

ONE VOICE



Singapore Council of Women's Organisations

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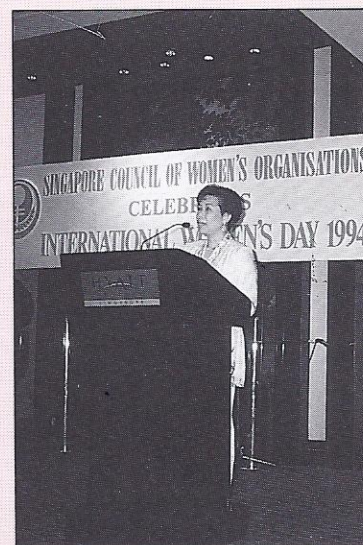
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 1994



First Lady Mrs. Ong Teng Cheong seated with SCWO board members.

SCWO affiliates celebrated International Women's Day with First Lady and SCWO Patron Mrs. Ong Teng Cheong at dinner on March 8, 1994 at the Hyatt Hotel. The programme began with songs sung by the American Women's Association Choir and included a dramatized reading of the play, "As I Watch My Daughter Sleeping," by Ovidia Yu and performed by Theatreworks. Poetry readings were given by members of the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE).

SCWO president Mrs. Anamah Tan was joined by past SCWO presidents: Mrs. Julie Tan, Mrs. Caroline Lam, Mrs. Quek Bee See, Dr. Chua Li Eng, Mrs. Janet Yee and Mrs. Constance Singam. In her welcoming address Mrs. Tan acknowledged all the women who have contributed to the SCWO during its 13 year history and said: "We salute you and thank you for building up SCWO to be a credible national organization and for making our mark in the ASEAN and Asian region."



SCWO president Mrs Anamah Tan welcoming affiliate members.



Soroptimist Geradlene Lowe donating \$500 to the SCWO Office Purchase Fund.



A chance to get together and have a good time.



Background

SCWO is a co-ordinating body whose Board Members comprise representatives from various affiliated member organisations. It has 38 affiliates with a total membership of approximately 94,000, and its members are drawn from all walks of life, ranging from housewives to factory workers, business women and professionals.

SCWO is recognised by the Singapore Government as the national women's council, and is invited regularly as the non-governmental representative, to attend the ASEAN Women's Programme (AWP) which is the ASEAN government body dealing with programmes for women. SCWO is also affiliated to the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations (ACWO) whose Board of Directors and Confederate Council members are drawn from

members of the boards of the respective national women's councils in the ASEAN region.

Aims and Objectives

SCWO's main aims and objectives are:-

- * to co-ordinate the functions of and also act as a federation for the various women's associations, organisations, and clubs and bring together all women leaders of Singapore;
- * to promote and improve the status of women in general and particularly in education, economics, social welfare and community involvement, culture and sports;
- * to stimulate and encourage women to realise and fulfil their social responsibilities, and to enable them to discharge their moral and ethical commitments to the community, as well as nationally and internationally;
- * to serve and act as a resource centre for the gathering and dissemination of information, news and other materials concerning women and the family, as well as to carry out studies, research and training programmes for the benefit of women;
- * to provide a forum for the exchange and discussion of issues, in particular those related to women, children and the family;
- * to foster friendly relationships, goodwill and understanding amongst all women and to further their welfare as embodied in the UN Declaration of Human Rights Charter; and
- * to work towards peace and understanding throughout the world by actively participating with other like-minded organisations with similar aims and objectives. ■

AFFILIATES OF THE SCWO

- | | |
|--|--|
| • American Women's Association | • Singapore Association of Women Lawyers |
| • Asian Women's Welfare Association | • Singapore Baha'i Women's Committee |
| • Assn. of Women for Action & Research | • Singapore Business & Professional Women's Association |
| • British Assn. of S'pore – Ladies' Group | • Singapore Business & Professional Women's Association – Mandarin Chapter |
| • Central Council of Malay Cultural Organisations | • Singapore Nurses' Association |
| • Chinese Women's Association | • Singapore Women's Association |
| • Cosmopolitan Women's Club | • Singapore Women's Netball Association |
| • D.E.W. Co-operative Credit Union Ltd | • Society Against Family Violence |
| • General Conference of Women's Society of Christian Service | • Soroptimist International of Singapore |
| • Inner Wheel Club of Singapore – East | • Women's Travel Club of Singapore |
| • Inner Wheel Club of Singapore – West | • Young Women's Christian Association |
| • Inner Wheel Club of Singapore | • Zonta Club of Singapore |
| • International Business Women's Association | • Crescent Girl's School Alumnae Association |
| • Kamala Club | • St. Joseph's Convent Alumnae |
| • NTUC Women's Programme Committee | • Breastfeeding Mothers' Support Group (S'pore) |
| • People's Association Community Centre Women's Executive Committees | • Women for Women Association |
| • Quota Club of Singapore | |
| • St. Hilda's Alumnae Association | |
| • Singapore Association of Personal & Executive Secretaries | |
| • Singapore Association of Social Workers | |

