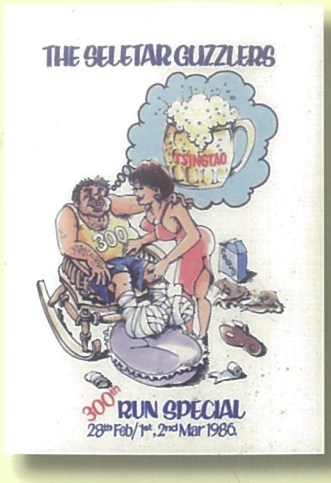
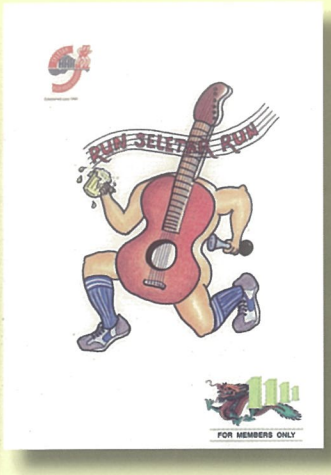
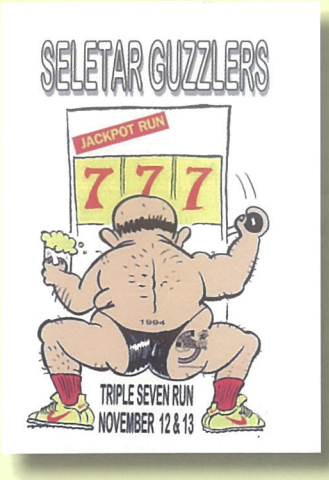
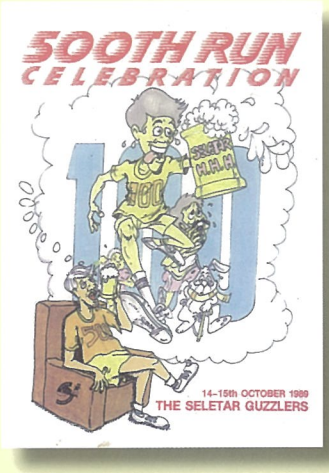
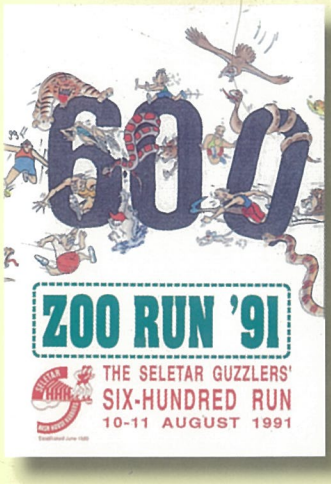


