

A Tribute to Ooi Giok Ling

Mr Gan Kok Tiong

Senior Research Officer
Research and Planning Department, Housing Development Board

Speech

Institute of Policy Studies Forum – A Tribute to Prof Ooi Giok Ling
Orchard Hotel
5 October 2010

Good Afternoon, Dr Kog & family, friends and colleagues

My name is Gan. I am a researcher at HDB's Research & Planning Department.

When I was approached by my Director, Mr Raymond Toh who was invited to speak on this occasion but couldn't due to work commitments, I readily accepted to do so on his behalf.

I have known Prof Ooi Giok Ling way back in November 1983 when she joined HDB as a fellow research colleague. Giok Ling as our colleagues would address her fondly was one of the rare 'doctors' in our research team and also in HDB. Having a doctorate degree holds a high premium, but it also means higher demand for their services. From time to time, colleagues from other departments would consult them on matters or problems encountered which they hoped the 'doctors' could help them solve. Giok Ling, being extremely approachable and helpful, was a popular choice. Dr Kog could well testify for it when he was our colleague at HDB.

Although Giok Ling left HDB in early 1989 for greener pastures, she still kept in touch with our staff. In 2004, she was appointed as a Research Consultant together with Prof Tan Ern Ser until 2009. She also served HDB as a member of Research Advisory Panel since 2008 with Prof Aline Wong as the Chairman.

Among her contributions to HDB were the HDB Sample Household Surveys in 1987 and in 2008 in enhancing the conceptual framework and analysis of the findings, surveys on residents' feedback on HDB's commercial and recreational facilities, and her active participation in HDB's Anniversary Book, "Housing A Nation" and contributions to articles in our in-house research bulletins.

Specific Contributions by Professor Ooi Giok Ling with fellow colleagues in HDB

(21 Nov 83 to 31 Jan 89)

1. One of the chapter writers in Housing A Nation, 25 Years of Public Housing in Singapore, edited by Professor Wong and Stephen Yeh, published by HDB in 1985. The title of the chapter is Dimensions of HDB Community, pp 455 to 494.
2. Shops Survey, 1985;
3. Study on Precinct Shop Facilities, 1986
4. Study on Dry Markets, 1986
5. Study on Trips to Bedok Town Centre, 1986
6. Study on Use of Neighbourhood Centre Park, 1988
7. Study of Neighbourhood Centre Pedestrian Catchments, 1988

News that Giok Ling was unwell surfaced when she wrote to us on 6 May 2008 when she could not attend a pre-arranged meeting with us. Her words:

“I have to apologise that I will have to miss the meeting this Thursday. I am scheduled for an operation...This was a decision taken by the doctors...If you send me the notes of the discussion from the meeting, I will be happy to add my comments. I am really sorry about this but I was given very short notice. Warm regards.”

The note reflects clearly who Giok Ling was – highly responsible, and showing great concern and commitment for our work progress in spite of her health condition.

In work and at outings, Giok Ling came across as unassuming, caring, friendly, approachable and well-liked by her colleagues.

Giok Ling had a soft spot for her support staff who held her in high esteem. They have described her as an ideal supervisor and have penned these words...:

“Giok Ling will always be remembered for her cheerful, humble and gentle personality. Her natural warmth touched us and it was unfortunate she had left us. We have lost a special friend and mentor. The memories of her life and her achievements will linger on. All her life she was not only approachable, but above all, she was without airs, although she was an intellectual and a Professor. She was always full of wit and humour. Even after she left HDB, a small group of us still kept in touch with her for dinner at her home.”

One year has passed and we still miss her.
