

PERANAKAN ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA (NSW) 5th Anniversary Dinner.

We have come a long way in five years, PAA NSW celebrated its Fifth Anniversary with a gala dinner (and dance) on 1st October 2016. Some 150 members, sponsors and guests filed through to the banquet room of the Blue Elephant restaurant in Pennant Hills. Everyone proceeded to their tables and quite soon, the banquet hall was filled. Best of all, everyone arrived on time and the party could begin. Master of Ceremony, John Khoo rather teasingly congratulated everyone for being present without the occasional 'rubber time' many Malaysians have tended to practice. John remarked that a sure sign of the Peranakans ability to absorb different cultures can be seen in the commitment to our adopted country's 'On-Time' culture.

However, before John Khoo began welcoming everyone, the resident band, Suara Merdu, led by maestro Jerry Tan entertained as guests entered the room and proceeded to find their assigned tables and seats. As people mingled and greeted one another, with plenty of smiles and laughter, the band played on with a few songs that would have been favourites of many. Their applause was really appreciated.

MC John Khoo then paid tribute to the land's owners, followed by the Australian national anthem. The lyrics were projected on two screens which ensured that everyone would sing along. Good idea too as the anthem was enthusiastically sung.

John Khoo was joined by Professor Dr. James Chin, Raffle Master, who explained the Raffle format, \$100.00 a booklet, or ten tickets of \$ 2.00 each. Needless to say, the tickets were sold out with a few extra books needed to cope with demand. Every diner wins a door prize complimentary of A.Clouet Australia, producers of Ayam brand products.

President Evelyn Tian was invited to deliver her President's Speech. President thanked everyone for attending and a special mention for the guests from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Melbourne. The Indonesian team, from the Asosiasi Peranakan Tionghoa in Indonesia was represented by its President Andrew Susanto, who was accompanied by Hendi Handadi, Vice President, and Executive Members Ragyan Satrisna, Gani Subrata, Fajar Purnomo and Donny Sukrna Prawira. President Evelyn thanked the group for honouring PAA NSW with their presence. She went on to thank Peranakan members who came from Malaysia, Singapore and from Melbourne. Alfred Chi was the immediate past president of the Melbourne Peranakan Association.

Quoted from President Evelyn's opening speech: "When I first founded the Peranakan Association Australia NSW Inc, I took a road less travelled walking an unknown journey " she then continued on to speak about PAA NSW five years, remembering the early days in January 2010 and the quiet achievements that has

seen the Association grow. An extract from her President's speech where she quoted Confucius '...a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step...' She went on to say that without the Executive Committee, loyal sponsors, business associates, friends and members, PAA NSW would not have reached this milestone.

President Evelyn thanked the members of the executive committee, past and present, all of whom are volunteers who had given their time and expertise to help the association climb to the level it enjoys today. She added that PAA NSW has always and will always be an independent, non-profit, non political and non religious community that's here to promote a greater awareness of the Peranakan culture and heritage, as evidenced by the colourful, sarong kebayas worn by the charming ladies and the 'baju China' worn by many of the men.

She said: "Australia is one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world, and we Peranakans fit and settled in very well," and continued: "As an individual in this country, we have each a place here without sacrificing our Peranakan identity. Hence, we do not confine our membership to Peranakans only, we are open to other cultural communities who are interested in our culture".

President Evelyn once again thanked her Executive Committee for their hard work and dedication, closing with ...' you have stood strong and tall and are truly the pillars of success...'

With that remark, she closed and invited Alfred Chi to the podium to address the crowd. Alfred Chi gave us a rousing speech about the achievements of the numerous 'Baba's of Malaysia who were leaders in government, industry and commerce. Many were from Malacca including Tun Sir Tan Cheng Lok, Tun Tan Siew Chin (probably Malaysia's most successful Minister of Finance) plus Babas who started tea planting in Malacca (and everyone thinks the tea plantations began in Cameron Highlands) or those who began planting rubber and so on.

Dinner began with the President's table invited to proceed to collect their food as dinner was a buffet. Earlier, entres of satay and curry puffs were served to the tables. Two bottles wine, a bottle of white and a bottle of red wine, were placed on each table, kindly sponsored by Mr Chestor Chiew from Ray White.

But like all things planned, the dinner and speeches went into overtime and as the desserts were produced and served to each table, Suara Merdu proceeded to entertain with a small selection of songs. The planned 'Dondang Sayang' had to be curtailed and the newly formed Peranakan Choir was introduced. Members of the band emerged from behind the door, all with remote microphones attached and proceeded to move freely around the room. Needless to say, the choir was a smash hit with the crowd singing along as well, easy with the lyrics projected for all to see. Immediately, the ukulele group got together and with Jerry leading proceeded to strum along to 'Camptown Races' and 'Jambalaya' as band members led the singing. Once again, this was well received, judging by the support and the applause. It was a lot of fun.

The kebaya parade followed while the band struck up a latin-beat number. The lucky door prizes were given out, goodies from Ayam Brand packed in paper bags and given to every diner.

It was then time to draw the raffle tickets and President Evelyn was invited to draw the 1st Prize winning ticket which was 2 return tickets to Singapore generously donated by Scoot Australia. Many of the crowd went home with some good prizes, of dining vouchers, and Mr Elvan Tong donated a mounted etching.

Finally, President Evelyn, surprised members of the band with awards, a nice touch as it shows they, Hawa and Jonathan Yee, Collin Yeo and Dr Donald Tan are appreciated. Members of the Executive Committee having served the last five years were also appreciated with awards by the President. Appreciation awards were also handed to sponsors who have generously supported our Anniversary events over the last 5 years.

A very nice surprise was our Indonesian guests coming forward to present Madam President Evelyn with a beautiful sarong by President Andrew Susanto. He also presented Alfred Chi with a sarong as well. The sarongs are special ones, purchased especially for the occasion. It was a nice gesture from our Indonesian Peranakan friends and very much appreciated.

As the evening ended, the band proceeded to perform the final song 'Mari Pulang' as everyone said their 'good-byes' and 'good-nights' with smiles and laughter from an evening enjoyed by everyone. It was truly an evening of great enjoyment, food and fun.

Phee Huat Cheah
Editor