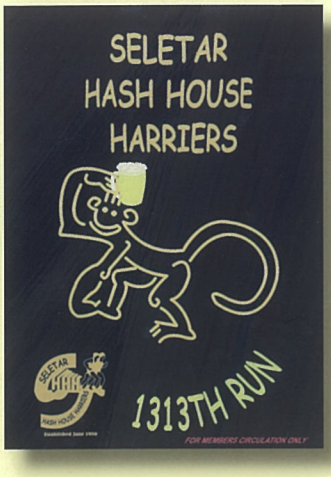






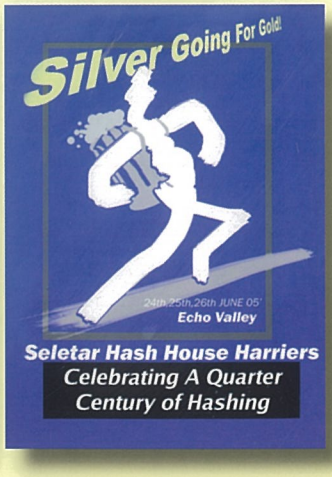


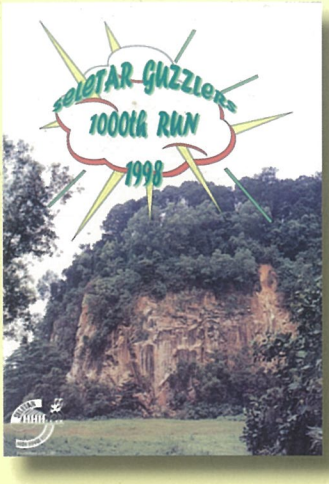


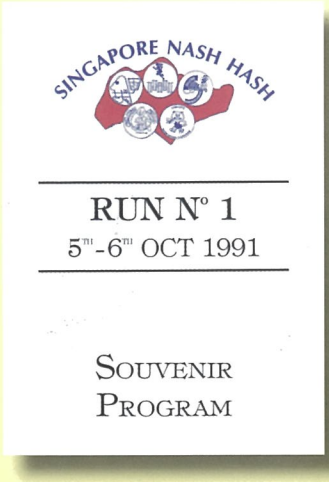










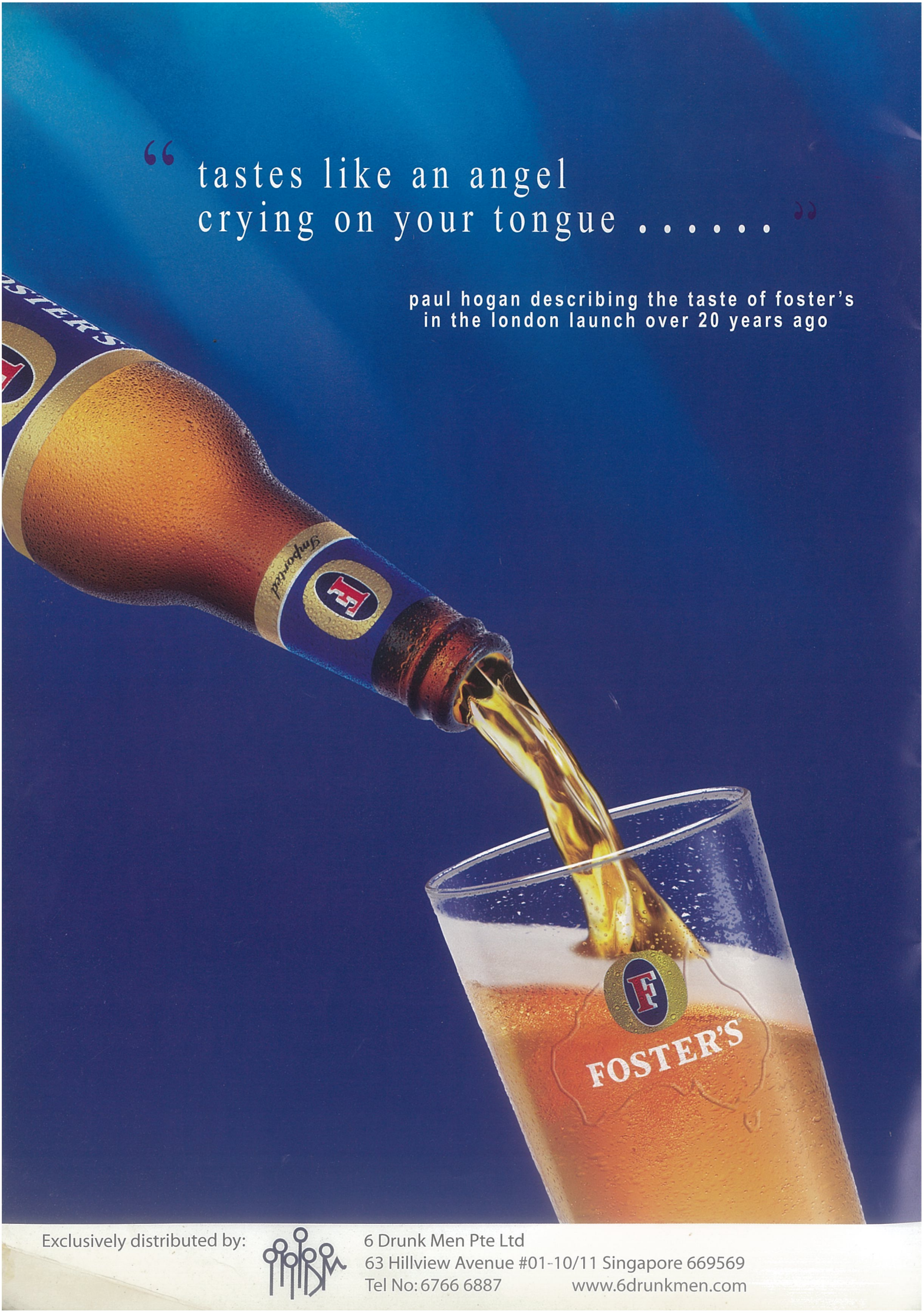


The Seletar Guzzlers

1500th Run

and Dinner

Date: 1st December 2007


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Grand Master's Address

I extend my warmest welcome to all of you, our hash brothers and sisters especially to our brothers from PJ Animales and Sungei Ujong for making the effort to join us in our Celebration Run.

Since inception in 1980, we have always been a mixed bag of hashers - all nationalities. Our members come from the UK, USA, Austria, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, Germany, and Zimbabwe.

In Seletar we call ourselves a "Fun Club" but we are always mindful of the less fortunate. Through the years we have raised more than half a million dollars for a number of Charities.

As Seletar is a "Batang" [Males Only] Hash this is a great opportunity for us to celebrate this event with members of the fairer sex from the other Singapore chapters, our families and our friends. So enjoy the run, beer, food and party.

