

with
gratitude

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the beginnings

This project came about from a typical conversation on a Monday morning between two colleagues. We were talking about an event that took place the Saturday before, where S R Nathan was the guest-of-honour.

We were musing about how Nathan, despite him being the VIP of the event and ex-President, was busy walking around the room greeting and talking to everyone, including award-recipients, and their families where he leaned in and listened attentively to them.

We had heard about Nathan's quiet charitable works, which dated back to his union days in the 1950s and we thought what better way than to find all those people whom he has helped to pen words of thanks and gratitude to him?

01

So the ball started rolling – e-mails were sent, contacts were mined through friends and friends of friends, and old bosses were contacted to explain what was needed.

Luenne, "the driver", brought the motley crew from one end of the island to the other to track down leads, contacts and interviews; Khalijah, "the networker", pulled together funders for the project; and Eleanor, "the writer", put her powerful pen in motion.

The three of us were often met with suspicions. No one believed our underlying motives were simple – for Luenne, it was a curiosity about the outwardly severe Nathan, whom she met years ago when she served him Karu's curry; and for Khalijah whom she had personally experienced his sincerity, it was a belief that there was more to Nathan than his public persona. For Eleanor, it was simply to learn more about the ex-President and to support the other two.

We got to meet many interesting people along the way. Ex-colleagues and ex-staff who remembered Nathan as a stern and exacting boss that expected nothing but the best from everyone. Despite his even-handedness, they would always check “the weather” with his secretary before their meetings with him. We understood the power of the simple word – “spoken”. Ex-schoolmates recalled harrowing moments during the height of the student activism and through these moments of camaraderie, lifelong friendships were formed.

02

This collection is not a definitive set of stories. The one message we got from all of them was that through Nathan’s own experience of being a recipient of kindness, he chose to pay it forward to the people around him. So this is not your usual book on S R Nathan – Singapore’s 6th President – it is a book of a long history of paying it forward.

We, ourselves are grateful to those who have shared their stories so readily, albeit with initial apprehension and suspicion to make this book become a reality. A special thanks to Eng Beng and Desmond for opening a lot of the doors for us. Many, whom we met, opened up their homes to us, fed us and spent so much time with us recalling the days of yonder. We hope our readers will remember to always to be grateful to whoever who had helped them and to do the same to others around them.

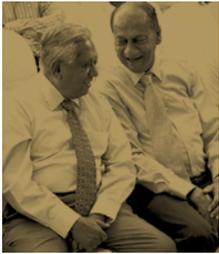
Khalijah, Luenne & Eleanor



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“Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that’s all who ever have.”

– MARGARET MEAD, AMERICAN CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST

foreword



04

S R Nathan is a family friend. More importantly he is a good friend and mentor. I have been a beneficiary of his kindness and generous advice all these years.

When I was told of this book, my initial thought was “why?”! But when I

read the stories one by one, it occurred to me that the public has not seen this side of Nathan before. Among his staff, colleagues and friends, Nathan is known for his tough exterior, but beneath all that, lies a kind heart and generosity. We had heard of many such stories. But until those stories are put down in black and white, we will never know them. Every story that unfolds in these pages confirms to me about the man I know everyone loves – a tough but benevolent man.

I am glad that the recipients of Nathan’s good heart have come forward to record their experiences. Nathan has touched many lives in his many capacities from his early days, all the way to after his presidency. In many of these



instances, he did not have to do it; he did not have to go out of his way to extend a helping hand, but he did nonetheless.

In all his previous books, we have read of how Nathan started from nothing, he was even a vagabond in the darkest time of his life. He knew what it was like to have nothing in life, to be desperate. He persevered when times were hard and the going was tough. There have been many who reached out to him and helped him along the way. He understood how important it was for someone to be offered a helping hand when things looked bleak. He did what he had experienced, helping others when it was needed. Nathan paid it forward all the kindness he had personally received to other deserving individuals.

05

These individuals, till now, after all these years, are grateful to Nathan and this book documents their gratitude. I hope those who had benefitted from Nathan's kindness will do the same as he did – pay it forward to others in need.

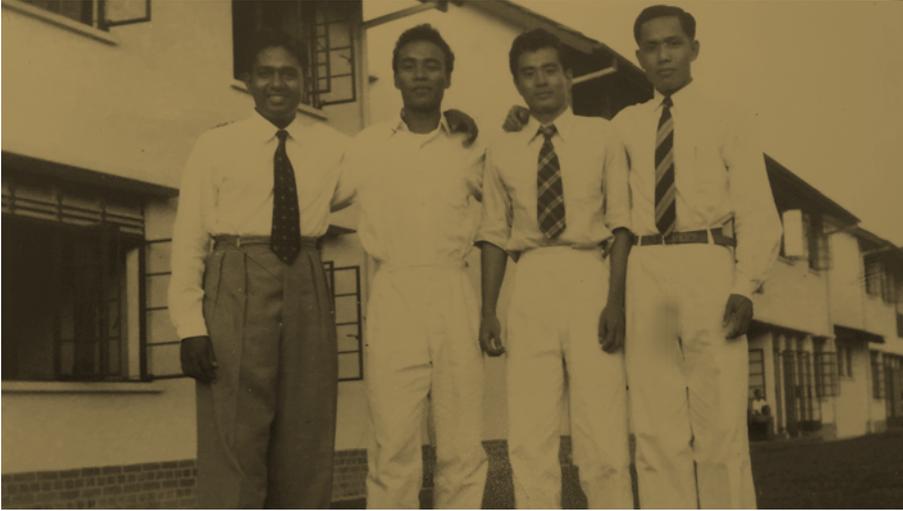
S Chandra Das
Non-Resident Singapore High Commissioner
to Sri Lanka

introduction to the stories

We all know the stories of S R Nathan being a social worker, becoming a unionist and moving up further into positions of government to later holding office as the President of Singapore.

However, what we know little about are really the people that he has touched, and who hold him forever in a special place in their hearts. He has left his footprints in the community and these individuals of all ages and races are better off now for having known him.

He has made their lives enriched in so many ways that they will never forget him and will be forever ... in gratitude.

student/post-war

brothers for life

07

The two men had similar backgrounds – both faced family hardships – and that was the glue that tied them together as “brothers” for life.

Dr Lee Ah Chai (who was later known as Lee Ting Hui) was S R Nathan’s dorm roommate while he was studying at the University of Malaya (later renamed the National University of Singapore (NUS)). They both lived at the Dunearn Road Hostels; the 85-year-old firebrand was studying history while Nathan, who was six years his senior, was studying social work.

Ah Chai laughed about their early days together: “We used to go to eat at the canteen in the dormitory and

I would eat a lot of rice – three big plate fulls! Nathan would mention it to his friends that I consume lots of rice. I used to be very big then and did lots of weight training.”

He shared that Nathan was friendly to all, and the two would often help each other in their studies even though they were in different fields. Calling him like a “bigger brother”, Ah Chai, who has five grandchildren and one great-grandson, noted that Nathan would always extend a helping hand to him. “He knew I was from a poor background as my father was a pork seller in the market and my mother, a seamstress.”

He further shared that he had one younger brother and three sisters, and during that time, sons were often sent to school, while daughters were made to work at home and sent out to work for others as child labourers as “this was the Chinese social value”. He also spoke of his hard living conditions where five people had to live in one room.

Though the men bonded through their similar backgrounds of hardship in their early days, their friendship continued to grow over the years and Ah Chai was never far from Nathan’s mind. “I heard that Nathan is fond of me but I still don’t know why till this day.”



As the men grew up, Nathan was the one who recommended Ah Chai to be a research associate at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in 1974, and where he stayed for two years. And, when Ah Chai went to do his research for a doctorate which he completed five years later, Nathan hired him to be an employee at the Ministry of Defence’s Security and Intelligence Division, where Nathan was the director, so that he could be paid a salary to do his research.

