

## Outstanding Alumni— Head Prefect Series

# Shirley Chan Lai Yin ( 陳麗賢 )

*Manager for Reservations and Ticket Offices, Continental Airlines*

*Joined SGSS in 1961*

*First Head Girl ( from 1964 to 1966 )*

*Phoenix House*

I was admitted by SGSS as a Form 1 student in 1961. My parents were very worried as SGSS did not exist and was not yet constructed then. My father was with me on the orientation day held at the Queen's College. We felt a little relieved after our first School Principal, Dr. Pong Tak Sun gave us a brief introduction of the school. We were housed under the roof of Clementi Secondary School for the first 3 years. We finally moved to our own school building when we were in Form 4. Then we had to share our school with Belilios Public School; and that made us all a big happy family.

### The First Head Girl

My first Form 1D Mistress, Miss Esther Young appointed me as one of the class monitors on the first day we were in class. Since then I remained as the class monitor and a prefect throughout my years at our Mother School until I graduated in Form 5. I was elected as the first Head Prefect by the teachers when I was in my Form 4 and Form 5. I had the privilege of planting a tree in the school garden together with the teachers and the Head Boy on our first 'Plantation Day' in SGSS.



At the wedding of Shirley's son, Jordon.

It usually takes an exemplary person to be a Head Prefect. The challenge in being a leader is that you have to be a model to your fellow schoolmates and set good examples. You are being judged by your behavior, performance and appearance.

Not necessarily that I possess all the aptitude to be the Head Prefect. I guess the reasons I was chosen to be one were I was very active in my school curricula activities and had achieved some good results. I was one of the top students in examination results during the earlier years in my secondary schooling; the highest ranking being no. 2 in the final examination in all six classes. Twice I represented the school participating in the inter-schools "English Public Speaking" contests in Hong Kong and had awarded first and second prizes in two consecutive years. The results were pleasantly surprising as none would expect that SGSS, a school name that was so new and un-familiar, could win over other strong competitors from the renowned schools, such as KGV, DGS, Belilios Public School etc. The Radio Hong Kong had broadcast my 1st prize speech. I had participated in various contests held by the School Musical Festivals and always achieved either first or second awards without fail. My photos, my name and the school name were in the newspaper on the education pages numerous times. I was active in sports as a member of the school badminton team and was in the semi-final list in the inter-school badminton competition. I was also a member of the school choir. All these made me somewhat "popular" in my school days.

Then of course there were sacrifices. Due of the numerous involvements in the extra curricula activities, I was taken away from



Shirley in her Girl Guide uniform.

classes for training and practice. I missed classes. It was a bit too late when I realized that I could not catch up with my studies. That was no good. I gradually found myself falling apart in the exam results. I guess 'fame' had taken my senses away as I did not pay enough attention to my studies. So my advice



Shirley and Ma Toh Toh in front of the tree they planted in the SGSS campus in the 1960s, July, 2004.

to my fellow school-mates is to take a balance on both your studies and extra curricula activities.

### Flying To Dreams...

When I was a young kid, I had three wishes. I was an 'Elvis Presley' fan and my first wish



Shirley ( fourth from the left ) and the staff of Pan Am.

was to see Elvis live show. My second wish was to travel round-the-world. In those days, it was not an easy thing to do for a youngster. My third wish was a personal one which I would like to keep as a secret. My first two wishes have probably led me to my career path in the airline and travel industries. I joined "Pan American World Airways" as a Reservations and Ticketing agent after I completed my commercial course at the 'Hung Hom Technical College' (now known as Hong Kong Polytechnic University). While some of our younger generation might not even have heard of this airline name, Panam was the largest global airline at the time I joined the company. Because of the travel benefits, I had the opportunity of seeing Elvis show in Las Vegas in 1970. In 1971 I traveled round the world. So I easily had two of my wishes come true.

After PanAm closed its business, I had worked for United Airlines, Galileo (a global computer Reservations systems used by airlines and travel agencies) and I am now working for Continental Airlines as a Manager for the Reservations and Ticket Offices. I have been a Regional Trainer and have held several managerial positions with the companies that I worked for. My job has provided me opportunities in acquiring knowledge and experience in the travel and airline industries as well as in the airline technology field. I have been fortunate in gaining the trust from my bosses. I must say that I am satisfied and happy with what I have accomplished in my career so far.

My career has provided me many op-

portunities to travel. I had visited many cities, but there are still a lot that I would like to travel to. My best memory of the cities I visited was Bali in 1972 when Panam inaugurated their flight. Bali was a paradise and quite untouched by the outside world then. The major means of transportation was "on foot". The natives would tell you that the "cock fight" site was just "around the corner", and only you found later that it took more than an hour on foot to get there. I saw elderly ladies walking topless in the coconut forest, with two "dry pancakes" hanging over their chests (you have to use your imagination). Beautiful young ladies, dressed up so elegantly in their brightly colored Indonesian "sarong" walking in lines after lines, carrying on their head tops baskets of flowers and fruits, making

minutes to reach the foot of the mountain. Exciting!

## Home Sweet Home

My parents are 95 and 92 years old now. My Mother was a dentist and had practiced for over 10 years in China before she finally settled in Hong Kong. My husband is an Indonesian born Chinese. He is now enjoying his retirement life and actively participating in the retiree group activities. We are enjoying the family life with my son and my daughter-in-law, and our little loving dog.

I would like to thank the SGSS AA for allowing me to share my stories with my alumni. I compliment the SGSS committee members for their contribution. They are doing such a great job in making the SGSS AA successful. May I take this opportunity also to express my sincere appreciation to all our respectful teachers for their guidance, patience, tolerance and generosity in passing

on their knowledge and leading us to succeed. To my dear classmates, I treasure our friendship which is so genuine and long lasting. We have regular gatherings since we left schools. It is the joy in sharing our fond memories, the talk of the good old times and sometimes stories uncovered by some



Teaching staff at a school trip.

offering to their gods in the early mornings. The air was filled with the aroma of fresh forest trees and flowers. Dawn was just charmingly beautiful. At sunset, the big two-foot long lizards would loiter in the Intercontinental Hotel lobby, wanting to join you for dinner. Interesting but scary!

My most adventurous experience was a trip I took this year with my colleagues to the "Simatai" at the Great Wall in Beijing. We walked pass seven mountainous Great Wall Towers. Then I took the slide-way through the air via a cable downhill to the lake. It took only 3

secret admirers that keep us stay connected. Let us continue to stay in touch. My email address is shirleykoohk@yahoo.com.

## Note from the editor:

I'm sure our readers are happy to share Shirley's precious memories in her own words. The interview with this elegant, cheerful, charismatic leader was short, but nice. I remember, the first time I met up with Shirley was at a gathering of the 1966 graduates and their teachers, the gathering called by Shirley and her good old friend Ma Toh Toh. I was simply amazed by the number of people who joined. After all, it had been more than 30 years! I was even told that the kind of gathering had been held regularly since graduation. From the smiles shown on their faces, I saw what "true friends are forever" meant.