

MAGNA NEWS

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**Excerpt from the President/ CEO,
Magna Group:**

“My dad was a father, trusted friend, spiritual counsellor and a business adviser. He was a well-read and knowledgeable man whose wisdom surpassed many of his contemporaries.

He was kind, patient, forgiving and magnanimous to those around him. A father I would like to emulate”.

**A special tribute to my beloved Dad:
Commandant Cheng Kim Bing**

His Voyage



Dad's Arrival in Singapore



Upon his arrival in Singapore, he joined my grandfather's printing firm as an apprentice. He was supposed to learn the art of linotype letter press printing but was made to do general work instead. Apprentices were considered the lowest in company's hierarchy during those days, and were often mistreated by senior workers.

Although my grandfather was the foreman of the shop, my dad was not given special privileges. On the contrary, he was neglected and not taught the skills of the job.

Background

My dad was born in 1920 in Zhong San Yong Mark, a small village in Guangdong, China. My grandfather left for Singapore in search for greener pastures when my dad was eight years of age, leaving behind two sons and his wife.

Voyage abroad

Dad left his village and sat sail for Singapore at the tender age of thirteen to find work. The journey took over a torturous week of sea sickness.

Singapore was a sleepy fishing village when my dad first arrived. The streets were narrow and filthy. Houses were infested with cockroaches, houseflies and bed bugs.

Most of the immigrants and their children were malnourished. Many suffered from tuberculosis and related diseases. Opium smoking was a common sight.

His Life

A Resilient and Diligent Dad

He learned the art of linotype and letter press printing through observation and practised during the night when the other workers left for home. His diligence and determination to learn eventually placed him among the best in the trade, becoming one of the best full-fledged linotype letter press printers. He worked hard in the printing company during the day and rushed home to do chores before attending night classes. This routine was short-lived when the Japanese invaded Singapore on 15th February 1942.