In 1982, Nathan also had a hand in getting him a job at NUS in its history department as a lecturer. Ah Chai stayed there and worked his way up to become a senior lecturer in 1985. When Ah Chai went back to ISEAS in 2009 first as a research fellow and then a senior research fellow, Nathan again assisted on both occasions to raise money to help the Institute pay his salaries.

It wasn't just school and work that Nathan extended a helping hand, he also offered to pay for Ah Chai's eye operations when he got glaucoma and cataracts. "Nathan said he would pay for me as well as for subsequent operations but in the end, I never accepted any money from him. He had said something like this to me which I will never forget – 'Remember that I am here to help you for as long as I am alive'."

Ah Chai added, "When Nathan was president and I met him, he even asked randomly whether I needed any money. I have savings; I dress very simply and I lead a simple life."

09

As Nathan has not forgotten about him (he sent him and his wife a Chinese New Year card this year), his long-time friend has also not forgotten about Nathan. Over the past 20 years, he has written nine short poems in Chinese about Nathan's altruism and humility, both values that he deeply admires, as well as Nathan's sharp intelligence. "I wanted to put my feelings down on paper; that Nathan has helped so many people including myself," said Ah Chai, who then had the poems translated and sent to Nathan earlier this year.

"If it wasn't for him, I would be reduced to begging. I thank him, the Good Samaritan, for all his assistance." Ah Chai will remain as the "brother" whom Nathan has made sure to never leave behind.

Poem 1
written by:
DR LEE AH CHAI

谢同窗纳丹

Thanks to my fellow-student, Nathan

恩同再造谢同窗

His kindness had me resurrected, profound
thanks to him, my fellow-student Nathan

济世深情似海洋

His insatiable thirst to help in society is
as wide and deep as the sea and the ocean

未皈基督有真爱

He has not taken to follow Jesus Christ,
but his love for humanity is nonetheless
genuine

凡鸟群中此凤凰

Among the flocks of common birds, he is
indeed a phoenix

Poem 2
written by:
DR LEE AH CHAI

怜困有谁唯此君

Who else is there to take pity on those who
are in difficulties except this gentleman

慈怀济世拯多人

His compassion to help others has led him to
save many, many souls

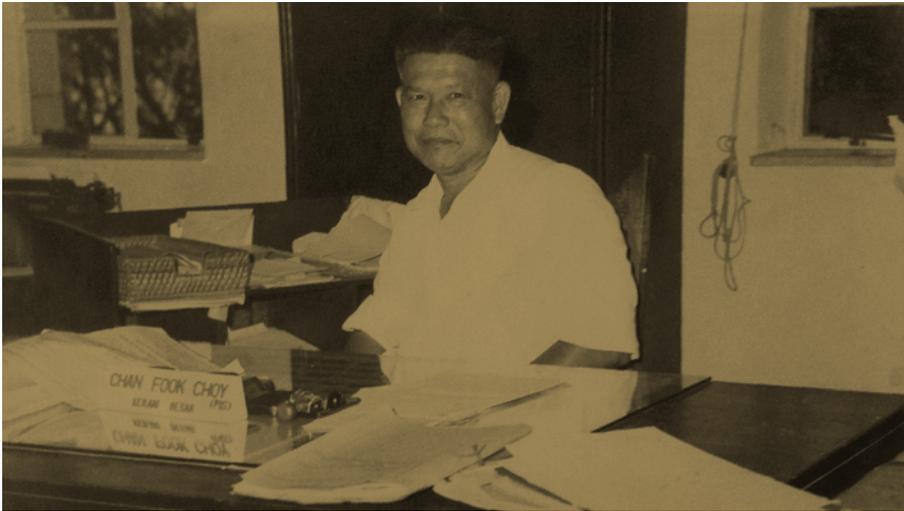
绋袍恋恋难忘旧

A thick jacket for a friend in freezing winter,
he is unable to ignore an old acquaintance

六纪深交老更亲

A deep friendship of six decades, closer have
they become as they age

(There is a story in ancient China which tells of two fellow-students, one of whom became an ordinary official in a certain state while the other became the prime minister of a stronger state. One day, the less fortunate man was sent on a mission to the stronger state and he met his old friend. It was winter time but the man had on him only a jacket which could not really keep him warm. When the prime minister saw this, he felt great sympathy for his old fellow-student, and he straightaway took off his very thick woollen jacket and put it over the shoulders of his friend.) – DR LEE AH CHAI



12

coming full circle

A man's hope to visit the Istana to see his old friend was not meant to be, however, his granddaughter, Angelene Chan has now fulfilled his wish.

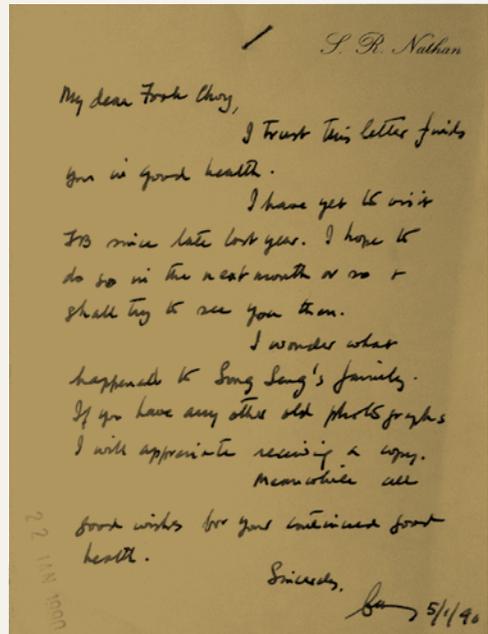
Angelene Chan's grandfather, Chan Fook Choy, was S R Nathan's supervisor at the Johor Public Works Department (PWD) when Nathan was in his early 20s and working as a clerk. Fook Choy and Nathan shared a close friendship as they were living on the same street in Johor called Jalan Ngee Heng. Angelene, 51, an architect and CEO at DP Architects, said that this was told to her much later by Nathan, and she also heard some of this from her family in the 1990s.

Nathan remained in touch with Fook Choy; he updated his former colleague on his new postings and sent greetings during special occasions, some of which Angelene has kept. After Nathan became President of Singapore, Fook Choy sent him a congratulatory letter and Nathan, in return, wrote back and invited him for a visit at the Istana.

But it was not meant to be; Fook Choy never made that visit. Angelene shared, “My grandfather was very proud of Nathan and his rise to such a high position in the government service of Singapore. He held Nathan in high regard and felt a little self-conscious about visiting the head of state as a personal friend.” It was also a challenge for Nathan, in his public position, to visit Johor on a casual basis.

Sadly, Fook Choy passed away in February 2001, his wish to visit the Istana unfulfilled. The family placed an obituary in the Johor newspaper and it was this that caught the eye of Nathan, who then wrote a letter of condolence to the family.

But the story doesn't end here. Things came full circle in 2009, when Angelene won the President's Design Award, Singapore's most prestigious design accolade that recognises excellence across all design disciplines, given out yearly by the President of Singapore at



the Istana. When Angelene went on stage to receive the award from Nathan, she took the opportunity to whisper in his ear that she is the granddaughter of his friend, Fook Choy. She said, “When I mentioned my grandfather’s name, there was a moment of instant recollection. His eyes lit up and he grabbed my hand, filled with emotion. It felt like he was reconnecting with my grandfather through me. I was very moved.

“It was a full-circle moment because I was fulfilling my grandfather’s wish to visit his old friend at the Istana. Nathan said that my grandfather would have been doubly proud of me for visiting him and for receiving the award.”

Since then, Nathan and Angelene have stayed in touch. Angelene has travelled with him on one occasion, and has had lunch at the Istana and tea at Nathan’s house on Ceylon Road. He has also met her parents, and family.

14



“Nathan felt my grandfather was a good on-the-job teacher and mentor to him in PWD, and that they made a great team,” said Angelene.

