



Sporty Senior

By William Chia

Hearing Mr Tan Kok Sing speak, one would never have imagined that here is a man who is 79 years old.

In a telephone interview with the sprightly Mr Tan, I initially thought the person who answered the phone was a much younger man.

An active senior who has even gone skydiving from 8000 feet in Cairns, Mr Tan's fitness regime would put many who are younger than him to shame. A marathon enthusiast in his younger days, though he stopped participating since the 1990s, the healthy man never misses his daily 6.00am jog and basketball game with six to eight of his neighbours.

Lao Chen, as his basketball buddies and residents affectionately call him, had an encounter with arthritis and joint pain when he was in his early thirties. He then began leading a healthier lifestyle.

Initially he started doing evening jogs after work from his home in Outram Park to the Botanic Gardens. During the 1970s, jogging was not common and he raised some eyebrows. Even the police thought he was up to no good and started trailing him for a few days before they realized he meant no harm!

Mr Tan often asks senior residents to join him in his basketball sessions. "It was very difficult in the initial stages," he said. "People are not easily motivated. They may listen to what I say, but will hesitate if I encourage them to go further." However, his never-say-die attitude works and a lot of them are convinced to take up some sport.

Mr Tan doesn't stop there. The Bukit Merah View resident formed the "Tiong Bahru Garden Joggers" with fellow jogging enthusiasts, and even bought T-shirts for them bearing the logo of the group, with expenses fully borne by him. The membership now stands at about 300 and is still growing.

Mr Tan's outlook towards life should be a shining example for everyone to follow. Senior citizens, it's time to play basketball!