The SCWO is also affiliated to:

- ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations
- National Council of Social Service
- People's Association ■

What names have you listed for the Editorial Committee?

Editorial Committee

Mrs Rosenah Hj. Daud – Chairperson

Dr Phyllis Chew

Mrs Ellen Ettensperger

Ms Norsiha Abdul Kader

Mrs Geraldine Sng

Mrs Lynette Thomas

SCWO NEWS

SCWO AGM

The SCWO Annual General Meeting was held on May 28, 1994 at the SCWO office. The following board members were elected: Mrs. Anamah Tan, Mrs. Jannie Tay, Miss Tan Sieu Lee, Mrs. Janet Yee, Ms. Lalitha Nambiar, Mrs. Lily Goh, Mrs. Vivian Chan, Mrs. Rosenah Hj Daud, Dr. Kawaljit Soin, Mrs. Nimmi Handa, Ms. Tan Kee Leng, Mrs. Margaret Chew, Dr. Seet Ai Mee and Mrs. Constance Singam.



SCWO Annual General Meeting, May 28th 1994.

That is the last issue for the 1993/94 ONE VOICE Editorial Committee. Chairperson Rosenah Haji Daud wishes to thank everyone for their dedication and hard work.



Mrs Rosenah Haji Daud with her Editorial Committee Mrs Ellen Ettensperger, Dr. Phyllis Chew, Mrs. Norsiha Abdul Kader and Mrs. Lynette Thomas.

“LET THE WOMEN SPEAK” SERIES

Regional Workshop on “Women, Economics and Sustainable Development”

The Regional Workshop on “Women, Economics and Sustainable Development” was held on the April 26 – 29, 1994 at the Pan Pacific Hotel. It was attended by about 50 participants and observers, representing government and non-governmental organizations, from countries in East and Southeast Asia.

The opening ceremony was attended by about 200 dignitaries from both the private and public sectors, local and foreign, and was declared opened by Mr. Abdullah Tarmugi, the Acting Minister for Community Development. Dr Aline Wong, the Minister of State for the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education was also in attendance and was a participant in the four-day workshop.

The workshop was organised by the **Singapore NGO Committee for the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women** (Singapore NGO Working Committee) on behalf of the Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Kuala Lumpur. This is an ad hoc SCWO committee, comprising representatives from three organisations – the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), the Singapore Association of Women Lawyers (SAWL) and the Singapore Baha’i Women’s Committee (SBWC).

Members of the Singapore NGO Working Committee include Ms Hedwig Anuar, Dr Phyllis Chew (Secretary), Ms Choo Wai Hong (Publicity), Ms Shawn Dok, Ms Constance Singam (Chairperson), Dr. Kanwaljit Soin, Mrs Anamah Tan and Dr Vivienne Wee.

The regional workshop brought together individuals and groups engaged in policy, research and action programmes to engage in systematic analysis of key development issues affecting women, families and communities in the mid-nineties and beyond.

Its immediate goal was to prepare for the Governmental Organization Asia and Pacific Regional Preparatory Conference to be held in Jakarta, Indonesia from June 7 – 14th, 1994 and the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing, China from September 4 – 15, 1995.

This workshop was the second of the “Let the Women Speak” series, launched at the beginning of 1994 to collect and relay nationally and internationally the views of Singapore women in the NGO sector.

“Towards Medical Benefits” Forum

Held on 5th February 1994 at the Lee Kong Chian Hall, The first workshop was entitled “Towards Medical Benefits”. Attended by over 100 women, the two speakers, Dr Myrna Blake from the National University of Singapore and Mrs Hedwig Anuar, Director of the Singapore Book Council gave their views as to why women should have equal medical benefits.

