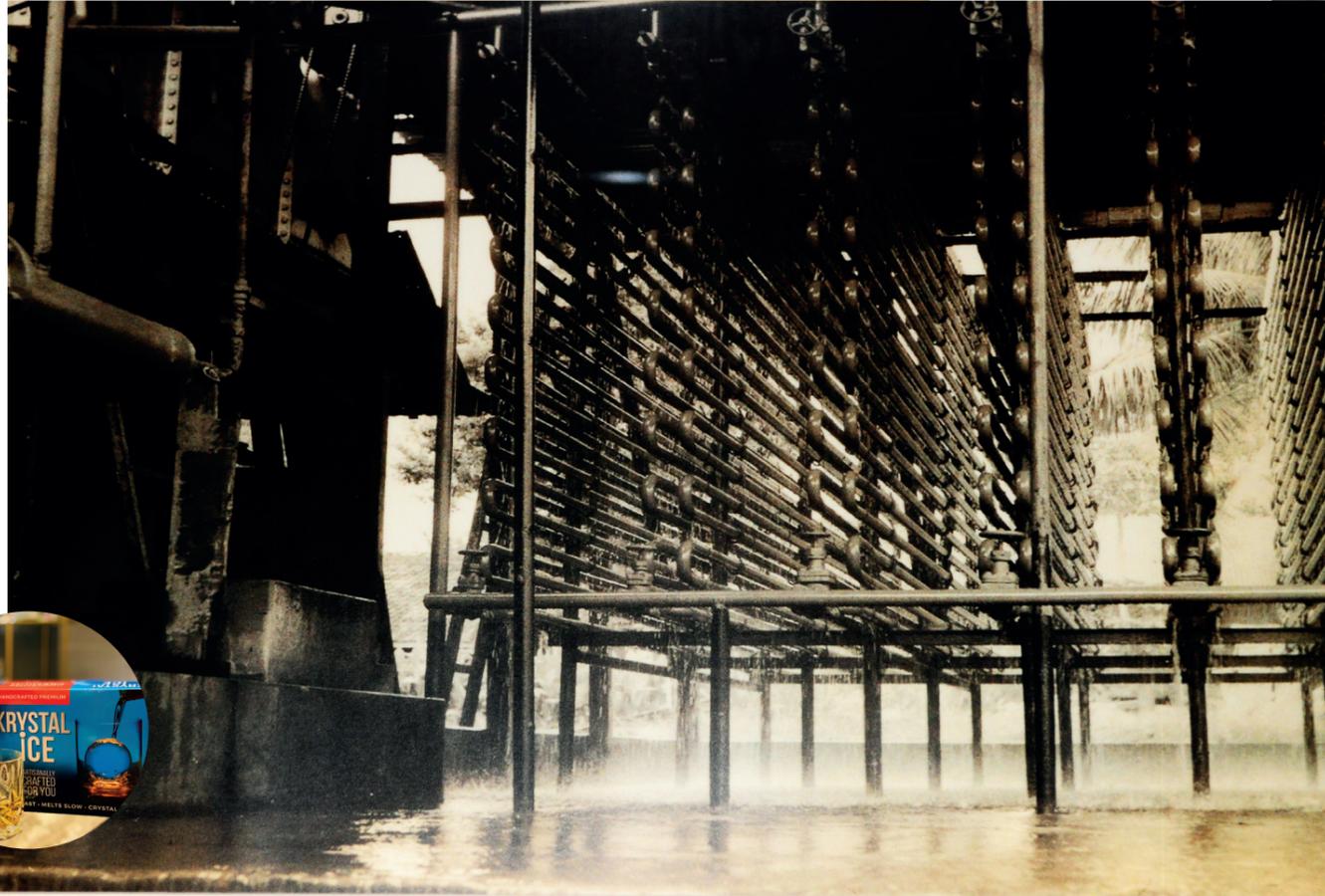
Tuck Lee's ice factory in the 1930s, and its new product Krystal Ice Balls (inset)

TUCK LEE ICE

"The Coolest Business in Singapore" – the management of Tuck Lee loves this pun on their product, and the company's eye-catching vehicle wraps emblazoned with humorous slogans have elicited quite a few chuckles over the years. Founded in 1935 and currently run by the fourth generation, this family business can be said to be the most well-known ice manufacturer in Singapore.