She shared a handwritten letter by Nathan to her, dated January 2016, where he talked about a Straits Times’ article highlighting her achievements. He said: “I am sure Fook Choy would have been very happy about it. He had two achievements in life – you and your fame; and me, his subordinate-turned-President-of-Singapore.”

SRN

“

One of my favourite and dearest moments in life is that moment I shared with you at the 2009 President's Design Award. I'm glad I had the courage then to whisper to you that I am Chan Fook Choy's granddaughter. That serendipitous encounter has now opened a new chapter in this long-standing family friendship, and allowed our own personal friendship to blossom, with many opportunities to reconnect over meals, visits to Shanghai and personal letters. If I had hesitated back then, I would have missed out on the joy brought about by your thoughtfulness and the generosity of your spirit. I am grateful that you remember my family, and that you continue to keep memories of my grandfather so close to your heart. I have enjoyed our conversations revolving around stories of Johor in the past. I have benefitted so much from your generous friendship. Thank you most deeply.

– ANGELENE CHAN

”

unionist

16

*my
godfather*

It was tragic circumstances that brought retired Captain Vincent Pang, 74, and S R Nathan together and their friendship would bind them for a lifetime.

It was in 1957 when Vincent's father, a chief steward, had passed away suddenly on board a ship heading to England. He was the sole breadwinner and this meant tough times ahead for the family of six children.

At the time, Nathan was the Seamen's Welfare Officer and tried to get the family extra money through the government social welfare system, but they could only give the family \$48 a month. Nathan felt the amount

was just not enough, so he “fought for us” to get some more money, this time from the Mercantile Marine Fund, a fund that was derived from donations from the government as well as ship owners.

With Nathan’s perseverance, the family managed to get \$108 a month and he advised the family to opt for this money instead. “This helped, with the additional money that my brother earned working part-time. I wanted to quit school to work as well but my mother said I had to study,” said Vincent, who was at the time 14 years old.

And, when he went to pick up the money, his mother would often ask to see Nathan (as the pick-up place was near to his office) and Vincent would end up translating the conversation, as his mother could only speak Hainanese. “We would drop by to see him a number of times. Nathan would always be very concerned about my younger brothers and my mother, and would ask me to bring her along,” said Vincent. Much later, he shared, that Nathan even asked the people from the Marine Fund to bring the money to his office building every month to make it more convenient for Vincent and his mother.

17



It was not just money issues that Nathan helped with; he even tried to find Vincent a job. “He felt I needed to learn some typing skills and he paid from his own

pocket for those classes for a few months.” Vincent also shared that Nathan created a job as a temporary clerk in his office for him when he was 19 years old where he earned \$100 a month. However, again, Nathan felt the amount was insufficient and found him another job as a clerk/interpreter at the Seamen’s Registry Board where he earned an additional \$120.

“Keep in mind, there were a lot of problems with seamen and there were thousands of them. Despite all this, Nathan was still like a godfather to me and looked after me. How many people would do that? He didn’t have to help me, but he did. He really went beyond,” said Vincent.

As Vincent grew up, Nathan stayed in touch. He shared another notable encounter with Nathan on his first day at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 1981. “I was told to report at 8.30am to the director of administration division’s office and to see her first. However, I got a call from Nathan’s personal assistant to see him immediately at his office upstairs (at the time he was MFA’s First Permanent Secretary). I remembered the call well and I will never forget it.” When he went to see him, just like old times, Nathan would ask about his family.

Vincent owes much to Nathan and counts him as one of two people who have impacted his life, besides his mother. It is no wonder, he holds on fondly to a pink scrapbook titled “The President”, where he has kept important clippings of Nathan and his career.



“

I believe you initiated the annual President's Star Charity show. I remember clearly when you were President, you wrote a short article in The Straits Times about something on learning to care or caring for others who were less fortunate. I will always take what you said to heart.

I have great respect to you. Your help to my family and I will not be forgotten. To end but not the least, in the simple words of my late mother who said in the early '60s – 'Nathan is a very kind and helpful man; he will one day be very famous'. How very true that has happened! My mother may have been illiterate but she was forward-thinking.

I wish you good health. – CAPTAIN VINCENT PANG

”



20

a guiding light

S R Nathan helped a Scout in his travels overseas to certain Scout events, allowing him the opportunities to learn much more.

When Poh Boon Koh joined the government service in 1959, he was supposed to be attached to the Marine Department under Captain J A L Pavitt, the Master Attendant, as a clerical assistant. However, the job lasted less than a week before Nathan went to see Captain Pavitt and requested that Boon Koh serve under him instead. At the time, Nathan was the Seamen's Welfare Officer and he needed Boon Koh to help him interpret and translate Malay and Chinese

dialects for local seamen that Nathan had to deal with. “When Nathan was away, I had to take notes and keep seamen’s personal records until he came back, because we were literally a one-man operation. I had to answer all phone calls,” remembered the grandfather of five. He also shared that when working with Nathan, he would sometimes watch over his two children, as they would wait for him so that he could fetch them back to Johor. Boon Koh worked with Nathan till 1962, when Nathan was seconded to the Labour Research Unit of the Labour Movement.

Before Nathan moved on, he did a kind deed for Boon Koh. He wanted to go to the 3rd Nippon Asian Jamboree as he was a Queen’s Scout. He shared: “Since my salary was only \$138 a month, I couldn’t afford to go on the trip. I reached out to Nathan hoping he could help through his contacts.” And help Nathan did. He reached out to Lee Foundation, who gave Boon Koh \$150 to cover his round trip on a ship to Japan, with some balance on hand. “I really appreciated Nathan for his help,” added Boon Koh.

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And when his trip there ended up being extended thanks to a typhoon and his ship stuck in Okinawa, Boon Koh returned to Singapore and explained to Nathan what had happened. “There were no phones to call back at the time. Normally if you don’t show up at work after a certain time, you get sacked. After explaining, Nathan was very understanding; he didn’t cut off my leave and asked me to continue working.”



When Nathan became President of Singapore in 1999 (and automatically a Chief Scout), Boon Koh, who was at the time a Rover Scout Commissioner (East), would often meet Nathan during events and functions. He also saw his wife and grandchildren when they accompanied him. “At functions, Nathan would always put on the uniform, and he and his wife would always mention my name at Scout events,” shared Boon Koh. During every Deepavali, Boon Koh would send a card to Nathan and occasionally would visit him. “Even if he was away [on overseas posting], I would still send a card. I have great respect for him.” He shared that Nathan gave him some mementos from his own collection including a plate from Japan and an eagle portrait, which Boon Koh holds dear.

22

Nathan also never wavered on offering support whenever he could. In 2006, during Deepavali when Boon Koh met with Nathan, he talked about Scouts and the 2007 21st World Scout Jamboree that was to be held in England. “Nathan knew I liked to travel. I never asked him to sponsor me but he offered and said that any amount he would pay for me, however, I would have to give him the costing breakdown,” said 77-year-old Boon Koh.



Nathan ended up paying for the trip through his own pocket, covering the flight, registration for the event as well as personal expenses. Boon Koh will forever be grateful to Nathan. 

“

Thank you Nathan, you were my guiding star and I appreciated your help during my career and also during my service to the Scout movement in Singapore. You helped me a lot. Without your help, I wouldn't have been able to go on certain Scout events overseas, and learn a lot there and meet a lot of fellow Scouts around the world.

Nathan, I wish you good luck and good health as well as to your family members. - POH BOON KOH

”



civil servant

24

a tough boss

S R Nathan was an exacting boss that expected nothing less from all his staff as he groomed a generation of leaders.

It was a historical event on March 16, 2016, as Nathan hosted a lunch at Hai Tien Lo, Pan Pacific Hotel, for 16 of his old friends. These friends were all former colleagues and associates of his from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), when he led them in setting up the political and functional divisions of the fledgling Ministry.