Forthcoming Forums

Other forthcoming public forums organized by the Singapore NGO Working Committee are:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| August 27, 1994 | – Women as Leaders |
| November 26, 1994 | – Women and the Environment |
| Jan 7 – 8, 1995 | – Priority Issues for Women in Singapore |
| April 29, 1995 | – Women and World Peace |
| June 24, 1995 | – Women and Development |

Members of the public are welcome to attend these public forums.

Interview with Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Coordinator, Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Regional Lead Institution for Beijing



Dr. Noeleen Heyzer at the "Women Economics and Sustainable Development" Workshop.

Born in a kampong in Katong 46 years ago, Dr. Noeleen Heyzer remembers when life wasn't so easy: "In those days people in Singapore were trying very hard to move out of poverty. They didn't talk about their hardships but just got on with it and lived life on an every day level. At that time no one thought that what they were living through would ever affect anyone. People buried their feelings and were not as open as they are today."

Noeleen graduated from the University of Singapore in 1973 with a masters degree in sociology. Her focus was on the formation of an industrial work force and the safety of shipyard workers. After graduation Noeleen worked at several different jobs including banking and a stint as a textile worker.

"I took odd jobs here and there as part of my studies," she explains. "There wasn't much material on local society and our teachers used case studies taken from the West that didn't make sense to us. Everything was theory and on an abstract level. My purpose was linking life with knowledge."

Noeleen also remembers the 1970's as a time when young people were witnessing changes and asking themselves lots of questions.

"Nation building is not easy," she declares. "Many of us were searching for the best path and thinking about how we wanted to spend the next 10 – 20 years of our lives. We realized that if you have opportunity you also have social responsibility."

Noeleen decided on graduate school and went to Cambridge University where she got her doctorate in 1978 in Development Studies. Living in the United Kingdom made a big impression on her.

"I realized that some of the issues of the feminist movement came out of Western history and could not be taken without critique," she says. "We Asians needed to break away from other people defining our reality and come to terms with our own history. I wanted to play a role in the Asia Pacific region and look at our history from a women's perspective."

In 1981 she went to Bangkok to work for the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Noeleen remembers that the selling price of young girls in Thailand was 3,000 bat and prostitutes were on every street corner. At an ESCAP conference she brought up prostitution as a problem of economic development.

"There was total silence on the floor," she recalls. "The reaction of the government organizations was, 'It's illegal and therefore it does not exist.'"

Noeleen attended the Third United Nations World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985. She remembers it as an important milestone for women from developing countries.

"Third World women for the first time found their voice," she declares. "None of us were involved in the conferences in Mexico or Copenhagen. At first we were kind of embarrassed. We didn't know how to fit in but what we wanted to say people wanted to hear and our voice got louder and louder. Now it's too loud to ignore."

The conference, she feels, helped create a network of women able to identify key issues and influence policy making in their countries. The Regional Workshop of Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (East and South East Asia) held in Singapore last April is an example of this network in action.

The Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing has lofty goals. Noeleen predicts the conference will advance new ethics in the development of emerging economies.

"Governments have to be very aware to put human development at the centre," she says. "We should watch out for programs where capital going out is much more than development aid going in. We need to remember it's the people who pay the price in countries borrowing money at high interest rates because instead of money being spent on social expenditures such as schools it is used to pay debts. We must not allow programs that result in the degradation of our environment by dumping toxic wastes and poisoning our common air."

For the past ten years Noeleen has been living in Kuala Lumpur and working for the Asian and Pacific Development Centre (APDC). She is married and has two 16-year-old daughters. Asked to pinpoint a challenge facing Singaporean women today she replies: "For Asian women it's the ideological definition of roles and responsibilities. The challenge is to find and found families that are grounded on mutual respect."

FEC GOODWILL MISSION TO SINGAPORE



FEC members and SCWO representations at the Academy of Law.

About 20 members of the International Friendship Exchange Committee (FEC) from Japan were in Singapore April 3 – 7, 1944. The study mission was comprised of women who are professionals in the medical, legal, educational and social welfare sectors. The leader of the mission was Mr. Takeo Iguchi, former Japanese Ambassador to New Zealand and currently a Professor at Tokai University in the Faculty of Law.