When Haw Wee, the third-generation owner took over the reins in the '80s, Tuck Lee was still using the old method of transporting ice to roadside vendors – using sawdust and gunny sacks as insulation in blazing Singapore. Wee saw these methods inefficient and unhygienic, and sought to overhaul Tuck Lee's production and delivery systems. New machines were bought to produce ice in different shapes and sizes. He also invested in a fleet of reefer trucks and worked on improving service and, at the same time, branding. Tuck Lee's product range greatly expanded.

By 2000, Tuck Lee's major business was the supply of food-grade ice for parties, and to supermarkets, F&B outlets, hawker centres, petrol stations and convenience stores. Wee's son, Jeremy Haw, currently the executive director, introduced Tuck Lee's ice sculpting service for weddings, parties and corporate events. In 2019, Krystal Ice Balls were launched to target a growing group of whisky connoisseurs. Early this year, Season's Best was launched, giving local restaurants access to Tuck Lee's expertise in cold-chain delivery so that they may serve the seasonal produce at its freshest to customers.



PHOTOS: TUCK LEE (ICE FACTORY SCENES); PHOON HUAT (PHOON HUAT STORES); DR JULIAN THENG (KAP MALL)



Phoon Huat stores, then and now



PHOON HUAT

The worldwide phenomenon of "lockdown baking" began as Covid-19 struck – and made Phoon Huat the accidental hero in town for being a source of joy and the purveyor of regular household goods turned prized items. Business was brisk for the baking ingredients supplier as flour, butter and sugar flew off the shelves. Despite the pandemic, the company achieved its target of about \$100 million in revenue last year.

Phoon Huat's first shopfront was set up in 1947 on Middle Road by a Hainanese entrepreneur named Wong Tai Fuang. In 1958, Wong started RedMan, a retail brand for baking ingredients. During the '60s, Wong took Phoon Huat into East and West Malaysia, and opened a Phoon Huat in Bencoolen Street. In 1967, the RedMan Concentrate was launched. The first flavour in this line was orange, while the second was rose.

Through the decades, Phoon Huat expanded its chain of stores across the island, and ventured overseas into the rest of Asia and the Middle East, including the Maldives and Papua New Guinea. While the company based its production in several locations during the early days, it then moved into its own Phoon Huat Industrial Building on MacTaggart Road in 1994. By 2002, it had relocated to its current premises – the 25,000 sq m Phoon Huat HQ building on Pandan Loop. By 2008, Phoon Huat's annual revenue had crossed \$50 million, and by 2016, it had crossed \$100 million. In 2020, Phoon Huat's e-commerce's wing, RedManShop.com, was launched.

KING ALBERT PARK



The redeveloped King Albert Park

The former two-storey blue building named McDonald's Place was originally home to the fast-food company's Singapore corporate headquarters until it was bought over for redevelopment by Oxley Sanctuary in 2012. Since the early '90s when it first opened, the McDonald's outlet with its own drive-through was a regular hangout for students from schools within the Bukit Timah vicinity, while its anchor tenant of Cold Storage was popular with the area's residents. The building came to be known fondly as King Albert Park.

To one Singaporean family, the location holds so many memories that they bought three strata-titled commercial units and one residential unit when Oxley launched a sale for the new seven-storey freehold mixed development comprising 107 commercial units and 142 residential units that would receive TOP in November 2016. "Prior to me and my sister buying the units, we were told that McDonald's and Cold Storage would return to the new site," says Dr Julian Theng, an ophthalmologist, and the founder and group chairman of Eagle Eye Centre.

When the fact that neither was coming back sunk in, Dr Theng decided that he had to step up on efforts to bring life to what's now known as KAP Mall. "When I bought the units, I was hoping that the building would bring joy to the community the way the old site had to many of us in the old days," adds Dr Theng, who went on to found the EagleWings Group. Through persistent concerted efforts, Dr Theng, his sister and some of the owners who make up the MCST of the building procured a good mix of tenants in the retail mall.

The EagleWings Group, which also has a yacht charter arm, then filled in gaps in the services available at the mall by taking up empty units and turning them into EagleWings Cinematics, a 24-hour minimart, sugar-free dessert cafe Camaca, and an optical shop called Owl Optics to complement Eagle Eye Centre's services – just to name a few.

KK WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

An icon in Singapore that brings back wonderful memories for so many families here, KKH had actually started in 1858 as a general hospital in Hampshire Road called Kandang Kerbau Hospital before seeing women for gynaecological conditions and childbirth. A post-war baby boom between 1940s and 1960s, and a spike in referrals for abnormal pregnancies and premature births, led to the building of a new extension in the 1950s.