MFA was established shortly after Singapore separated from Malaysia and became an independent state on August 9, 1965. The immediate concern of MFA under the new Foreign Minister was to secure the widest possible international recognition for the independence and sovereignty of Singapore.

Nathan was the pioneer Deputy Secretary at MFA. As a leader, he set the pace and example from his own dedication and energy when guiding and leading the new officers. He turned the Foreign Service around into a professional outfit in just two years.

Many officers who worked with him during those early years remember him as a tough boss who expected nothing less than perfection from them. But underneath the tough exterior, there was a softer side to the man. A few officers recalled that period as a time when Nathan “beat us into shape and made us more professional” so that they could serve Singapore abroad more effectively and gain the respect of the more established nations. As recalled by Mushahid s/o Munshi Asmat Ali, who worked for Nathan for five years, Nathan made his officers working under him “more pro-active shapers of our foreign policy and did not allow anyone in the Foreign Service to be passive pen-pushers”.

He added: “As young officers, we were filled with trepidation when we had to take notes for PM Lee Kuan Yew’s meetings. Nathan vetted these notes carefully to ensure that they met Mr Lee’s exacting standards.”

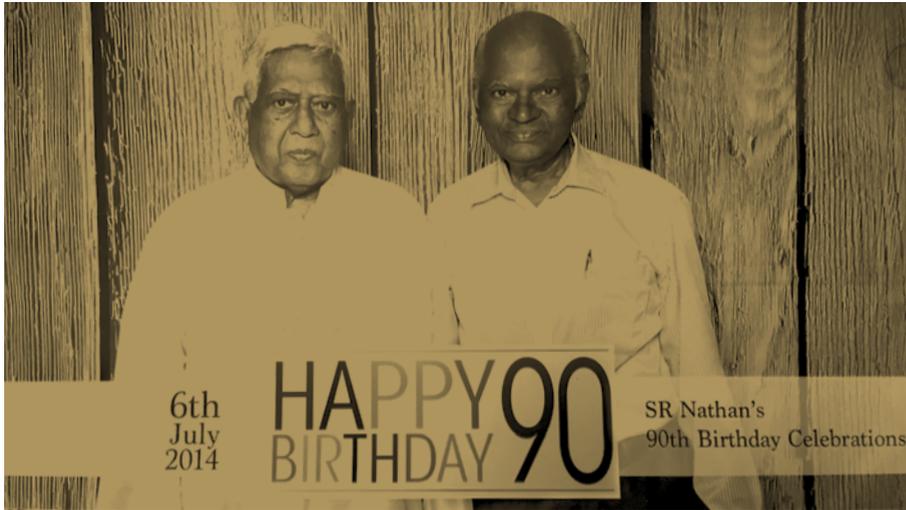


'Please speak' at the top of any report or draft submission in Nathan's handwriting would send any officer trembling as this was a way Nathan told the officers that their work was lacking and not up to his standards. 'Weather check' from Nathan's personal assistant alleviated the situation and advised the officers of Nathan's mood. Sometimes Nathan might forget the offending matter and the officer would write 'spoken' on the file, letting himself off the hook!

Despite being a tough boss, these officers shared that he was also a considerate and caring person. He rewarded staff who showed zeal and good performance, and encouraged younger officers and pushed them to excel in their work. These officers remembered the times when Nathan would make sure that dinner was brought to them when they were working late.

Shared Barry Desker, who worked with Nathan for five years: "Nathan took a close interest in his staff and was a generous boss. He went to the UN General Assembly each year and would return with ties for the men and scarves for the women. When I left for further studies in 1972, he hosted dinner for my newly-wed wife and I, even though he had moved by then to SID (Security and Intelligence Division)."

Though Nathan did not stay long at MFA and moved on to become Executive Chairman of the Straits Times Press, he left a lasting legacy of professionalism, confidence and dedication among the MFA officers who had been nurtured by him. Many of them went on to take up senior positions in MFA and today, they are still grateful to Nathan for "beating them into shape" early in their careers. 



grabbing a lifeline

27

An office boy turns to S R Nathan during tough times and gets a helping hand in return.

Sanasi s/o Ayakannu, who came from a town called Tangkak, in the state of Johor, joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as an office attendant, after working in the City Council of Singapore and the Ministry of Law, Prime Minister's Office. During the time, Nathan was the Assistant Secretary at MFA. Sanasi's responsibilities were helping with general office work including preparing drinks for VIPs such as ambassadors and high commissioners who visited MFA.

While living in Singapore, Sanasi rented a room in a large house on Chancery Hill Road for five years, paying \$40

a month. He lived there with his wife and his father, and later an additional three small children.

With paying the rent and dealing with other expenses, Sanasi found it hard to cope and to save money to eventually buy a flat of his own. So he approached Nathan in 1966 and told him about his situation and asked if he could help him in any way. “He said he would help get me a government flat at Somerset Road and after a few months, I did get the flat which I paid using my CPF monies,” said Sanasi. At Somerset, he paid lesser rent of about \$30 a month, and it was closer to the MFA office at City Hall.

“If it wasn’t for Nathan, it would have been difficult for me to keep paying the rent at Chancery Hill and continue cycling 30 minutes to work,” added the 77-year-old and grandfather of eight. While Nathan moved on to various positions outside of MFA, Sanasi stayed on and later moved up to the post of office keeper. He stayed there till his retirement in 2000.

Sanasi shared that he will always be grateful for what Nathan did for him back then and he continues to stay in touch with his friend. “I have met him several times at the temple and I have gone to his house on Ceylon Road. When he was working overseas, he also kept in touch. We became very close.” Sanasi said that during festive seasons, Nathan would always send his well-wishes.



Surprisingly, the MFA connection continues even today – Sanasi’s youngest daughter, Yogeswary, has followed in her father’s footsteps by working at MFA. Greatly “influenced by him”, she has been at MFA for 23 years and serves as its corporate affairs officer.

“

Nathan has always been a kind man. He would often take a moment to find out how my family and I are doing. He is an unassuming man who genuinely would help anyone who needed help. He still remembers me and asks about my family and me.

I sometimes visit him and pray to God to bless Nathan with good health and long life. I will never forget Nathan as he is a kind soul who has lent a helping hand when I most needed help. It was timely help that made me survive during the rough patch that I encountered in my life.

– SANASI S/O AYAKANNU

”



30

transforming MFA

S R Nathan has left a lot of footprints in MFA and this has helped make the Ministry what it is today.

Phang Tai Chee, 79, who is currently the officer-in-charge of MFA Club activities at the Talking Point in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), remembers the footprints Nathan left at MFA. He joined the Ministry in July 1970 as a clerk; Nathan was already in MFA since February 1966 and was serving as Deputy Secretary. Shared Tai Chee, “We were very small at the time; we hardly had 150 people at the office in City Hall.”

In 1979, Nathan returned to MFA after a stint at the Ministry of Defence and became its First Permanent Secretary. During that time, Tai Chee was posted to Beijing to help set up the Singapore embassy there. It was then that Nathan put into effect a lot of changes that continue to exist today.

First, he started a duty office, where every night after 5.30pm, an officer would have to stay back at the office and answer calls till 10pm. “Weekend duty was also included and they later extended it from 10pm to midnight, especially in cases where Singaporeans needed assistance overseas,” said Tai Chee. Prior to this, Singaporeans could only receive consular assistance overseas during office hours. Nathan recognised the importance of having the MFA office open beyond the usual hours.

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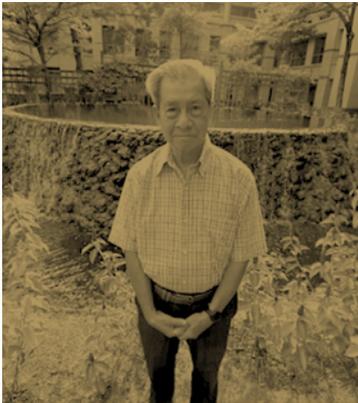
Tai Chee also shared that Nathan started something called the information note, which Tai Chee called Nathan’s “masterpiece” of work. This was basically key news on anything happening in other countries. It was compiled and sent to cabinet ministers so they could be kept up-to-date on current affairs.

