

Ride Along with Mr Leong Horn Kee

By Patricea Chow

As he walked into the room, Mr Leong Horn Kee greeted us, "Good afternoon! Am I late for the interview?" Mr Leong was actually early by five minutes.

His portfolio includes Member of Parliament for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC, Chairman of Parliament of Singapore's Public Accounts Committee, and Chief Operating Officer and Executive Director of Far East Organization.

He is also Chairman of the Bukit Timah Saddle Club and President of the Equestrian Federation of Singapore. The 52-year-old saddles up at 7.15am on most mornings and rides for 45 minutes before he goes to work.

His interest in horse riding began in 1999, after some friends brought him on a trail ride during a holiday in Canada. He then joined the Bukit Timah Saddle Club with his daughters Delphine, who is 15, and Bessie, who is 17. Mr Leong also has two other children, Celine, 25, and Alvin, 23.

Now a hobby horseback rider, Mr Leong has learnt some dressage (which is guiding a horse through a series of complex dance manoeuvres) and basic show-jumping.

But he has no plans to ride competitively, content to just ride for leisure and stay trim and enjoy nature.

"I'm more aware of the weather and I observe more things on horseback. I even saw an iguana and a pangolin walking across my path!"

The avid horse rider hopes that more Singaporeans will take up horse riding. To increase awareness of this sport, the Equestrian Federation of Singapore has been conducting visits, camps and courses for the public through various horse riding clubs and schools. The Bukit Timah Saddle Club also has an affordable Beginner Course for children and adults who are interested to have a taste of horse riding.

Mr Leong also enjoys being indoors. His other hobby is wine appreciation. The seeds of this hobby were sown when he went to France to pursue his MBA in 1980. A year in this most famous of wine producing countries, followed by numerous corporate functions where wine was de rigueur, exposed him to the intricacies of wine. Although not a connoisseur, Mr Leong appreciates good wine.



Mr Leong Horn Kee, MP for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC

"A good wine will give you a good combination of nose (smell), taste and after taste. I prefer French wines for their distinctive nose, but some are very expensive. However, you don't need to pay a lot for a good wine. I discovered a South African wine that costs only \$12 and is very enjoyable."

Above all, Mr Leong looks forward to dinner with his wife and children on weekends.

Everyone, except Alvin who is studying in England, puts aside work or school to spend some time together.

However, besides dinners, he says, "We call and send SMS and email to each other. We all have different schedules and different activities. So we have to make an effort to keep in touch."