With specialised nurseries equipped with incubators, the survival rate for these babies was greatly improved. Nearly 40,000 babies were born in 1966, which gained KKH entry into The Guinness Book of Records that year for being the largest maternity hospital in the world. In 1997, KKH relocated nearby to its current Bukit Timah Road location, and was renamed KK Women's and Children's Hospital, to signify its move beyond obstetrics and gynaecology (O&G) to become Singapore's first and only purpose-built children's hospital.

In 2017, KKH launched The KK Human Milk Bank as Singapore's only donor milk bank to give vulnerable infants a healthy start to their lives. Today, KKH is a major teaching hospital for medical schools, and offers the nation's largest O&G and paediatrics training programme. KKH also has the largest neonatal intensive care unit in Southeast Asia and takes care of two-thirds of all babies born under 1,500g here.

KK Women's & Children's Hospital is 163 years old



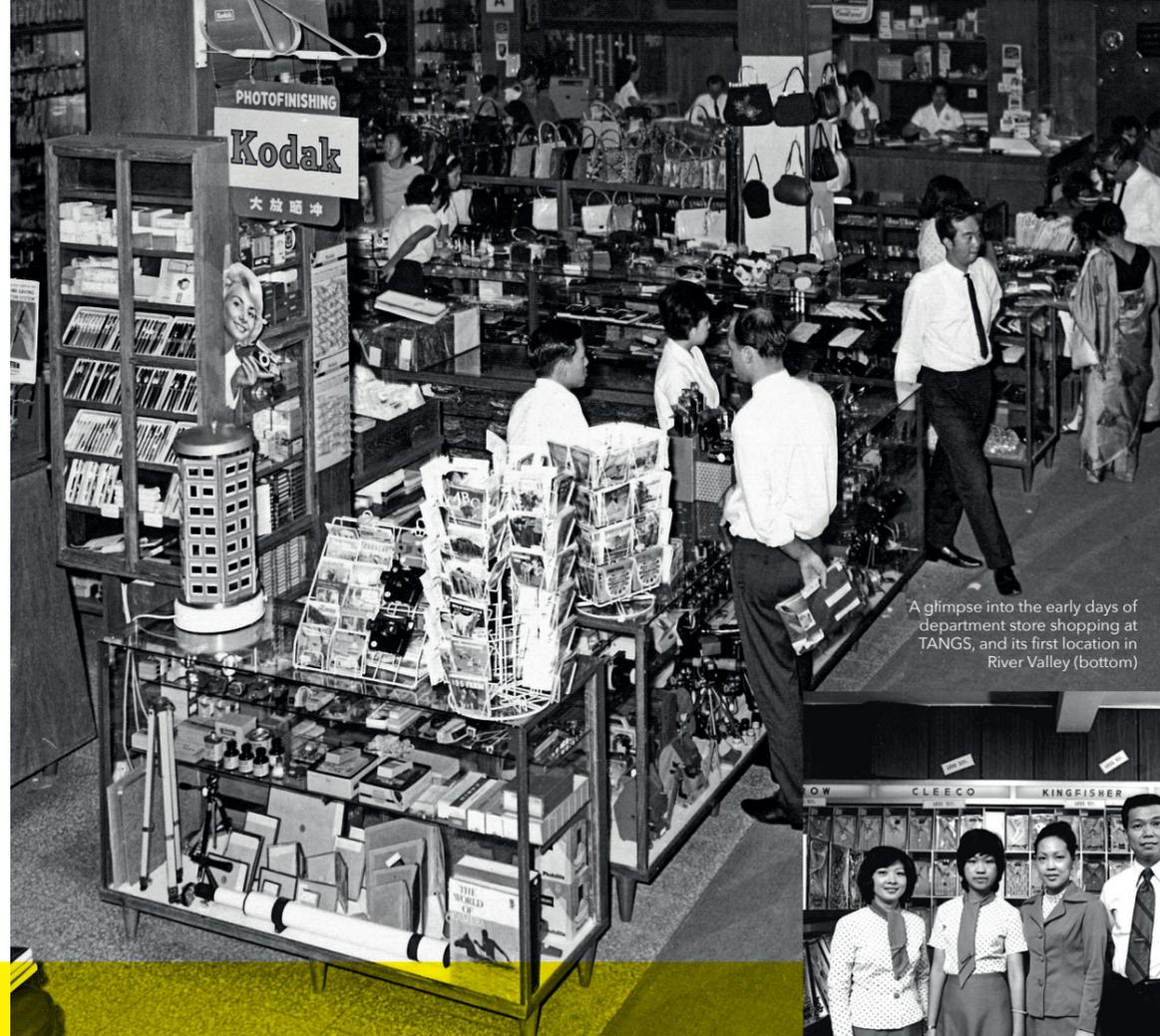
SRT's *Forbidden City: Portrait of an Empress*

SINGAPORE REPERTORY THEATRE

Founded in 1993, Singapore Repertory Theatre (SRT) is one of Asia's leading English-language theatre producers and presenters. In 1988, it became the first Singaporean, if not the first Asian, theatre company to be part of a production that went all the way from Singapore to Broadway and earned three Tony Award nominations for its role as associate producer for *Golden Child*.