Over the years we have had the support of a generous group of sponsors who never failed us. Judging from the adverts within, this year is no different. Please accept my personal appreciation. Thank you.

Special thanks also go to the organising committee headed by Hardcock, without which this event would not be possible and to all the members who have generously contributed to the beer barrels. So we will have plenty to drink and plenty to drink about.

I will look forward to meeting you again in our next big event, which would be our 30th Anniversary in June 2010.

Ong Chye Ong
Aka Tight Arse
President 2007

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Early Daze | contribution from **BabyFace**

So we've reached the ripe old age of 1,500. Amazing. This is a cause for celebration but it's also a good time to take a look back to the golden olden, past days.

I joined Seletar Hash in October 1981, on run 69 (I somehow always remember this number). We were a much smaller bunch then and I was one of only two Ang Mohs. The 69th runsite was in Bedok where we ran through abandoned chicken farms into and around a huge hole in the ground that was later filled up with water to become Bedok reservoir. Like most runs then, we finished in the dark because local time was still +8 _ hours GMT.

I was given a T shirt, gallons of beer and makan and I asked, "How much?" "It's free. You wanna join?" You bet I did.

There were few guests and no guest fees back then. Also, leaving the run site before the circle was simply not allowed. Jump in your car, turn the key in the ignition and half a dozen hashers would appear, blocking the way, asking, "Where the fcuk do you think you're going?"

We were also more disciplined, everyone sang at the circle, or else, and something like snoozing in the beer wagon was a serious offence.

Notice that the SH3 logo features a guitar? That's because we normally had a sing-song after the circle until the beer had finished.

And when that happened, it was on-on-on for more beer. Here are a few recollections of a once popular on-on-on site: To Newton Circus, past midnight, banging Tulang bones too hard and breaking melamine plates, inflating condoms like balloons and launching them in the air towards bemused tourists. Spending half an hour searching for the car.

Some notable runs: what is now the luxuriant Raffles Country Club was once great hashing territory – a swampy area and the planned second-link road, the run site, was a dead end. After a long circle and on-on, Neil Woodcock and Poet Painter drive off the wrong way and, reaching the dead end, part company with the road. Poet crashes through the windscreen, ending up on the bonnet, but being 'relaxed', suffered no broken bones. Cops arrive and Woodcock talks his way out of it, cops leave and Woodcock somehow gets the car back on the road, drives for 50 meters and the engine seizes up; a case of no sump = no oil = lack of forward motion. Poet Painter was never seen at the hash again – his misses forbade it. But Woodcock continued hashing and went on to become a revered whip, and a divorcee.

Another notable 'run': The Mad Chinaman laid a long, long trail out in the western ulu and after an hour or so an exhausted pack arrived at a sign that said 'FIND YOUR OWN WAY BACK' It was like a reverse bus run without a bus. The committee were not amused and the run was stricken off the record, declared a non-run. I thought it was quite creative but no-one has dared try it since. Cinderella came close with his epic brace of 'blue corals' but they were both proper circuits, albeit obscenely long.

Makan issue: Before Fukawe and his lone, losing battle against spicy food there was Crotch, now in the great hash above. He introduced a BBQ system where he would start a fire and hashers could bring there own meat, grill it and have some nice western style food. It was, shall we say, an idea ahead of its time; so far about 25 years and counting. And on this note, enjoy Seletar Hash's 1,500 Celebration, on-on to the makan…and 2,000 runs. ✎

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Congratulations!
Seletar Hash House Harriers

Ass Prof Kolatkar "Microdick" Prasanna



A genome is all the DNA in an organism, including its genes. Genes carry information for making all the proteins required by all organisms. These proteins determine, among other things, how the organism looks, how well its body metabolizes food or fights infection, and sometimes even how it behaves.

The Good and the Bad of the Hash

1 contribution from **Microdick**

Hashing is one of the best things I have encountered since coming to Singapore many many years ago. Its one of the best ways one can really learn the local culture,land,drink and song of any place you hash in. When we do off station runs, its always been not only the usual fun but one really learns about a different place in ways you cant do by taking a tour bus. When you hash, you not only run and drink but its that chatting under the influence which lets you know what sort of blokes (well if batang like Seletar) you are dealing with. And "usually" one finds that hashmen are pretty much the same world over (screwed up but friends for life). Even in Singapore, if you run into ex-hashmen or hashmen who joined other chapters, there's always a heartfelt exchange of greetings and usually some ale. In addition I had the chance to do a few of these Amazing races held in Singapore. It was rather amusing when we sometimes would come to a place in the middle of nowhere and I would immediately say, "just take that short cut through that shiggy and we will be there". Most Singaporeans (non hashers) know only the 50% of Singapore which is paved and air conditioned.