The objectives of the mission were to promote mutual understanding between the women of Singapore and Japan, to understand the role of women in local society, to study Singapore's effective use of its human resources and to look into Singapore's welfare system for the aged.

They were treated to lunch at the Academy of Law. Representing SCWO were Mrs. Anamah Tan, Mrs. Margaret Chew, Mrs. Janet Yee, Ms Lily Goh and Mdm Rosenah Hj Daud.

AWA TRAVEL FAIR

Dancers from Sabah performing to the beat of tribal drums kicked off the beginning of the Ninth Annual AWA Travel Fair held March 8, 1994 at the Orchard Hotel. Attendance reached 468, an all time high. As in the past, tourist promotion boards, travel agents, cruise lines, resort hotels and airlines were present providing a plethora of information about travel.



AWA members and guests at the AWA Travel Fair



AWARE LUNCHEON

The AWARE luncheon at the Regent Hotel last May drew a sell-out crowd of 300 guests and raised \$6,000. Guest-of-Honour Hedwig Anuar spoke about her life and the founding of AWARE. The "Why I Like Being a Woman" essay competition drew an encouraging 80 entries. Top honours went to Corinna Lim who won a trip to Phuket.

SAFV FUNDRAISER

The Society Against Family Violence has set up a resource centre at the SCWO office with the intention of providing direct services to the community. Donations are needed and a gala fund raising dinner is planned at the Hyatt Hotel on November 23, 1994. Please contact Claire Chiang at 462-2022 for more information.

SBPWA HOSTS JAPANESE RESEARCH GROUP

A research group from Keizai Doyukai (Japanese Association of Corporate Executives) was in Singapore recently as part of a project to learn about the motivations of women in the work force and how to improve relationships between husbands and their working wives.

They met with SBPWA representatives at the SCWO office and were joined by Ms. Constance Singam who provided them with pertinent facts regarding the female labour force in Singapore. SBPWA attendees were Dr. Janet Sosna, Mrs. Rose Leong, Mrs. Tricia Ng-Loh and Ms. Leong Chooi Peng.



SBPWA members meet with a research group from the Japanese Association of Corporate Executives at The SCWO office.



THE MAJLIS PUSAT IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE

The Executive Committee for the Term 1993/1995

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Deputy President	:	Maj Ibrahim Bulat, PBM
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Vice President II	:	Hj Badron Dahlan
Secretary General	:	Mr Mohd Noor Mohd Said
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Soroptimist president Eunice Lecomber and residents of the girl's home.



The tea commemorating the event.

SOROPTIMIST YEAR OF THE FAMILY GIFT

For their Year of the Family project Soroptimist International donated a washing machine to the Half-way House for Girls. A tea was held on May 8, 1994 to commemorate this event.

CYNDI KAPLAN LUNCHEON

Soroptimist International and the SCWO organized a luncheon for author Cyndi Kaplan on May 21, 1994 at the Cockpit Hotel. It was a well attended event and the topics she covered – marketing, self-motivation and strategies on staying sexy, sane and solvent – prompted much discussion among the attenders and the press.



SCWO president Mrs. Anamah Tan, Ms. Cyndi Kaplan, Ms. Dorothy So and Soroptimist president Mrs. Eunice Lecomber.

IBWA SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

This year's IBWA scholarship recipient, Noraini Binti Mohammed Kassim, says she will use the \$1,500 award to help pay her school fees. Currently she is enrolled in a program leading to a Master of Business Administration via distance learning at the University of Leicester. Noraini is currently an administrative assistant for Omega Medical and Scientific Pte Ltd and she previously worked for nine years for DBS Bank.

"I like the work I'm doing and I feel that a degree will help me reach my career goal which is to be a leader in the business administration industry," she declares. "I would like to see myself as one who would be able to encourage the younger generation to be more enterprising in whatever they do."

The IBWA scholarship was founded in 1987 in memory of the late Ms. June Ling-Chin, a lawyer and former IBWA board member who drowned in Phuket, Thailand. The award is to help women continue their studies toward a career in business.