A Resourceful Dad

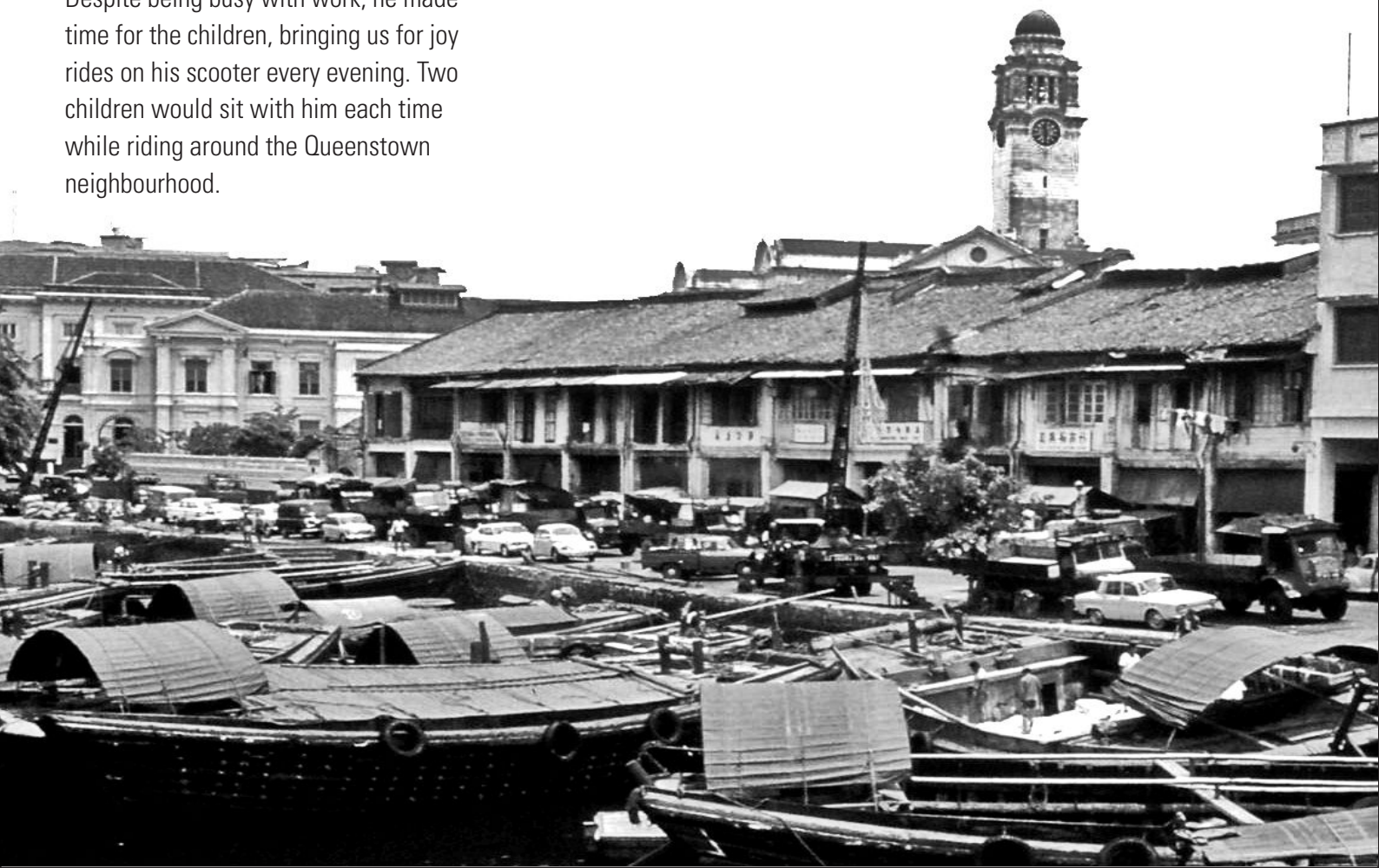
It was during the Japanese occupation that my dad learned the Japanese language, seizing the opportunity for an alternative income source. He soon became an interpreter for the British. He saved up enough to buy a house and a factory in Bukit Timah. However, the Japanese surrendered when the Americans bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, rendering the wartime banana money worthless overnight. My dad had to continue to work as a Linotype operator until retirement.

A Responsible Dad

He married in his early twenties and became a father of nine children (five boys and four girls). He worked very hard to feed the family, holding two jobs. Leaving for work around 7.00 am, he would be home by 5.00 pm and leave for his night job shortly after. He kept this routine for more than 25 years.

A Caring and Nurturing Dad

Despite being busy with work, he made time for the children, bringing us for joy rides on his scooter every evening. Two children would sit with him each time while riding around the Queenstown neighbourhood.



Our Home Queenstown Estate



Queenstown consisted of hills, swamps and cemeteries before it was transformed into Singapore's first high-rise housing estate.



Queenstown Forfar House, Block 39, the pigeon hole where twelve of us lived.

Just like a good shepherd tends to his flock, he would ensure that every one of us was back home by doing a roll call, counting his children before he went to bed. Despite being physically exhausted after working 15-hour days, he read for at least an hour a day to keep abreast of the current affairs of the world. When pay day came, he would buy supper as a treat for the family, waking my siblings and I in the late hours of the night. He devoted his income to the family, hardly spending a cent on himself.



A father I would like to emulate

An All in All Dad

My dad was a father, trusted friend, spiritual counsellor and a business adviser. He was a well-read and knowledgeable man whose wisdom surpassed many of his contemporaries. He was kind, patient, forgiving and magnanimous to those around him. A father I would like to emulate.

A Dad That Readily Blessed His Children

During my wedding, he prayed for my wife and I, blessing us during the traditional Chinese tea ceremony, where the bride and groom serve tea to their parents and elder relatives. He gave our children Chinese names to encapsulate the virtues of filial piety and righteousness.