Hashing gives rise to some interesting situations like the time I almost stepped onto a cobra. Rifle range road area usually just has the usual number of monyets and ants. So as I was running through some bush, I almost stepped onto a long black "stick". When it suddenly moved and darted away, I actually reversed my stride in mid-air and came right back out from the bush (never expected a snake in singapore! This place only has ants I thought). But most of the time, we can see these and other creatures meandering happily away from the runners.

Hashing however has also resulted in a lot of bad things. Specifically we have destroyed many dates. Too many times, hashmen will come out of nowhere (usually on top of a scenic hillview), where there might be car with fogged windows. The poor couples likely have some extra time Tuesday night and come onto what they think will be a quiet "romantic" time. When they see a large herd of sweaty and hairy (some botak) men shouting "on on" , I can imagine that the couple is having a sleepless night. In fact, this Halloween , we even managed to ruin the paranormal society's annual trip to the cemetery. Instead of scary ghosts, there were only the "well mannered" hashmen shouting louder than ghosts and singing happy songs. So I apologize to the love-lost couples and the paranormals. Next time don't waste time fogging windows and looking for Pontianak. Just put on some running shoes and RUN DRINK RUN. ✎

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On On, Seletar! I am with you!

Kampong' Run #1 I contribution from **GM Shoeless**

Seletar H H H's camaraderie over spills from Tuesday nights to almost any other night! When I joined Seletar H H H, Friday nights were spent at the Pauliner Pub at Wheel Lock Place and then moved to the Piano Bar at the Apollo Hotel.

Pontianak and Tight Arse were in deep discussion about run's. Pontianak mentioned that he had a run number 1 shirt from the Bangkok Sunday Hash and as Tight Arse being a typical Kiasu Singaporean, he also wanted a run number 1 shirt. Since Pontianak did not have a spare run number 1 shirt the seeds were sown for the Kampong Hash House Harriers.

A couple meetings were held around town noticeably the cricket club and at Tight Arse's house and a committee put forward. Run number 1 took place on the 19th September 1999 at Lorong Susuai and the hares were Straight Spout and Cat Woman. Red Baron was the innaugrial Grand Master and fittingly so, as he came up with the "Kampong" name.

The Kampong Hash
SINGAPORE

Eight years on and Kampong H H H will be celebrating their 100th Run which will be held on the 15th December 2007. Registration forms can be downloaded from the the web site. ✎

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SCRIBE REPORT

I contribution from **HARD COCK**



RUN #1492 TRUESDAY 30TH OCTOBER, 2007
BUKIT BROWN CEMETERY, LORONG HALWA OFF KHEAM HOCK ROAD
HARES COOL HAND LUKE AND LIPSTICK ON MY FORESKIN

Life Member Campbell "Cool Hand Luke" Chuan should have been christened "Submarine" as he surfaced only twice this year so far, twice last year, twice in 2005, thrice in 2004 and the list goes on but….he never fails to show up to hare and host a run each and every year. This year, he and co-hare Karel-Steven "Lipstick on my foreskin" Linskens had professional assistance in the form of consultant MD Victor "Dr. Nightmare" Seah and contractor Murugesh "Sticky Tissue" Ramasamy with a potential observer cum hash man-to-be, his son Jonathan Chuan.

68 hot and ready-to-run members started gathering at the clearing just after the entrance to the cemetery from 1700 hours onwards. At around 1740 hours, an unmentionable alighted from a taxi right smack in the middle of the gathering, swayed over to Cool Hand Luke, took the Tiger from his hand, sipped the amber and smiled to the 67 open-mouthed batangs. Muruku Mama suggested that we should amend our constitution to admit unmentionables since our membership is dwindling.

At 1800 hours sharp, the pack still bedazzled with this second "intrusion" [last week it was Goodie Bag from Friday Hash] roared off blindly towards Kheam Hock Road to find no sign of any trail. We were called back by the hares and were showed the entry path into the Chinese cemetery. As we ran through the grave yard, I was surprised to see the graves still in place with nearly all in dire condition as my family had the remains of my grand-father exhumed almost twenty years ago after receiving notice from the authorities. Passing by the grave "guarded" with the statues of two Bengali soldiers, Harshman was personally upset as the hares had mischievously deposited flour on the statues heads. 15 minutes into the run, Lipstick on my foreskin in his trusty WA4180J Land Rover had to intervene as the FRB's had overshot the trail leading to Mount Pleasant Road. Pungent sweet aroma filled the air as over a hundred shoes trampled onto the beds of betel leaves. Memories of my sweet dear departed grandmother flashed through my mind as she was fond of chewing Pinang and Gambir wrapped in betel leaves. We emerged at the junction of Mount Pleasant Drive and Gymkhana Avenue only to go into another area of the cemetery off Onreat Road then onto the PIE, through the Old Police Academy, past the Singapore Polo Club and onto Jalan Mashhor. At the Omar Salmah Misjid, there were only four of us, the stragglers, Tom "Cunnylickher" Lillig, Hardeep "Harshman" Singh, Govenda "Perut Besar" Samy and yours truly. We were off paper so we sought directions from a foreman at the construction site who was clocking-off duty. He very kindly agreed to us a ride on his pickup and as we clambered on board, Robert "Deep Hole" Tan, Roman "Cuntopop" Tan and lord and behold, Harish "Never Come" Pillay the Whip arrived in the vicinity. We all agreed with Harshman that sitting on ice would be a better choice than trying to find our way home at 1945 hours in the dark. We had a breezy drive on Jalan Mashhor, Joan Road, Lornie Road, Sime Road and Kheam Hock Road which would have taken us at least forty minutes on foot.

