

# LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

When my father passed away in 2006, so many athletes and officials as well as those in other sports turned up to bid him farewell. They even did the traditional yum seng at his wake just the way he – ever the sociable man - would have wanted it anyway! While clearing his things, I came across many of his sports photos and memorabilia. I discussed with Maurice Nicholas, Loh Lin Kok, Tan Eng Yoon and other athletes and officials the idea of a book. It became evident that with so much support from the athletic fraternity, I could try to publish a book. It would be dedicated not only to him but also to all the athletes and officials who were devoted and loved athletics as a sport passionately.

My father's life, over eight decades, included his years as a top athlete in Anglo Chinese School in the late 1930s; founder and coach of Swift Athletes Association in the 1940s and 1950s; and the first sports promotion officer in the 1960s during which he organised the Singapore Grand Prix, Pesta Sukan, World Cup Golf as well as other sporting events. He retired from the civil service in 1971 with two public service awards but was still deeply involved in athletics as a patron with Swift Athletes Association and Singapore Athletic Association. In the early 1980s, he, in true pioneering spirit, became the organiser of the Singapore Marathon when it was a relatively unknown event, raising funds each year to hold it until it became a corporate brand name from 2000 onwards. Today, the Singapore Marathon is an annual event that attracts some 30,000 plus participants both international as well as local. It is no wonder that those in the athletics circle know him as the father of today's Singapore Marathon.

But more importantly, his life touched many officials and athletes, whether well known or otherwise. It is thus apt that, in publishing this book, we use his life as a road map in each decade to bring out the highlights of dedicated athletes and officials. Like him, they were passionate about athletics and willingly sacrificed time and money to achieve recognition for our country at regional and international competitions. These are the unsung heroes and heroines that we pay tribute to in this book. The athletes and officials that were associated with my

father over his life time came forward to provide materials to piece together the stories for this book. At the same time, some of my father's close friends provided financial support. I have had the good fortune of being able to count on these supporters to put together, in our own modest way, the story of Singapore athletics in this book - with a chapter in the middle as a tribute to my father.

In particular, I would like to thank Singapore Athletic Association, Singapore Sports Council, Swift Athletes Association, Loh Lin Kok, Maurice Nicholas, Lau Teng Chuan, Tay Boo Jiang and the various athletes and officials who have given their valuable time to be interviewed to provide the content for the book. Special thanks also go to the financial sponsors who are listed in the book. Their financial support has enabled us to raise funds for this publication. It has also given us excess funds to donate to Swift Athletes Association (the first multi racial Club which my father co-founded in 1947) to manage for athletes in need of financial assistance. I would also like to thank the editorial team, especially Chua Chong Jin, for believing in the concept right from the start. This was despite the fact that I had no money, no writing or publishing experience, and was living thousands of miles away from Singapore. They simply believed in the concept and was willing to "just do it"

Hopefully this book brings out the story of Singapore athletics with a glimpse of my father and his love for the sport. We will be giving the book to all schools, libraries and public institutions so that our young will become more aware of some of our home grown athletes. They may be of a different generation. But the way these trail blazers competed with passion to reach the regional and international stage despite obstacles can be an inspiration to today's youths. In this sense, this project – the book and the fund created to support athletes – is as much about looking ahead as it is about looking back in fond memory of my dear father and his work.

**Ivan Goh**

Publisher