“Nathan really helped to clean up MFA. He did a lot of good work in the Foreign Service,” shared Tai Chee. Nathan also instituted that when Ministers go on working visits, they should be given briefs detailing important notes like state governance in the country, important people they have to meet, etc.

Nathan also cared for the welfare of his staff. At the time, there wasn't a scheme which accurately reflected the staff pay scale and cost of living in different countries. This made it financially challenging for those who were posted in "expensive" cities like New York and London. "Nathan was the one who pushed for the scheme and today, it is noted as one of the top schemes in the civil service," explained Tai Chee.

Nathan did a lot of other things to improve MFA. Tai Chee shared that at the time for example, there was a shortage of office equipment at MFA. To increase efficiency of his staff without busting the budget, he gradually pushed for more resources for MFA. In 1982, he left MFA to become Executive Chairman of the Straits Times Press.

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"To people, Nathan is very kind and happy to help as long as it is a reasonable request. He really did a lot of good things for MFA. It was really his second baby!" said Tai Chee. Current staff at MFA have a lot to be grateful to Nathan. 

““

S R Nathan was a very strict and demanding boss. He insisted that MFA staff produce high-quality work, and that the work be done quickly. He did not tolerate lazy or foolish people.

But on a personal level, Nathan was a kind-hearted and caring man. He remembered everyone's name and always had a thought for the junior staff. The improvements he introduced in MFA, such as improving the cost of living allowance, were intended to help his staff. Whenever we had problems, be it personal or at work, Nathan would be willing to help. This is why his old staff continue to keep in touch with him even after all of these years. – PHANG TAI CHEE

””



34

a kind man

It was S R Nathan who recommended Abdul Rahim Abdul Rahman to MFA and later, helped pay for his daughter's schoolbooks. This kindness has never been forgotten.

Rahim, who was from Merlimau, Malacca, was a postman for the Singapore Postal Services Department while in his 20s when he first encountered Nathan. Nathan was just posted to the Protocol Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 1966 and Rahim would meet him when he delivered letters to his office. "Nathan was a very hardworking man," said Rahim.

When the department there was in need of an office attendant, Nathan remembered Rahim and he

recommended him to the job. “I was very grateful for this recommendation as it meant a substantial increment from my pay as a postman,” said Rahim, who could not remember the exact pay but said it was around \$300 that he got paid. He added: “Nathan was a kind man, always willing to help others.”

One of his many responsibilities was to make tea for guests such as Lee Kuan Yew and S Rajaratnam, who was then Minister for Foreign Affairs, who came to see Nathan. “Nathan must have been a clever man as his views were sought after by all those big men,” observed Rahim, 84. “As I made tea, I needed to know who it was I had to serve.”

While working there, the father of five shared that Nathan always asked about his family and would often buy lunches for his staff.

When Rahim’s eldest daughter was in Primary 5, he found it hard to pay for the cost of her schoolbooks with his salary so he decided to approach Nathan for help. In response, Nathan assured Rahim that he would help his daughter finish school. So every year till she graduated from a local university, Nathan would give Rahim a cheque to cover her schoolbooks. Today, his daughter is happily married and a lecturer at a tertiary institution.

“I wanted to thank Nathan personally for his help but never got around to it,” said Rahim. When Nathan became President of Singapore, he felt it wasn’t “appropriate” for him to visit Nathan back then. Since Nathan left MFA for his various posts, Rahim has not seen him. He continued to work at MFA till he retired in 2001, but he has not forgotten about what Nathan has done for him.

SRN

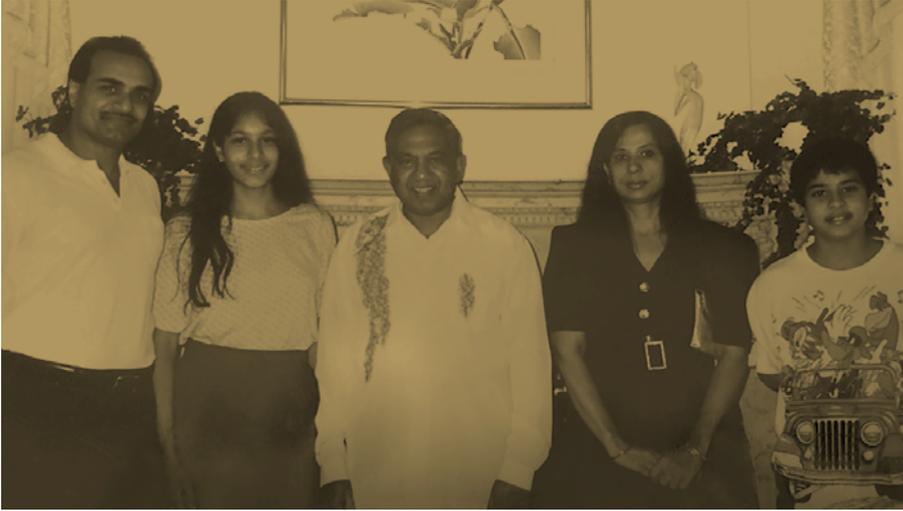


“

I would like to apologise to Nathan for not seeing him earlier to thank him for helping my family. Without his help, I wouldn't have been able to send my daughter to school. Nathan saw to it that my daughter had ample help until she graduated from the university. Nathan is a great man. I am thankful to God that our paths crossed. - ABDUL RAHIM ABDUL RAHMAN

”



diplomat*always
concerned*

37

S R Nathan doesn't forget the people who have helped him, including his chauffeur in the US when he was the Ambassador.

American Surinder Virk, 66, had been working as a chauffeur at the Embassy of Singapore at Washington for 41 years from 1974 to 2015, and during that time, served Nathan for six years when he was the Ambassador.

Surinder has only kind words of Nathan and his family. "Nathan and his family treated me like one of their family members. They were always so kind and showed concern, not only to me but also to my family."

He shared one of the many instances. Surinder's son had been ill since high school and as a result, he found it difficult to juggle his son's appointments with the doctor and Nathan's expectations for him at the Embassy. He brought this matter up with Nathan. Surinder explained that Nathan being an accommodating boss told him that he could attend to his son's needs whenever it was required. "This kind gesture was very much appreciated," said Surinder.

He added that even after Nathan and his family left Washington in 1996, they still remember him. "Even today they still think of me and I still enjoy their never-ending generosity."

It was no surprise to Surinder that in 1999, Nathan was elected as the 6th President of Singapore. However, what did surprise him was receiving a note from Nathan. Apparently in one of the countries Nathan visited as President of Singapore, he tried to look for his son's medicine.

Surinder remarked: "Can you imagine, despite his busy schedule on a trip as the President of Singapore he still remembered my son's needs! He took it upon himself to find the medicine for my son and even though he didn't find it, I was so touched with what he did."

When Nathan celebrated his 90th birthday in 2014 at a celebration at Shangri-La Hotel,



Surinder was invited by Nathan to attend. Not only that, Nathan paid for Surinder's travelling expenses and his stay in Singapore and assured him that he would be well taken care of while in Singapore.

Surinder recalled: "I have worked with the best brains from Singapore. I have seen from afar how Singapore has grown in my 41 years' service. To see and experience the real Singapore is a feeling I cannot describe. Thank you Nathan for making my dreams come true." 



“

Nathan always treated me as part of the family. When he learnt of my son's ailment, he was very sympathetic and empathised the difficulties that I faced. This made it easier for me to focus on my son and ensure he was well taken of. I am proud to say that my son, who is 32 years old, has now graduated. Till now, I never fail to remind my son of Nathan's good heart. – SURINDER VIRK

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coming out from the past

41

Dr R Theyvendran, 72, couldn't seem to get away from his past, but despite this, S R Nathan established the truth and didn't give up on him.