The circle was lively with James "Virginia Slim" Eller III celebrating his 600th run and with a visit of a busload of members of the Singapore Paranormal Investigators [a talk show on a local radio station the following morning mentioned that the SPI chanced upon a group of "Jui-Kwi" at Bukit Brown Cemetery ~"Jui-Kwi" translated from Mandarin means Drunken Ghosts]. The Hares, Consultant, Contractor and Observer were given a down-down on ice for a good run followed by Cool Hand Luke's rendition of "The Engineer Song". Makan was Mr. Ho's Mee Goreng with Pumpkin Mashed Potato cooked on site accompanied with a bottle of Dewar's Whisky and three crates of beers. The On On On was at the Old Police Academy till the wee hours of the morning.

Thank you Hares for the good run, good makan, good whisky, good beers and good On On On.✎


Heartiest Congratulations
on our 1500th run.
On On to our 2,000th run
Cool Beer

Hash House Horrors – Singapore "The Hash for Kids"

The Hash House Horrors of Singapore were established in 1982 by Mike Croft [aka "Crotch"] a member of the Seletar Hash House Harriers and earlier a member of the Singapore Hash House Harriers. He was the Head Horror (President) of the club until his untimely passing in 1995. The club has had its ups and downs over the years since Crotch left us – especially during the SARS pandemic of 2003.

Even though the Seletar Hash House Harriers are no longer the official club sponsor for the Horrors, there remain strong ties. Since Mike, there have been numerous Head Horrors from Seletar HHH: Bananaman, Never Come, Lipstick on my Foreskin, Nick Leeson, and many others.

Today the club enjoys a membership of 90+ kids that range in age from 18 months to 18 years. The Horrors recently celebrated their 600th run on Pulau Ubin in July 2007. Several of the Horrors have chalked-up more than 150 runs, which is a tremendous milestone given that the Horrors run fortnightly (on Sundays).



Want to learn more about the Horrors? If so, then visit their web site:
http://horrors.hash.org.sg/index.html

The Hash House Horrors of Singapore heartily CONGRATULATE the Seletar Hash House Harriers on the attainment of their 1500th run!!!



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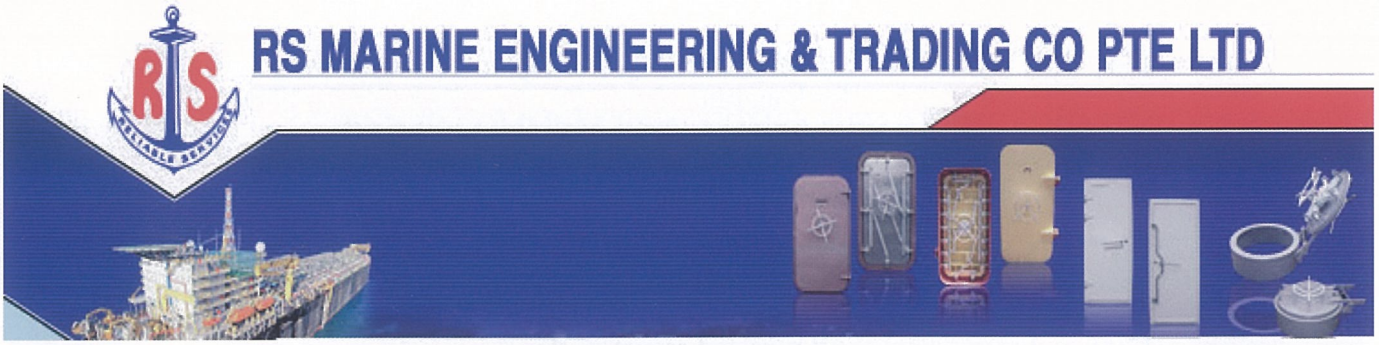
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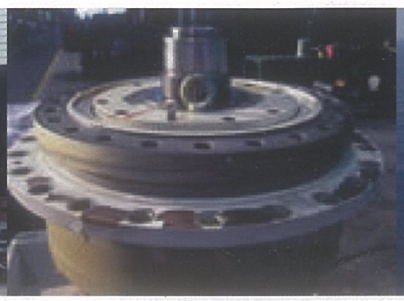