Besides producing original musicals like *Forbidden City: Portrait of an Empress*, the company has also staged a number of critically acclaimed international plays including *The Pillowman*, *Disgraced*, and *Caught*. Some of its more well-known international collaborations include the Royal Shakespeare Company's *King Lear* and *The Seagull* starring Sir Ian McKellen, Oscar-winning Sam Mendes' *The Bridge Project* (2009-2011) as well as 3 *Titans of Theatre* - a season of works directed by Simon McBurney, Yukio Ninagawa and Peter Brook. SRT's Shakespeare in the Park season is a regular event that is widely anticipated by locals.

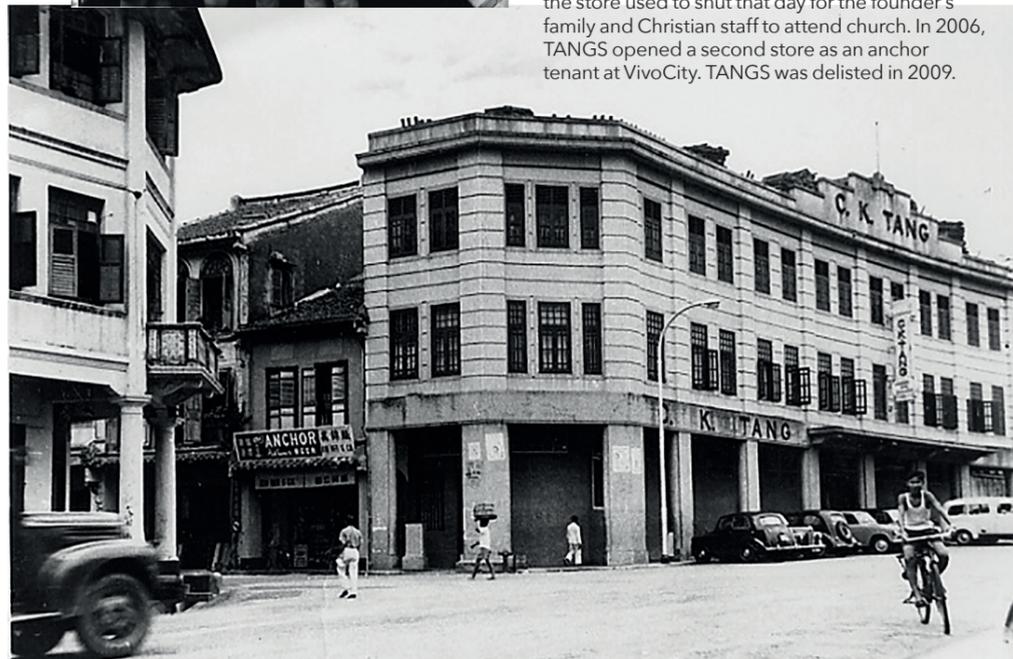
Besides staging plays, SRT is also very active in the local community with programmes that benefit young learners and educators. One of SRT's more recent initiatives includes the establishment of Access Arts Hub, a collective of over 140 artists and arts organisations that work together to create a more inclusive environment in the arts, by increasing access to arts programmes for the disabled community.



A glimpse into the early days of department store shopping at TANGS, and its first location in River Valley (bottom)



PHOTOS: KK WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL (PANORAMA OF HOSPITAL); SINGAPORE REPERTORY THEATRE (FORBIDDEN CITY PERFORMANCE); TANGS (SCENES OF SHOPPING AT TANGS); JANET TAN & TAN WAI SEE (TAN TONG MENG TOWER BROCHURE)