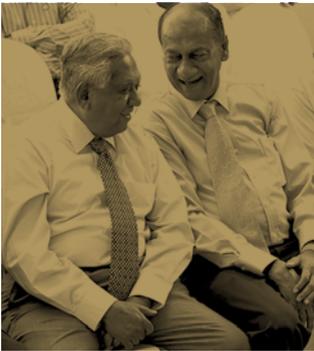
Dr Theyvendran (known as Denan) shared that he was detained for three years when the former Member of Parliament (MP) and chairman of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) Phey Yew Kok (who earlier this year pleaded guilty to 12 charges) implicated him in a conspiracy in 1971. Even though Denan was acquitted back then as there was not a single shred of evidence against him, he couldn't seem to get away from the accusations and there was a dark shadow cast over him.

He shared that when he was detained, he swore he would fight for his innocence and would show people that he would succeed in life. And that is exactly what he has done over the years. After his acquittal, his former boss the late Ong Kah Kok with Dr Goh Keng Swee's blessings gave him a job at MINDEF as an admin officer. He took advantage of this opportunity and slowly rose up, to later owning Stamford Press, a one-stop print media solution provider.

Nathan was one of Denan's customers. The father of one shared that at the opening ceremony of the new building of Stamford Press Group in 1996, Nathan was invited to the event. "In my opening speech, I expressed gratitude to Kah Kok, and that seemed to have struck a cord with Nathan as our value systems seemed to be aligned," said Denan.

"Nathan had known Kah Kok very well, and revealed that the address, in particular, the manner in which I had mentioned my former boss and his wife made him think twice about the polarised opinions about me. While in the pursuit of success, we must never lose our humanity."

Thereafter, Nathan felt that the common misconception about Denan then, that he was "an autocrat, a power monger, and a destructive element were untrue". Nathan came to know Denan better by way of organising meetups, and giving him tests, to ascertain if he meant what



he had said about helping others. “It was Nathan who changed many negative views about me by endorsing my character. This, in turn, led to more opportunities in positions of voluntary leadership,” explained Denan.

He has not stopped contributing to the community and showing his gratitude to Nathan. He currently serves as the secretary-general of the Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS), chairman of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce, chairman of the Tamils Representative Council, and chairman of a cooperative, a sports club and a temple, as well as in an advisory capacity of a few organisations. On top of this, he has also donated more than \$3 million to-date to various charitable organisations.

Denan added: “Till this day, I will never forget how Nathan has helped me remove the stigma surrounding my past. He still asks for my help in helping others and when I can, I will try to accede to his requests. At many times I have been a witness to Nathan’s selflessness in helping the men on the street and I hope I can do the same.”

SRN



“

When I was attending the funeral of Nathan's younger brother, Nathan asked me if I could help a business leader re-enroll in a legitimate doctorate programme. The person subsequently went through the proper rigours of stringent tests and obtained his doctorate of repute. Nathan, while grieving, set aside his feelings, and had the heart to spare a thought to help someone else. He truly is the people's person, a man of inspiration to myself and many others.

– DR R THEYVENDRAN

”



president

surviving under great odds

45

Child at Street 11 would not be where it is today if it wasn't for S R Nathan. It would have easily had a quiet demise, and sadly, not many would have known.

Today, Child at Street 11 is abuzz with the children doing various activities including preparing the material for their own storybooks, creating art pieces and making a healthy sandwich on their own. The childcare centre, which serves disadvantaged children in the neighbourhood, has lots to be thankful for as when it started operations back in 1999, it was a tough journey for M Nirmala and her other founders. It was her dealings with Nathan and the friendship that grew out of it that helped the floundering centre get a second wind and survive.

Her first dealings with Nathan was when she was a Straits Times' journalist in the early 1990s and she wrote a column about Thaipusam and the hooliganism that surrounded some parts of the street procession in this Hindu ceremony. Though she got a lot of flak from the Indian community, Nathan wrote to her to say that he was struck by her bold piece and found it had relevant viewpoints. He was then Singapore's Ambassador to the US and had a good understanding of Indian community issues (he was once the chairman of the Hindu Advisory Board).

Her second piece on the same subject much later on did not garner the same reaction from Nathan though. "He said I hadn't fully understood the issues on temple management in Singapore and India. His advice, especially when it is highly critical, is always given professionally as he wants you to get the best out of yourself."

Nirmala said that sometime after he returned to Singapore from serving as Ambassador to Washington, she saw him at an event where he and Mrs Nathan made a "beeline towards me". This was to be their first face-to-face meeting. "He said he had heard about

Hariprasad Childcare Centre (the name Child at Street 11 was originally called) through the Tamil radio station where I was interviewed on several occasions (as the station had adopted the charity) and asked if it was a home for children or a handicapped centre. I then told him more."



Around 2002, she wrote a letter to him, inviting him to come to the centre. Her dealings with him were more frequent at the time as Nirmala was covering political issues and was able to get political insights from him. But it was in 2003, that Nathan finally paid a visit to the centre. “It was a big day for us and we even went to great lengths to ensure that the nasty red ants that roamed in large armies near the centre, wouldn’t bite him and Mrs Nathan. As an organisation, we were largely unknown. We were new; people were doubtful and sceptical about our work, and we had problems raising money. We didn’t have powerful connections like the other big charities. We were driven by ordinary people and at the time, we were all volunteers who had full-time jobs,” explained Nirmala.

She added: “He saw what other people didn’t or couldn’t see – that the centre’s unique educational programmes was a make or break for these children who were less fortunate. When he came, the children were photographing him and serving him. Children do everything here. Child at Street 11 is a place that believes in their abilities and how far they can go with the right pedagogical support.”

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One of the teachers, Shanti de Mello, recalled that on his visit, Nathan watched his wife sew with the children. The children also played some math quiz with him, which Nirmala said, “They got the answers faster than him. Maybe he was giving



them a chance.” Another highlight was when he made one of the children, Chantilyn Ng, who is legally blind from a tumour in the optic nerve, sit beside him after he saw her in a centre video. Added Nirmala, “Throughout his visit, he saw the curriculum at work and we didn’t do any hard selling. He kept wanting to know who created the curriculum.”

After that meeting, the children at the centre and Nirmala would write to Nathan and invite him to the centre’s events. The children also attended the art event at the Istana every year, and they would bring flowers for Mrs Nathan. Nathan would also make sure to take pictures with the children. “He knew why it was important for people to be photographed with him. He is humble and down-to-earth, and with no airs,” shared Nirmala.

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After the 2003 visit, he asked her to set up more centres. She hand-delivered her response to the Istana telling him that that would be tough, as they had no money and were close to becoming bankrupt. As the centre’s financial woes continued, Nirmala saw a lifeline in the President’s Challenge (PC), which was initiated in 2000 by Nathan, and to be one of the beneficiary charities. But sadly, her centre didn’t even make it on the reserve list. Crushed by this news, she then reached out to Nathan in one of her hand-delivered Istana letters to see if he could help.

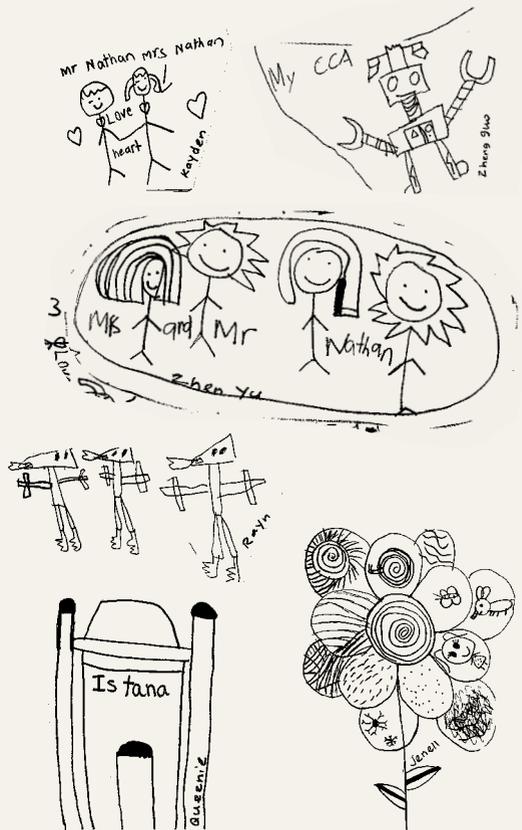
It didn’t take long before a group of people from PC came to visit the centre and after which, Nirmala got a surprise in the mail that her centre was selected as

one of the beneficiaries. She added that Nathan also suggested to large companies and individuals that they could consider supporting the centre.