RUN Programme

1200	hours ~	Registration & distribution of goodie bags commences at the back of grand copthorne waterfront hotel in front of the water taxi booth by the river
1500	hours ~	Bus depart from grand copthorne waterfront hotel for long run
1530	hours ~	Bus depart from grand copthorne waterfront hotel for medium run
1615	hours ~	Bus depart from grand copthorne waterfront hotel for short run
1700	hours ~	All runs end at wet circle
		chilled bottled water, 100 plus, h-two-o, foster's draught beers, fresh fruits & finger food will be served
1745	hours ~	Circle & whipping commences
1845	hours ~	All Buses depart from wet circle to Grand copthorne waterfront hotel
1915	hours ~	Shower &change at the back of grand copthorne waterfront hotel in front of the water taxi booth by the river











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DINNER Programme

1900	hours ~	COCKTAILS AT THE ANTE ROOM 4TH LEVEL COMMENCES
2000	hours ~	DINNER COMMENCES ACCOMPANIED BY THE SOUNDS OF "Penny lane"
2030	hours ~	WELCOME ADDRESS BY GRAND MASTER OF SELETAR HASH HOUSE HARRIERS ONG CHYE ONG "TIGHT ARSE" AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PRESENCE OF OUR NORTHERN BROTHERS ~ PJ ANIMALES & SUNGEI UJONG.
2100	hours ~	PRESENTATION OF PLAQUES TO THE 2006 sgt. BILKO COMMITTEE
2200	hours ~	BOAT RACE
2230	hours ~	Dance the night away to your favourite songs by "penny lane"
2359	hours ~	Lucky draw
0100	hours ~	Till we meet again

your emcees for the evening ~ cinderella, never come & rainbow

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Congratulations Seletar H.H.H.



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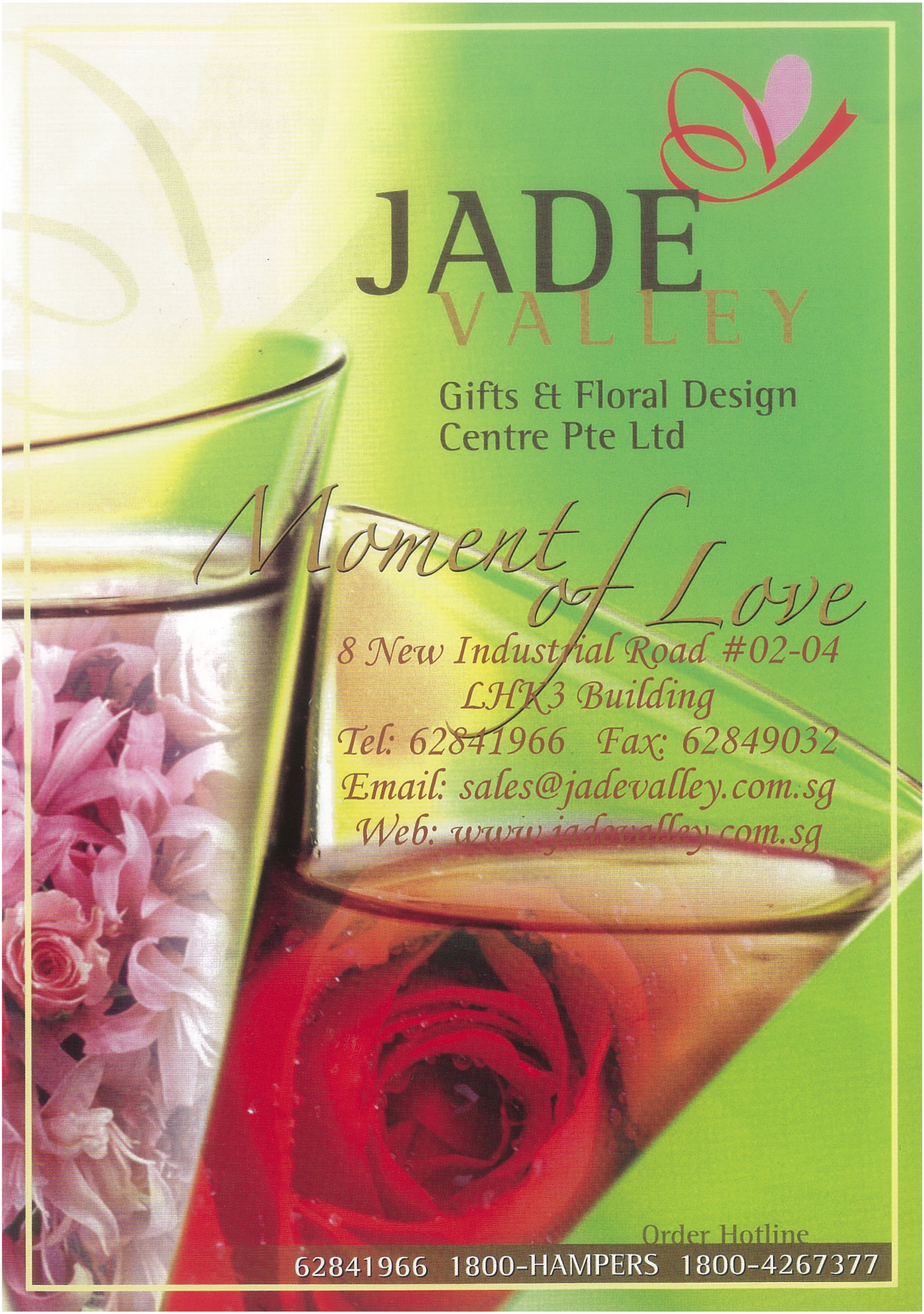