WOMAN UNFORGETTABLE

In her series of profiles on Singapore's women pioneers, Dr. Phyllis Chew claims that Mrs. E.V. Davies was special. Everyone she interviewed commented on Mrs. Davies' humour and laughter. Says Dr. Chew: "I have never before come across a subject who brought tears to the eyes of my interviewees when they had to recall what she did." One of Mrs. Davies' contemporaries declares: "When she died, a light went out of my life and the realm of social work in Singapore was never to be the same again."

Remembered for her many contributions to Singapore's women's organizations, Mrs. E.V. Davies (nee Checha George), remains unforgettable to all who knew her.

Mrs. Davies first came to Singapore in 1925 at the age of 27 as a young bride married to a Singapore school teacher. Her marriage was arranged by a classmate and in one of the many jokes she told about herself she often said, "The best way to find a husband is to be good friends with a classmate who has an eligible brother."

By then, she had already acquired her Masters of Arts degree as well as a reputation as a sportswoman with a championship medal for tennis. Indeed, in her younger days, she was the only woman wearing a sari to be seen bashing it out at the tennis courts.

"BY LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER"

The daughter of a lay preacher in Kerala, India, Mrs. Davies

was a Christian who believed that the essence of a religious life was in the doing rather than the talking. She found an avenue for this in the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which she joined in Madras in 1916. She adopted the YWCA's motto as her own: "By love serve one another."

As a member of the General Committee of the Singapore YWCA for five decades, she was a pioneering force in such fields as adult education for women, hostel accommodation for single girls and women and children's development.

Beginning in the 1930s Mrs. Davies travelled to different parts of Asia, Europe and the United States as the YWCA ambassador-at-large. At that time it was unheard of for an Indian woman to travel unaccompanied overseas, let alone around the world, single-handedly giving talks in places and to people she had never met before.

When presented with a gold badge by the YWCA in 1967

for contributing 50 years of service, Mrs. Davies came up with the novel idea of donating her weight in gold sovereigns – one gold sovereign for every pound as a reciprocal gesture for how much the YWCA meant to her. That did not come without sacrifice for according to her daughter, Mrs. Shantha Sundram, she sold a house in Johor Bahru to enable her to do just that.

A YWCA building often associated with Mrs. Davies is the hostel on Fort Canning Road. It was Mrs. Davies who spearheaded the fund raising for the six-storey building in 1969 which at the time was the largest hostel for female workers. She raised most of the money and to save on expenses, she used her flair as a floral artist and gardener by doing the landscaping and the actual planting of the garden herself.

WOMEN'S CLUBS AND THE SCW

Her YWCA experience gave Mrs. Davies the confidence to

start other women's clubs. In 1931, she helped found the Lotus Club, which later became the Kamala Club, a social and charitable organization for Indian women.

Recalls Mrs. Pushpa Ramanujan member of the Singapore India Education Trust and daughter of philanthropist Mr. P. Govndasamy Pillai: "I was very young then but I still remember a fantastic concert put up at the Victoria Memorial Hall by Mrs. Davies and the club in aid of the earthquake victims. It was a very big thing in those days for very shy, timid ladies to come out and take part in social activities."

For many years she was president of the International Women's Club which aimed

to promote understanding among women of different nationalities by getting them to work on community projects together. Mrs. Raj Verma, a club member in the 1950s when Mrs. Davies was president remembers her as "a fascinating person and an inspiring speaker. There was so much in her that one could admire."

Mrs. Davies was brought prominently into the public eye as a founding member of the Singapore Council of Women (SCW), established to promote equal rights and to act as an umbrella body for women's organizations. She actively recruited new members helping SCW membership grow from a handful of women in 1951 to close to 2,000 in 1955. It was an easy task for her, being on the executive committees of a number of women's groups.

At a memorable talk given at the SCW mass rally at the Happy World Stadium in 1958, she spoke on the "amusing consequences of polygamy," but ended by saying that it was really not amusing: "Men may think it is a good and honourable thing to have a line-up of broken hearts in their home but for the women it was far from amusing. Therefore, we appeal to the men