In 2004, things were finally looking up. Nathan was the guest-of-honour at a gala fundraiser for the centre and through Dr Lee Wei Ling's (Lee Kuan Yew's daughter) help, they got money and the event put the centre on the map. "Afterwards, we could concentrate on the pedagogical programmes we wanted to do and we never again went into the red," said Nirmala.

Today, Child at Street 11 serves about 50 children from the ages of 18 months to 12 years old. Some have grown up with abuse and violence, or broken families. Nirmala, who resigned from The Straits Times in 2014 to commit fully to the centre, said, "We are where we are today largely because of him. He is an extraordinary human being. It was Nathan who was instrumental in shaping the strategic directions for the professional-running of the centre and financial sustainability. No Nathan, no Child at Street 11."

She explained further a few things in the centre that were initiated by Nathan. "He said the name of the centre could signal that it was a religious organisation so we changed it in 2004. He told us it shouldn't be a



one-man operation (just being me) and he roped in Tony Siddique (who is currently Non-Resident Ambassador to the Caribbean Community and Special Envoy for Oceanic Affairs) to help the centre. Nathan also insisted that a board be set up to professionally govern the centre. He also urged the centre to train a pool of Singaporeans with the Child at Street 11 pedagogy so that the country could be independent in the way it teaches young children in a local context.

“We only saw it as a social project to help children, but he saw it as a bigger project to use high-quality education to help needy children make it in life. It was also Nathan who initiated the setting up of a Child at Street 11 Alumni, a place for former students to keep returning even after they left the centre.”

Though he has left an invisible footprint, there are however much of Nathan that can be seen at the centre, reminding Nirmala of the past and why she continues to be thankful today. There are letters to her hanging on the wall from 2000 to 2015, pictures of Nathan visiting the centre in 2003 with Mrs Nathan, and artwork that was presented to him as well as one for the Thai princess that Nathan asked the children to paint. This will be a friendship that will be everlasting. 



Letter
written by:
CHILDREN AT
CHILD AT
STREET 11

Dear Mr. Nathan,

We are from the Child at Street 11 Alumni. We would like to thank you for giving the Centre the idea to have a place for us to study and grow up.

There are many things we do at the Centre. We study, eat, do art and craft with recycled material. We use our brains to think. We hold meetings to plan and discuss. We then follow this plan. We manage the Centre's annual concerts. Every year it is a miracle because we juggle our school work with the concert planning.

We also like to play because we never get bored with playing. We are independent in Child at Street 11.

You and Mrs. Nathan saw this when you visited the Centre in 2003. That was the year Singapore had SARS.

At the centre, we learn many things. You cannot lie to people because they won't like you anymore.

Our teachers here talk gently to us. They help us when we have problems.

They support us and encourage us to cheer up and not give up.

When we are sad, we cry and are scared. We get angry, worried and frightened. We feel hot and cold inside and we panic. In the Centre, the teachers help us and we learn together with our friends. We work together as a team.

Mr. Nathan, you are a great, kind, helpful, happy man who sees many things. You are not a show off. When you visited the Centre in 2003, you saw the children working. You are a man who believes that everyone must continue to learn until they die. You can be a teacher if you study hard.

You love children and that is why you helped us.

Thank you Mr. Nathan. We wish you can come back to child at street 11 and see us doing brain work and heart work.

Yours Sincerely

Yours Sincerely

		
Kayden Tan Han Jie, 8 years old	Jenell Tan Li Wen, 7 years old	Tan Zheng Guo 8 years old

		
Goh Zhen Yu 12 years old	Queenie Yeung Ga Yan 8 years old	Rayn Harry M Raihan 6 years old

post-president

52

a helping hand

Sometimes all it takes is a helping hand to stand and through that, everything is possible.

Republic Polytechnic (RP) student Parimala d/o Uthakumar has had a tough life. Her father is the sole breadwinner in the family and works at a blueprint company, while her mother, whom she calls “my iron lady” takes care of the family despite being diagnosed with several medical conditions including low blood pressure, osteoarthritis, slipped discs and nasal problems. Said Parimala of her mother: “She always makes sure to motivate my elder brother and I to achieve as much and succeed as far as we can in whatever we love. I have always admired her strength and resilience as a woman and as a mother.”

Besides keeping an eye on the children, her mother also takes care of Parimala's 82-year-old grandfather who was diagnosed with dementia in 2011. All these factors have added to a financial strain on the family. And, it could have been a whole lot worse if it wasn't for the S R Nathan Education Upliftment Fund, which provides financial assistance to needy students who have graduated from the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) and are pursuing diploma programmes at RP. Nathan has donated \$129,000 to RP through the Fund and to-date, 12 awards have been given since 2013. The former President himself was a beneficiary of a bursary, which enabled him to continue his education and graduate with a diploma in social studies from the University of Malaya (then in Singapore).

For Parimala being a recipient of the Fund in December last year has been a blessing. This is the second time Parimala has received money from the Fund, which has been put towards her school pocket money, school fees as well as groceries for the family and her mother's medication needs. "The support [from the Fund] has been a significant help to my family as my father need not worry about my school fees anymore and could use his earnings on medications for my mother and grandfather.

"If I didn't get the Fund, I would still been able to go to school as my parents would want me to achieve this and do well. But there would be a lot of cut-downs on food or my mum wouldn't be able to see the doctor and get her medications," shared Parimala. "I can't stress enough how many good things have happened thanks to this Fund. We would never have gone out as a family to eat or celebrate because we would have tried to save wherever we could."



Despite her situation, she remains optimistic and positive. The 22-year-old who is studying biomedical sciences, and loves judo and debating, said, “I have never liked asking my parents for extra pocket money as I know and understand my family’s situation. I never once regretted or felt sad about my life experience, as through all this, I have learnt to be a strong and independent girl. I have learnt to be understanding and kind, and I wouldn’t change this experience for anything.”

She is currently undergoing a 20-week internship programme as a receptionist at Raffles Hospital. “It has been fulfilling as I often get to offer a listening ear to the patients. Some patients have even returned to the clinic counter to personally thank me. I am glad that I am able to make someone’s day, and in turn my own day, better.”

Though she shared that when she went to RP, she like many other young people, had no clue what she wanted to do in the future. However, now in her third-year in RP, she has narrowed her choices to psychology, as she is “interested in understanding the minds of individuals”. Parimala has much to be thankful for and sees a brighter future ahead. 

“

Thank you Nathan and your committee for making a change in my life through your support. I hope one day to lend a helping hand to other needy families as well. No words can describe how grateful I am and how much the Fund has done for me and my family. – PARIMALA D/O UTHAKUMAR

”





56

the surprise

A student at the ITE got a surprise when he noticed that his money in his bank account was increasing, not decreasing.

Tan Suan Tuck really needed help. When he was 12, his father's buffet business failed, as he didn't get much orders. Suan Tuck's father was the sole breadwinner in the family and he had to find another job, which he did but this time around as an employee. Also, during that time, his mother started working – selling fishball noodles at the market to make ends meet.

However, things took a turn for the worse, when in 2010, his father got into a car accident and passed away.

This meant even tougher times for the family, which included Suan Tuck and his sister, who is three years older than him. His mother continued to work at the fishball noodle shop but that wasn't enough.