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A Night In The Malaysian Jungle

I contribution from **Ong TIGHT ARSE Chye Ong**



My unforgetable run with the PJ Hash House Harriettes took place at Bukit Raja Industrial Estate, near Kiang, one merry night in May 1996.

Since it was only going to take less than an hour to get to the run site if I were to use the Kiang Valley Expressway (as informed by a veteran Klite), I left the hotel at 5.00prn giving what I thought to myself ample time to reach the run site and get to know the hashers before the run starts.

Little did I know that the infamous Bangkok jams have drifted south to K.L., and there I was ... still stuck in traffic at 5.30pm. Hit the toll at 5.45prn and from there it was a breeze all the way to the run site. Arrived there at 6.10 and was rushing off to catch up with the pack when a Harriette waylaid me and firmly demanded guest fees from me before I was allowed to run after the pack! I had to go back to the car and get the money ... and shucks ... no change. Took out a RM50 bill, gave it to Jothl and hurriedly shoved the change into my running shorts. This action was later to save my life.

Sprinted off and caught up with the back runners in 15 minutes. Overtook them and happily continued running on paper. At around 6.45 I realised that there was no one in front of me ... and also no one behind me! Only then did I realise that I had been following the wrong paper! We had started out on triangular paper ... and the paper is now square! BIG MISTAKE. I knew then that I had lost the pack. 7.15. But hark! The sound of motor vehicles ... the highway or road must be nearby. So I left the square paper and headed off in the direction of the sounds ... I force myself through the bushes ... suddenly I fell into a swamp ... up to my neck. After a bit of struggle, I managed to get out. By then it was 8 pm. I was so wet and dirty, so I just headed for a path in the oil palm. I made a quick evaluation of the situation. Triangular paper was eons ago, and I had no idea where I'd seen the last piece of square paper. So I resigned myself to the fact that I would have to spend my virgin night in the Malaysian jungle ... in oil palm.