TANGS

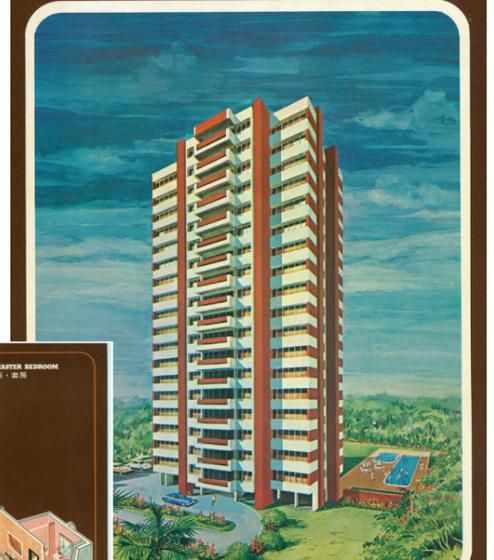
In 1923, a 21-year-old Tang Choon Keng (better known as CK Tang) left Shantou in China for Singapore, with two trunks of linen and lace among his possessions. Also nicknamed the "Tin Trunk Man" and "Curio King", Tang started out as a door-to-door salesman, peddling his fancy linen to customers on a rented rickshaw.

By 1932, Tang had done well enough to open his first shop at a River Valley Road building, which is now known as Gianurn Building as a tribute to his father, Presbyterian minister Tang Gian Urn. The entrepreneur must have been blessed with the Midas touch, for he then bought a piece of land in 1958 that would today be one of Singapore's most coveted. Located at the corner of Orchard Road and Scotts Road, it was to house his department store, C. K. Tang. Naysayers had called the land inauspicious as it faced the Tai San Ting Cemetery. A devoted Christian, Tang stood by his decision, and his company had done so well that it went public in 1975.

In 1982, the new 33-storey TANG Plaza incorporating The Dynasty Hotel (now Singapore Marriott Hotel) and a five-storey shopping complex housing the department store was opened. The store was renamed TANGS. By the early 1990s, one of Tang's sons, Tang Wee Sung, had taken over the reins. The younger Tang became chairman in 2000 after his father's death. One of the significant changes he made for shoppers was to open TANGS on Sundays, when the store used to shut that day for the founder's family and Christian staff to attend church. In 2006, TANGS opened a second store as an anchor tenant at VivoCity. TANGS was delisted in 2009.

The original sales brochure for Tan Tong Meng Tower

TAN TONG MENG TOWER



TANTONG MENG TOWER

Drivers who frequently take the Pan-Island Expressway would be familiar with the red and white condominium on 370-372 Thomson Road. Much like a beacon in the Thomson-Balestier skyline since 1981 when it was built, Tan Tong Meng Tower was the first high-rise apartment in the area and has been the stuff of urban legends in Singapore since.

It was the brainchild of late businessman Tan Tong Meng, who was conferred two Public Service Stars (BBM) by our early presidents Yusof Ishak and Benjamin Sheares. The building's conspicuous colours (red is a colour that the Chinese deem yang enough to ward off evil spirits) resulted in stories that it is haunted. However, according to Tan Wai See and Janet Tan, two of Tan's children, the hues are those of the Singapore flag and were chosen simply because their father loved the nation very much. The late Tan had bought the land in the '50s, building two bungalows on it at first.

Upon the advice of a friend, he decided to commission the construction of a condominium to Ong & Ong, the architectural firm founded by the late Ong Teng Cheong, Singapore's fifth and first-elected president, and his wife Ling Siew May. After the tower was completed, Tan kept nine units for his family and sold the rest. With nine units making up 30 per cent of the total units and still owned by the Tan family who intend to keep their "parents' gift", en bloc sale attempts by the other condominium owners have failed. According to Wai See, this has caused unhappiness among some owners, which could have led to the rumours about the estate.



The first McDonald's outlet at Liat Towers, and one of its original crew members Jeffrey Tan (below left)



MCDONALD'S

The famous Golden Arches set foot in Singapore more than 40 years ago with the opening of its Liat Towers outlet in Orchard Road in 1979. It broke the world record then for the highest number of hamburgers served on opening day. There were only six types of burgers on the menu then. They were the Big Mac, Quarter Pounder, Quarter Pounder with Cheese, Fillet-O-Fish, Cheeseburger and Hamburger.

The man who made it happen was former national water polo player Robert Kwan, who first visited a McDonald's outlet in Las Vegas in 1975 and later brought the franchise into Singapore on a joint venture he set up with McDonald's Corp. He sold his 10 per cent stake in 2003 back to the parent, and in 2016, McDonald's Corp sold its franchise rights in Singapore and Malaysia to Saudi Arabia's Lionhorn.

In its early days, McDonald's was the place in town to hold a children's birthday party, with Ronald McDonald the clown himself in attendance. Its original mascot crew, including Hamburglar and Grimace, was also a massive hit. Apart from being loved as a family restaurant, the fast-food chain had the reputation of having a family-like working environment. One of the current 10,000 staff members is Jeffrey Tan, who joined the crew at Liat Towers and has stayed with the company for 41 years. He is now Senior Director (Operations, Restaurants Solutions Group and Brand Extensions).