As the rent was "too high", Suan Tuck shared, his family was forced to move from a three-room to a one-room flat. But this wasn't the last move they had to make. The family eventually applied for a government-rental flat, which they got, and moved again.

At the age of 16, while in Secondary Four, Suan Tuck started to work as an earphone promoter four times a week for eight hours. "I saw my mother working so hard to support the family that I felt I needed to do my part," he shared. His sister was also working. However, he realised going to school and working at the same time, proved a huge balancing act. "I found it hard to juggle work and school, and my mother was worried my job would affect my school."

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When in the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), he went to apply for financial aid and the person at the counter suggested he also apply for some other grants, which he put his name down. Unbeknownst to him, ITE applied for the bursary from the SR Nathan Education Upliftment Fund, which was established in



2011 to provide financial assistance to needy students who are taking courses at ITE. The money, which is dispensed into ITE's Endowment Fund, covers monthly financial assistance payouts to help the students' day-to-day costs. Since its inception, over \$1 million has been distributed to 842 recipients.

Suan Tuck shared his surprise at finding out he had this extra money: “[During that time] I had cut down a bit on my work as I was getting tired and my bank money started to decrease and decrease. I also had to eat lesser food because there was less money and my mother had no money to give me. Then one day, I realised after looking at my bank account that I got paid \$150 more than what I usually got paid for work.” He did his own investigation and found out that the money came from ITE and the S R Nathan Upliftment Fund. He had missed the e-mail from ITE informing him of the good news!

“I realised that for six months, I was getting \$150 each month, which I ended up putting towards helping my mother pay rent and for me, to eat a little bit better,” said Suan Tuck. “When we were hungry, we sometimes couldn't eat and we had to curb our hunger. With the money, I could give her some of it so she could buy meat and vegetables.”

The 20-year-old is grateful for this much-needed help and looks forward to whatever his future holds. Currently going to his second year at Singapore Polytechnic focusing on events and



project management, Suan Tuck wants to open up his own business running events for people. He is also working at Sentosa as part of the attraction crew during the weekends.



He knows there are many like him with financial woes and he was lucky to have gotten a helping hand. He hopes through his church, he is able to do his part and help pay it forward to those with similar backgrounds like him. “I hope through testimony, many people will understand that it is not hard to survive and they should choose to work hard and good things will happen,” shared Suan Tuck. 

“

Living in a First World nation is not easy for people like me. It is hard at home and even when I want to go out with my friends, I still have to worry about having enough money to eat. It is because of this reason that I work hard in life! Hard work always pays off, but with the help of the Fund, life gets a bit easier and fun! Thank you Nathan for taking the initiative to give us this bursary; it makes us feel secure that there is money in our banks! - TAN SUAN TUCK

”

anecdotes

Not all of our research and visits bore fruit; many were dead leads. A few of the beneficiaries, for some reason or another did not want to be named in this book, but the stories told were too good to be buried and forgotten. As such, we decided to include a chapter specially on anecdotes of other kind deeds S R Nathan had done. Nathan's friends, who had personally witnessed these deeds, have narrated these anecdotes:



NARRATIVE 1:

Nathan read an article in a local newspaper of a Chinese man's interest in classical Indian music. This piqued Nathan's interest as it was rare for a Chinese to be interested in Indian music, let alone classical Indian music in this day and age.

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He proceeded to contact the man to find out more about his interest. After meeting him, Nathan felt that there was a need in letting the man's interest develop further since the interest in classical Indian music was waning in Singapore. He contacted an established music school and asked them to meet the man. Nathan hoped that the man's interest could be developed further with the guidance of a proper music school and that the man could further promote classical Indian music to the masses.



NARRATIVE 2:

When Nathan was President, a local self-help group enlisted his help for one of its students. This student was in need of financial assistance and his family was unable to afford the school fees and other incidental costs. The student was in danger of dropping out, as he had exhausted all means of assistance.

It did not take much to convince Nathan to provide a helping hand. He proceeded to help not only for that one particular year but until the student graduated from the local university, which spanned nine years. During that time, Nathan chose to remain anonymous to the student and his family. All Nathan requested was to be updated on the student's academic results annually. The student and his family only learnt who the benefactor was after he graduated. The student is now gainfully employed, and paying it forward to other students in his capacity.



NARRATIVE 3:

When Nathan was the Ambassador of the Embassy of Singapore in Washington, one of the Embassy's helper's house was destroyed in her home country in the Philippines due to a typhoon. Her family members were homeless. The helper felt helpless and desperate, as she was too far away to be able to provide any assistance to the family.

When Nathan learnt of her plight, he decided to help her by giving money to her family so they could rebuild their home.



NARRATIVE 4:

Nathan always made sure his staff's welfare was well taken of and their happiness well-supported. This extended even to marital matters.

Nathan, as the Ambassador of the Embassy of Singapore in Washington, was very supportive of his staff getting married. While he was there, two of his staff decided to get married in Washington and Nathan did not hesitate to throw wedding receptions for them. One of the grooms was also a friend's son, but the friend had since passed away. During the wedding ceremony, Nathan took it upon himself to be the "father" of the groom.

**NARRATIVE 5:**

An article in the newspaper of a boy who lived with his father in a shelter flat caught Nathan's attention and he then requested to meet the boy to find out more. Nathan found out that the boy's mother was incarcerated and was a missing figure in the boy's life. Furthermore, his father was ill and required a hefty sum every month to pay for his medical bills. Despite all these predicaments, the boy remained optimistic and positive.

Nathan went out of his way to ensure the boy's financial status was secure and that he had enough money to continue his studies. Nathan also made sure that an established businessman was mentoring the boy so that he could complete his studies.

**NARRATIVE 6:**

When a temple leader passed away, Nathan attended the wake. After paying his respects, Nathan took the time to sit down and chat with the family. He met one of the sons of the widow, and made small talk about his work and business. During the conversation, the son did not ask for help but Nathan sensed that his business was making a loss.

Nathan felt that with the passing of his friend, he had to step forward to help the family. With the intention to help the business turn around, Nathan asked one of his good friends to help the family to mentor the man and help him out with an interest-free loan. Five years later, the man managed to turn things around and his business is now successful.

acknowledgements

In appreciation of S R Nathan's charitable works throughout his lifetime, Khalijah and Luenne worked with Eleanor Yap, Oculus Design, and The Hidden Good to put together this book, an event and a video that honour Nathan's quiet ways of contributing to the community around him.

These are the people and organisations who, without their support, the project would not have been possible:

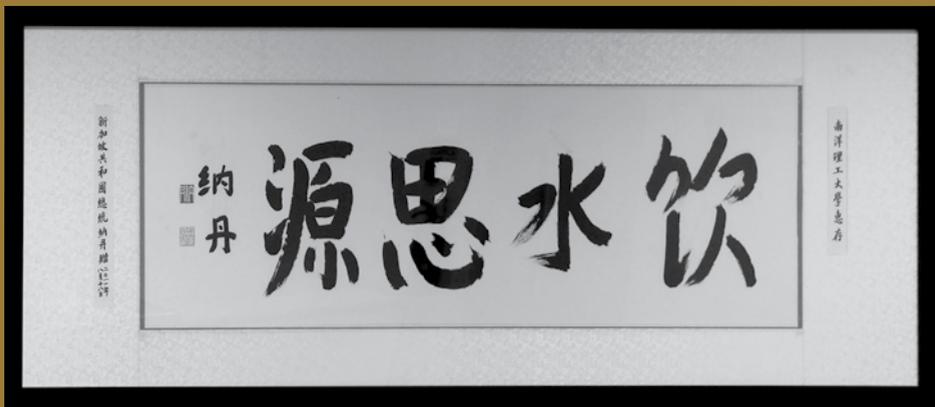
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Chinese calligraphy by S R Nathan, 2011
"Remembering where you came from"
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