

Preface

The idea of writing *100 Inspiring Rafflesians 1823–2003* was first mooted by my old friend and classmate, Prof Tommy Koh Thong Bee. He urged me to undertake this monumental project.

The book, which spans 180 years, can be used as a resource guide to Singapore's biographical literature. It should also be of interest, not only to Rafflesians, but also to students and researchers of Singapore's social history. The history of the three schools, Raffles Institution, Raffles Girls' School and Raffles Junior College, is inextricably intertwined with Singapore's development from a British colony to an independent nation. RI was founded in 1823, only four years after Singapore was founded.

Rafflesians have a proud tradition of public and community service. They have distinguished themselves in the arts and sciences, in the community, and in the areas of defence, diplomacy, education, finance, health, industry, politics and sports. Pioneers in their own right, they have made significant contributions to Singapore's emergence from a Third World entrépot to a First World nation. The Rafflesian diaspora has also found its niche in the world.

The 100 profiles are arranged in alphabetical order. I had to cast my net far and wide to encapsulate them, because of the magnitude and historical perspective of the book. Some profiles have been included because they are colourful and unconventional. Several Rafflesians, who ought to be featured in the book, declined to be included.

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Dolly Sinha Davenport, Stella Kon and Jenny Soh for their meticulous research; and to Dr Rosemary Khoo for her patient and painstaking editing. My interviewees have also given me some rare insights into their own character and personality. They have also regaled me with interesting, and sometimes intimate, anecdotes about themselves and about other Rafflesians.

Writing *100 Inspiring Rafflesians* has been a great learning and enriching experience for me. I am privileged to be given this rare opportunity to write my *magnum opus*, which has taken me three years. It is my modest literary contribution to my *alma mater* and to Singapore's biographical literature.

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