Old images from the family album of pioneers Ong Sam Leong and Ong Boon Tat

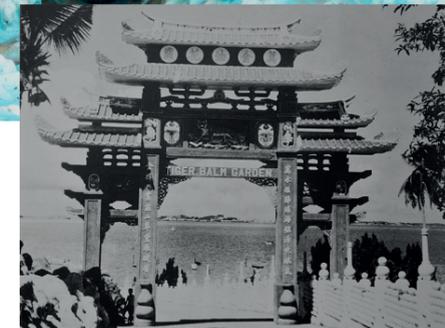


BUKITBROWN CEMETERY

A familiar landmark to residents in Bukit Timah and probably a fascinating sight to fitness enthusiasts who have been exploring the Lornie Nature Corridor, the Bukit Brown Cemetery was opened in 1922 by the colonial government. Spanning a total land size of 860 sq m, it was the first Chinese municipal cemetery in Singapore, and estimated to hold up to 100,000 tombs in its original state.

It was named after a now-defunct road called Bukit Brown Road and also after George Henry Brown, a British trader who used to live at Mount Pleasant, where part of the cemetery sits. It was the resting place of many famous Chinese pioneers, including Tan Lark Sye, Chew Joo Chiat, Gan Eng Seng and Chew Boon Lay. The largest tomb cluster at 600 sq m belonged to late businessman Ong Sam Leong (whom Sam Leong Road was named after) who had bought it for his family. Ong died in 1918 and his wife was later buried next to him in 1935. Years later, his sons (one of them was Ong Boon Tat whom Boon Tat Street was named after) who were behind the New World Amusement Park in Jalan Besar, were buried in the same plot as well.

Since 1991, the Singapore government has earmarked the cemetery for residential use. This means that the graves would be exhumed gradually - reportedly to be completed by 2030.



Tiger Balm Garden, and the founding Aw brothers (below)



HAW PAR VILLA

PHOTOS: MCDONALD'S SINGAPORE (MCDONALD'S FIRST LIAT TOWERS OUTLET); SHARON ONG (ONG FAMILY PHOTOS); JOURNEYS, WHICH MANAGES HAW PAR VILLA (HAW PAR VILLA SCENES & PORTRAIT)

With more than 1,000 sculptures and dioramas depicting Chinese mythology - particularly the fabled tales surrounding the concept of hell, karma and retribution, Haw Par Villa is Singapore's largest outdoor art gallery. Completed in 1937, Haw Par Villa was millionaire Aw Boon Haw's gift to his younger brother, Aw Boon Par. The name "Haw Par Villa" is a portmanteau of the names of the Burma-born ethnic Chinese Aws.

By the 1940s, Haw Par Villa had become known to be the opulent Art Deco house along Pasir Panjang Road with saucer-shaped domes resembling an astronomy observation tower. The garden around the villa was named Tiger Balm Garden after the famous ointment made by the Aws. As there were few open public spaces in Singapore then, the brothers opened Tiger Balm Garden to the public free of charge. The villa became badly damaged during World War II, and was subsequently demolished by Boon Haw after Boon Par died in 1944. Although the house was never rebuilt, the name "Haw Par Villa" stuck.

In the '60s, Boon Par's son Aw Cheng Chye added sculptures and dioramas of an international flavour such as sumo wrestlers and a Statue of Liberty to Tiger Balm Garden. In the '80s, the Aw family donated the garden to the state. In the '90s, it was turned into a theme park called Dragon World that closed in 2001. In 2015, award-winning heritage specialist Journeys took over its management. Since then, the firm has been working to bring back the park's glory days, and recently opened a new attraction named Hell's Museum. The attraction will be dedicated to exploring ideas, concepts and perspectives about death and the afterlife across different civilisations, religions and cultures.



DREW & NAPIER

Many are familiar with the law firm that has taken on some of Singapore's most publicised, complex and controversial dispute resolution matters. What's unknown to many is its history and that it is one of Singapore's oldest law firms. Founded by two Britons in 1889, Drew & Napier is 132 years old today.

Highly regarded as one of the "Big Four" law firms here, Drew & Napier has over 550 employees, including 335 fee earners, and three Senior Counsels. They are chairman Jimmy Yim, SC; CEO Cavinder Bull, SC; and director Siraj Omar, SC. The firm's alumni comprise the who's who in the political and legal spheres - from ministers and former attorney-generals, to judges and the former judicial commissioner of the Supreme Court.