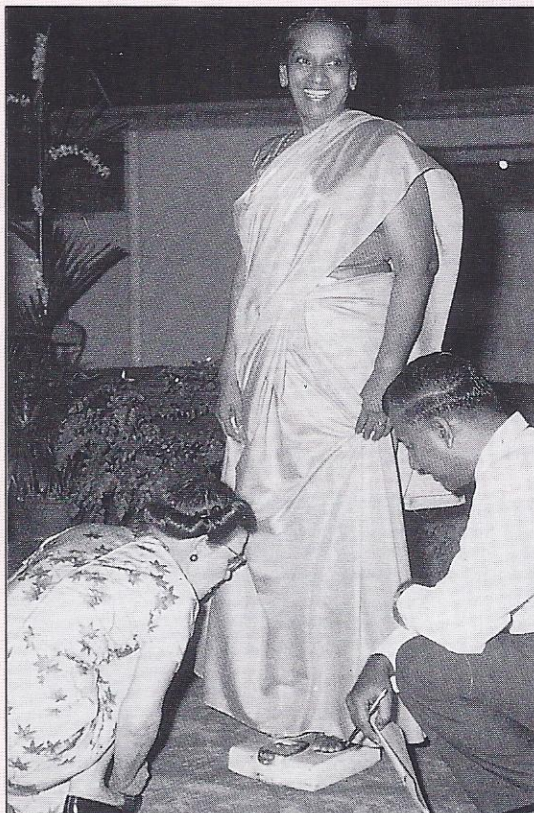
of Singapore to have pity on us – and to have pity on themselves."

SCW founding member and City Councillor Mrs. Robert Eu recollects: "I know now how very, very wise she was. While we were all going all out for rights, she was always stressing both rights and responsibilities and that men should not be alienated from the women's cause."

Such an appeal did not fall on deaf ears for by 1959, the People's Action Party (PAP) adopted the slogan "One Man, One Wife" in their election campaign. This principle became the cornerstone of the Women's Charter in 1961.

Known as a humorous and entertaining speaker, it was not surprising that Mrs. Davies received hundreds of invitations to speak. As Singapore Council of women's Organizations' (SCWO) first president Mrs. Julie Tan puts it, Mrs. Davies was "a woman with deep insight who could lighten every conversation with either a good story or an appropriate joke."

Mrs. Davies died in 1979 at the age of 80. Mrs. Florence Lim, YWCA General Secretary from 1960 – 1971, sums up the feeling of those who knew and worked with Mrs. Davies by saying: "A unique and irreplaceable soul – most talented, a great scholar and speaker, humble, loyal and sincere. Truly unforgettable!"



Mrs. E.V. Davies donated her weight in gold sovereigns to the YWCA in 1967.

THE KAMALA CLUB



Kamala Club members paying for a charity lunch.

Some of us may remember the Kamala Club house on Moulmein Road next to the Malay Football Association. Built in the 1930s and renovated in 1957 it was a prominent landmark and a center for women's activities until it was destroyed to make way for the PIE flyover in 1982.

The club house was unique because it was built by a women contractor. It was also the first time a women's group owned an entire building. The facilities were made available to all women's associations regardless of race or religion. Organizations such as the Singapore Council of Women held meetings there and many memorable charitable events and fun fairs took place on the grounds outside.

Whereas the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations' history of the women's movement, VOICES and CHOICES, summarized the Kamala Club in one sentence and claimed it was "founded by Nehru," this is not the complete story. In 1931 two organizations were founded to promote social life and charitable work among the Indian women – the Lotus Club and the Ladies Union. Nehru was invited to a dinner hosted by both organizations. Envisioning that unity was strength he suggested the two organizations become one. Nehru named the club after his late wife, Kamala, which translates as "Lotus" into English.

This was a fortuitous decision for with the joining of the two, the Kamala Club became

strong and united. It had its own dance troupe and members gathered there for cultural dances, cooking, health talks and arts and crafts classes. During the 1950s and 1960s it became the foremost cultural and social club for the local South Indian community.

Notable members of the Kamala Club included Mrs. E.V. Davies (see profile in this issue), Mrs. K.M. R. Menon, Mrs. M.J. Namazie, Mrs. Mary Emmanuel, Mrs. Malathi Pillai, Mrs. Jeyalakshmi Muthukrishnan and Mrs. Letchmi Naidu.

Although the club house is gone, members still continue to meet regularly to carry on the Kamala Club tradition of promoting social, cultural, educational, welfare and charitable activities regardless of race or religion.

SINGAPORE COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

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PATRON: THE FIRST LADY: MRS ONG TENG CHEONG