A Dad Who Was Willing To Lay Down His Life For His Family

He was a father who was prepared to lay down his life for his family. I recall an incident during the racial riots in the sixties, when the chaos spread to the vicinity of Forfar House. My dad wore his Red Cross boots and armed himself with an axe, ushering us into the house while he bravely stood guard outside. Fortunately, the rioters dispersed when the police arrived on the scene.

A Farsighted Mentor

My wife and I would visit my parents regularly for dinner. These occasions were a joy that we shared with him at the dinner table, talking about anything under the sun.

He would share with us his past experiences and his views on global and economic issues. He talked about the global depression cycles, the economy and even projected the rise of China years before it became the world's second largest economy. He inspired me to enter the world of business, and shared with me the importance of being practical with financial resources. He taught me to embrace sound business principles.

Some advice that I will remember:

"Never compromise in quality, and do not cut corners just to make extra money"

"Never overpromise and under deliver"

"Mean what you say and say what you mean"

"Expand your business within your means"

"Being the best in what you do is building a future platform for yourself"

"Practice delayed gratification. Profits are seeds to be sown for future harvest"

"Focus on one thing at a time and do your utmost best"

"First do what you know and then learn from others"

"Focus on what you have and then learn how to multiply it"

"Be generous to those in need, but lend only what you could afford to lose"

"No matter how rich you are, be prudent in your spending"

"Don't cry over a missed opportunity, learn from it and be there to answer it when opportunity knocks at your door again"

"Be the man what God wants you to be, because everyone has a purpose on earth"

"Bankers are fair weather friends. They give you an umbrella on sunny days and take it away when the rain comes"

"Honour your father and mother and you will be blessed"

These values are now credos and philosophical pillars of the Magna Group.

His Contribution to the community



Promotion to a Rank of Commander

Dad joined the Singapore Red Cross Society and quickly acquired skills in first aid. He rendered first aid to many of our neighbours and soon became known as the first aider of Forfar House. His passion in first aid facilitated his rapid promotion to the rank of commander. During his service, he met many foreign dignitaries including Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip. Dad was subsequently nominated for the post of Aide-De-Camp of Singapore. However, he felt that he lacked the necessary competency in English and gracefully turned down the offer.

A Passionate Dad

My dad had a passion for learning and acquiring new skills. He graduated from bible school at the age of 68 and learnt to play the guitar at the age of 66.

He retired at 70 after suffering from his second heart attack, but remained active in church, serving as a Sunday school teacher for as long as it was physically possible for him to do so.

The hardship he underwent in his younger days started to take a toll on his health when my dad had his first heart attack at the age 49. He survived and continued to live a fruitful life till the old ripe age of 82.

When he suffered his third heart attack, his heart stopped three times and was resuscitated each time. My brother Dickson and I were by his side in the intensive care unit. He smiled and spoke weakly, "Take care of the siblings and your mother". He then blessed us through prayer.

Two of our brothers were enroute to Singapore after receiving news of Dad's condition. God gave him the strength to hold out until the entire family had returned. Miraculously, he recovered and was transferred to a normal ward the next day. It was a powerful testimony to the doctors and nurses at the hospital.

The nurses expressed surprise at his recovery, saying "It's a miracle", "God's healing" and "Fantastic recovery".



In His Honor



His Last Activity On Earth

Dad's last day was spent praying and rejoicing with his family singing to him that night. I left only when he said "Go home now, I am now at peace".

The call from the hospital at came 12.05 am, informing me that he was in critical condition. The doctors were resuscitating him upon my arrival. At that moment, I knew that he had gone home to be with the Lord. His face was a picture of serenity when I kissed his forehead.

I have penned this tribute because of the pivotal role that my dad Commandant Cheng Kim Bing had played in my success today.

In his honour, a Magna-Cheng Kim Bing Scholarship has been established to provide educational funding to needy students across the globe.



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