Drew & Napier's culture in cultivating talent has even earned the firm plaudits from Asian Legal Business, which has recognised it as Employer of Choice for 12 consecutive years. Its International Arbitration practice has also been identified to be among the world's top 100.

This October, Drew & Napier joined forces with some of the most influential leading law firms in Southeast Asia to form a network of blue-chip law firms - Drew Network Asia (DNA). Comprising legal powerhouses Shearn Delamore & Co. from Malaysia and Makarim & Taira S. from Indonesia, alongside Drew & Napier, DNA operates as "a firm of firms".

The staff of Drew & Napier in 1907 and 1955 (below)



PHOTOS: DREW & NAPIER (DREW & NAPIER STAFF & OFFICE); SENG CHOON FARM (SENG CHOON FARM GROUP PHOTO); FAR EAST PLAZA (FAR EAST PLAZA FACADE); SENTOSA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (PULAU BLAKANG MATI & SENTOSA EXPRESS)

SENG CHOON FARM

Singaporeans love their eggs. In 2020, our per capita consumption was 388 eggs. And anyone in Singapore who has bought eggs would know Seng Choon Farm. Its market share of eggs sold in Singapore is 12 per cent, which translates to a production of 600,000 eggs a day.

Incorporated in Singapore in 1987 by two brothers, Koh Swee Lai and Koh See Wah, Seng Choon is a pioneer in egg farming. In 2010, Seng Choon moved from a 10.4ha space in Sungei Tengah (where the daily production of eggs was 300,000) to Lim Chu Kang where it occupies 14.76ha of land - approximately the size of 27 football fields.

Seng Choon was the first egg producer in Singapore that took its products direct to the consumer. This was done through campaigns, education programmes and advertisements. Many locals still remember the "hand pinch test" advertisement, as it set the litmus test for freshness: Only a very fresh egg could be picked up by hand - attesting to the quality of Seng Choon's eggs. The farm is now led by managing director Koh Yeow Koon, who is one of the late Swee Lai's children.



Flanking the late president Wee Kim Wee and his wife Koh Sok Hiong were Koh See Wah (left) and Koh Swee Lai (right)

FAREAST PLAZA



The shopping complex opened in 1982 with a design that was considered ahead of its time. Under the direction of Far East Organization founder Ng Teng Fong, the building was constructed to house two exterior observation lifts and internal water features with water cascading from the ceiling to a fountain at the ground level. These features were considered innovative, making the building the talk of the town.

In the '80s, Far East Plaza was the place to be seen for teenagers. As breakdancing was the rage then, it hosted several breakdancing competitions. It was so popular that '80s pop icon David Bowie visited it when he came to Singapore - an event that can still be viewed on YouTube. In the '90s, Far East Plaza reinvented itself after the flagship tenant, Metro department store, bowed out of its premises. Level One became known as the Fashion Incubator when it hosted shops targeting the young and trendy in the newly vacated premises. For much of that decade, Far East Plaza was known as the place for streetwear - the most famous of which was 77th Street.

While the pandemic has seen some businesses exiting, the tenancy has remained at over 90 per cent, and the number of shops specialising in the sale of second-hand luxury watches has doubled. Some of Far East Plaza's long-time tenants that have stayed put since opening are Kentucky Fried Chicken, Nanbantei Japanese Restaurant and Johnny Two Thumbs Tattoo Studio.

Far East Plaza still stands as a key landmark in Orchard Road

SENTOSA

A southern coastal defence post called Pulau Blakang Mati ("island of death from behind" in Malay) to protect shipping passages into Keppel Harbour during colonial times, the resort island of Sentosa was only renamed in 1970. In its previous incarnation, the island was home to several villages, and a British military base was established as early as 1827. During World War II, the island became a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp and later, upon Singapore's independence, hosted military units before the government unveiled a recreational development plan in 1972.

Sentosa is also home to animals such as monitor lizards, peafowls and monkeys. The first peafowls were introduced in the 1980s as part of Sentosa's attractions. Today, Sentosa has a population of more than 60 peafowls - probably the largest number of these feathered creatures in a single location in Singapore.

Sentosa Development Corporation recently unveiled exciting plans to redevelop Sentosa and Pulau Brani into a game-changing leisure and tourism destination by leveraging on their unique island charm, and geographical qualities such as proximity to the city. Known as the Sentosa-Brani Master Plan, the comprehensive blueprint will be rolled out in phases over the next two to three decades, bringing about even more world-class attractions and fresh night-time offerings.



