

IEM SECRETARIAT

# THE WIND BENEATH OUR WINGS

*Ir. Razak Yakob, Bulletin Editor*

I will always remember my first encounter with the IEM. Kak Jam was the one who patiently assisted me with the process to join IEM. It wasn't easy because many application cases are unique and mine was one of them, but Kak Jam was there to guide me every step of the way. I am sure all of us have gone through a similar experience.



*IEM Secretariat at 2018 Annual Dinner*

Members come and go, contributing to the organisation as and when we have the time, but the IEM Secretariat is always there and will continue to be there to ensure the smooth continuity of its operations. We may say “it’s their job” but without their dedication and passion, IEM will not be what it is today. If you want to know how hard they work, try coming in to the office after working hours or volunteer for events and travel with them to conferences. You will see how they take care of everything, not just the events but also you, the delegates.

This year, as part of IEM’s 60th anniversary reflection, let us take some time from the regular articles, stories of technical personalities in their line of work, engineering marvels and engineering events, to just have a moment to appreciate the IEM Secretariat.

As Bulletin Editor, I am honoured to be given this opportunity to recognise three of IEM’s longest serving employees. Their stories are a great tribute to how the organisation has thrived through the years. Here are the stories of Ms. Ooi, Puan Halimah and Mr. Loo. I have to stop at three, because the next three longest serving employees joined the Secretariat in the same year: Ms. Janet, Ms. Sarita and Puan Norimah (who joined at the start of the millennium in year 2000). It looks like all great things come in 3s.



## **Ms. Ooi Beng Ean**



She is tough and always striving for perfection. She is not someone you would want to mess around with. The stories she tell are testament to IEM’s hard work to be where we are today, as a respected and, more importantly, internationally recognised organisation that leads and upholds the nation’s engineering industry.

The truth is, Ms. Ooi is not just respected (and sometimes feared) locally. I have also seen how regional conference delegate leaders refer to her for details on planning and operations. When it comes to conference administration, she has the answers.

Though she officially started work with IEM on 1 April, 1976, she actually worked there part time during the school holidays and while waiting for the HSC (Higher School Certificate, later Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia) results. After Form 6, she was supposed to join the teacher’s college but was instead cajoled into joining IEM during the exciting years when the organisation moved into its new building. She can recall the preparations made for Tun Mahathir Mohamed to cut the ribbon and officiate the opening of Bangunan Ingenieur.

With her previous temp-work at IEM, she was tasked with introducing a catalogue system for the library. She later moved into the publishing side when the bulletin was printed in black and white.

For over 40 years, she has worked, supervised or managed every part of IEM. Today, she is the general manager of International Affairs, one of the most important portfolios in IEM because it reflects our capability as an engineering leader in the international arena. IEM is secretariat for international bodies such as FEIAP (Federal of Engineering Institutions in Asia & The Pacific), AFEO (ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisations), and AER (ASEAN Engineering Register). This means IEM manages all applications for membership as well as events for country representatives and members of their organisations. This is how important IEM is to the international engineering community.

There is no doubt that Ms. Ooi loves her job despite the challenges. She is fascinated to be working with members who volunteer their time and money with no expectations of appreciation and yet still have the stamina to push on.



This makes her want to strive further. The friendships forged around the world in the course of running the organisation makes it all worth the while.

Looking back on the early years of IEM, when with only 5 employees, members and their spouses worked closely together to bring the organisation up. It was an interesting time. The close human-to-human interaction has made IEM strong and Ms. Ooi hopes that in the next 60 years, the importance of such interactions will not be neglected despite the increase in virtual communication.

Today, members come to IEM to attend courses, talks and meetings rather than to network and to forge relationships. We need to create this interactive environment and to continue promoting the relationship among members because this will strengthen us as an organisation.

As for Ms. Ooi, you can give her an award for every milestone she has walked with IEM, but nothing will ever pay for the blood and sweat she has poured into the organisation.

## **Puan Halimah Musa**



Many Graduate Members know Puan Halimah because she is the gatekeeper for the IEM mentorship programme. They will need to get the mentorship folder from her and to submit their progress reports until they are ready to take the Professional Interview after three years. Puan Halimah joined IEM's Finance Department in 1996. From there, she was given exposure to handle activities for technical divisions such Highway & Transportation Engineering, Tunnelling & Underground Space and Geotechnical Engineering.

She later moved on to handle committees on training, logbook and CPD (Continuing Professional Development) as well as the IEM/BEM Graduate Examination Part 1/2 for graduates of non-recognised engineering programmes. This examination was discontinued in 2016. Today, Puan Halimah is busy with the Engineering Competency Development mentoring programme. Graduate Members contact her for clarification on the programme, which is now competency-based to go with the current IEM Professional Interview format. She is the "go-to" person for mentees and mentors and ensures both parties are able to forge a relationship that will create future professional engineers.

Puan Halimah has sweet memories of the awards that she has received for 10, 15 and 20 years of service. She feels good to be appreciated. As IEM turns 60, her vision is for the library to be a cozy, chill-out space where members come to work quietly. With the convenience of many websites with online books and research materials today, the need for physical reference books and other documents will be minimal. We hope Puan Halimah will continue her service until her retirement.

## **Mr. Loo Weng Soon**



When I first joined IEM, I thought all Secretariat staff members were women. But it turned out that there were quite a number of men too, including Mr. Loo, the third longest serving employee who joined IEM in 1997 as assistant executive in the library. He later moved to membership, activities and IT. One of the few people familiar with the overall operations of the various sections in IEM, he is today the senior executive for membership and IT.

Mr. Loo was instrumental in compiling the IEM processes and database for the setting up of the IEM portal in 2010. He now heads the department which monitors membership subscription payments and the weekly email notification of activities to members. I am sure many members would have communicated

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with him over the years with regards to payment of subscriptions, registration of events or updating their personal data. Mr. Loo certainly believes that IEM will grow to be bigger and better.

We salute Ms. Ooi, Puan Halimah and Mr. Loo for their dedication to IEM. We also salute all staff members of the Secretariat.

To be honest, it is a huge challenge to manage and run a learned institution such as IEM with its many dignitaries, intelligent, accomplished and highly successful professionals, coming in as participating members or as volunteers. As members, we may feel entitled and quickly forget that the basis of our establishment is the strength of committed engineers who want to contribute to the profession.

We claim our successes with the organisation and often, we forget those who help us in the background; they are the wind beneath our wings.

A little courtesy can go a long way. A simple "thank you" when you next encounter any staff member of the Secretariat will show that you appreciate their contributions and dedication to IEM. Let us be courteous engineers. ■



**IEM Secretariat at the IEM HQ**

## Upcoming Activities APRIL-AUGUST 2019



### 2-Day Course on "Contract Management Hiccups"

- Date : 11 – 12 April 2019 (Thursday – Friday)
- Time : 9.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.
- Venue : Wisma IEM
- Approved CPD : 14.0
- Speaker : Ir. Lai Sze Ching