Pulau Blakang Mati before redevelopment, and today's Sentosa Express monorail (right)





SINGAPORE BOTANIC GARDENS

In 2015, the Singapore Botanic Gardens, under the management of National Parks Board, became the first place in Singapore to be inscribed as a Unesco World Heritage site. It was established in 1859 by the Agri-Horticultural Society with a layout in the English Landscape Movement's style, which was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1874, it was handed over to the British colonial government and a series of Kew-trained botanists saw that it blossomed into an important botanical institute over the next few decades.

In the early years, the gardens played an important role in fostering agricultural development in Singapore and the region through collecting, growing, experimenting and distributing potentially useful plants. One of its most important successes was the introduction in the late 1800s of the Pará Rubber tree, which originated in Brazil and became the source of the trees that kick-started this region's plantations.

From 1928, the gardens spearheaded orchid breeding and started its orchid hybridisation programme, facilitated by new in-vitro techniques pioneered in its laboratories. The naming of new hybrids after VIPs, termed orchid diplomacy, began in 1957 and has become a closely watched event – with international media even speculating whether former US president Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un would receive the honour during their 2018 summit here (they didn't).

While important foreign dignitaries such as current US vice-president Kamala Harris who visited our shores this August tend to receive one, there are also flamboyant celebrity orchids named after stars like Elton John, Ricky Martin and Shah Rukh Khan. Our favourite, however, is the elegant *Spathoglottis Jane Goodall*.



Now and then: Botanic Gardens' Bandstand, which has become a key landmark and popular wedding photography spot

PHOTOS: NATIONAL PARKS BOARD (BOTANIC GARDENS' BANDSTAND); EU YAN SANG (THE "YAN SANG" STORE); BENGAWAN SOLO (BENGAWAN SOLO STORES)



The original "Yan Sang" store in South Bridge Road

EU YAN SANG

This heritage brand was founded in 1879 in the small tin-mining town of Gopeng in Perak, Malaysia, where mine workers had no access to healthcare and relied on opium for pain relief. Determined to free them from the clutches of opium addiction, founder Eu Kong made Chinese remedies accessible through the "Yan Sang" shop, the precursor of the contemporary Eu Yan Sang stores.

Today, Eu Yan Sang is still seeking to make traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) more accessible to customers, adapting products to their needs that have evolved over the years. The small, dark medical hall with jars of unidentified ingredients of yesteryear has morphed into sleek retail shops offering hygienically prepared forms of TCM that can be consumed conveniently.

Generations of Singapore women would be familiar with the PMS-relieving women's health remedy, Eu Yan Sang Bak Foong Pills, which contain over 20 herbs. Its preparation is known to be tedious since each herb that makes up the formula has a distinct preparation method. The modern Bak Foong Pills are available in both capsule and liquid forms. In addition to retail, Eu Yan Sang also operates one of the largest networks of TCM clinics in Singapore in 21 locations.

This April, Eu Yan Sang launched One Wellness Medical at Shenton Way, with the objective of combining the best of Western medicine with TCM through an integrated primary care practice.

BENGAWAN SOLO

When Anastasia Liew (née Tjendri) moved to Singapore in the early 1970s, she brought with her a love for Indonesian sweet treats and an interest in making them. When orders for her kueh and cakes grew thanks to word of mouth, she started producing more from her home kitchen. This led to a warning from the Ministry of Environment, and then the opening of her first Bengawan Solo Cake Shop in Marine Terrace in 1979.

In 1983, Liew opened the first branch of Bengawan Solo at Centrepoin in Orchard Road. By 1987, she had opened a central kitchen in Harvey Road. Ten years on, the company had to move all production to a factory in Woodlands. Over time, it came to be respected as a legacy Singaporean brand, whose signature pandan chiffon cakes even gained a following made up of Hong Kong celebrities and tourists who'd buy boxes home as gifts.

Naturally, several stores at Changi Airport followed, with the first opening at the Terminal 1 Departure Lounge in 1988. It is not surprising that the airport outlets were the top performers before the pandemic. Currently, the company still operates three outlets there, including its flagship store at Jewel Changi Airport that was launched in 2019 in celebration of Bengawan Solo's 40th anniversary.

In total, there are 43 Bengawan Solo stores islandwide today. As for the founder, who's in her late 70s now, she is still involved in the business as managing director, and makes it a point to check in at the factory every day. Working with her is her son, Henry Liew, as director. **EW**



The Bengawan Solo flagship in Jewel Changi Airport, and Anastasia Liew at her first Marine Terrace store in 1979 (below)