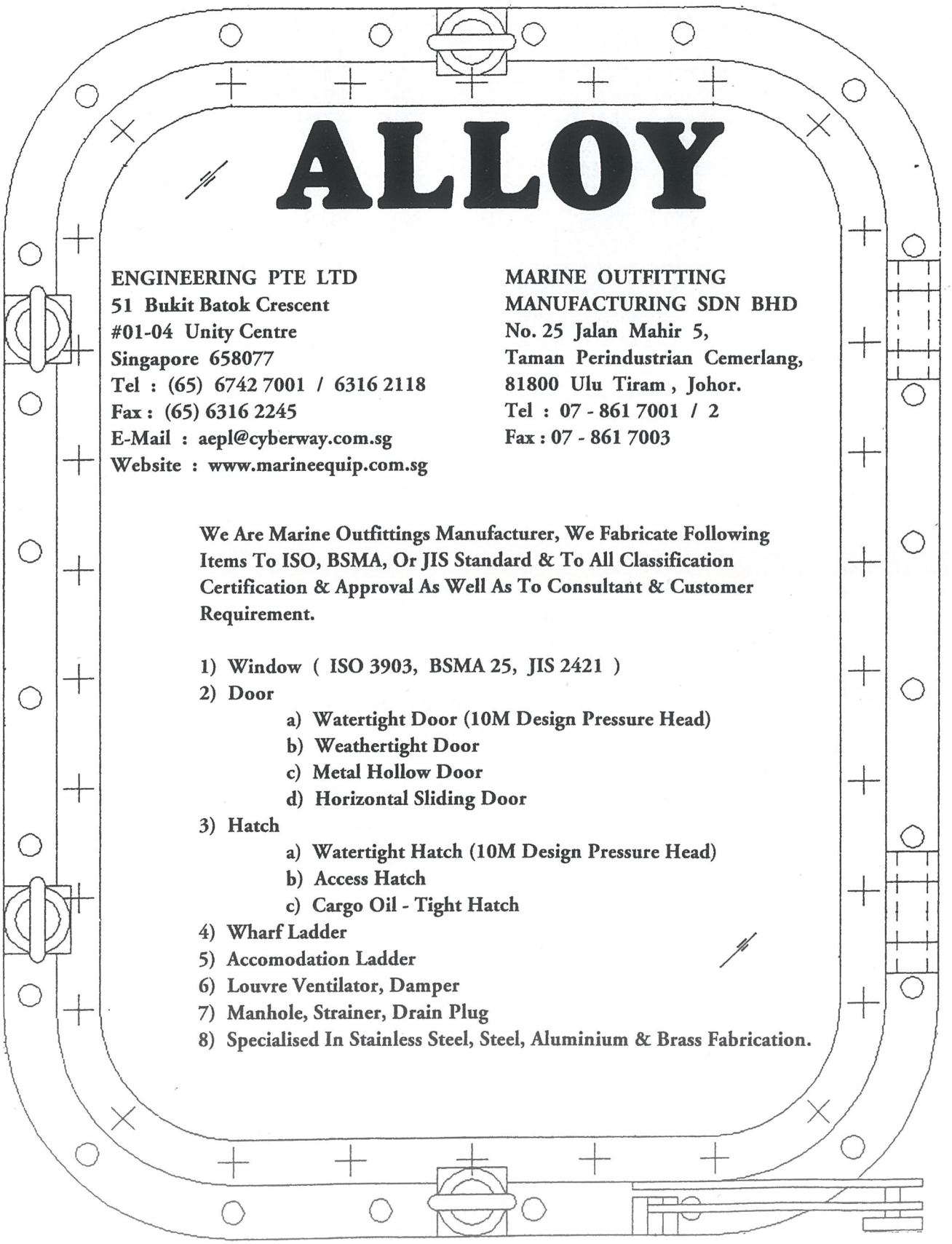
To make matters worse ... it started to rain. I was so cold ... so hungry ... mozzies attacked me by the thousands and I couldn't do a thing. There were some fireflies to brighten up my night as well ... and I was so very worried about my loved ones ... about the hash waiting for me to come out. Once or twice, I thought I heard the sound of vehicles in the oil palm ... but the vehicle was too far away. I had no choice but to wait out the night.

Woke up at 6.45 am and started to walk for a while ... then run for 2 hours ... running in circles, I suspect. I was very tired and dehydrated and started to worry . . . 'til I heard some sounds like Indian music ... so I headed for the music ... Boy! Was I glad to see 2 Malay guys. They very kindly gave me a ride in their truck to the main road of Pekan Meru. From there, I hopped on a bus towards Kiang. Thanks, Jothi, for making sure I had money with me. Had a cup of coffee in a coffee shop, then rang up a hash friend who was good enough to come give me a ride home.

I later found out that the hare and a few committee members had waited at the run site 'til 1.30 am. Two FWDs had gone in twice to look for me both on the Thursday triangular paper and also the Monday square paper, but to no avail since I was not on paper. I am indeed very grateful to the Thursday hash for arranging to send my car back to my hotel. This must surely be hash comraderie at its best! Thank you again PJ Harriettes/Harriers.

The moral of the story must surely be when you are lost, ALWAYS STAY ON PAPER ... I learn. ✎

Congratulations!



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Anecdotes from years past

1 contribution from **Up Yours**

Hasn't anyone figured it out yet? In any given celebration magazine there would be a mixed bunch of articles ranging from past scribe reports to descriptions of events past, etc. Betcha most of you c*nts don't read them anyway (CAN any hashman read at all, especially after a couple of beers?!). However for those of you who do indeed read these articles (go get yerself a life!), here are some Seletar vignettes from the recent past.

Let's go looking for ghosts!

Bukit Brown Cemetery # 1492, Hares Cool Hand Luke and Lipstick on My Foreskin

It was bad enough to set a run at a cemetery during Halloween, but the c*nts arranged it such that we met with a whole slew of other people, including the MacRitchie Runners 25 (who actually run and don't drink – but had some decent chicks by way of redemption). Later in the evening during the circle, a group of people led by the Singapore Paranormal Investigators (i.e. the poorer equipped version of the Ghostbusters) showed up at the cemetery, looking for spirits on a dark Halloween night. Well spirits the hash had, though of the golden, frothy kind!

Am I on the right Hash ?

Bukit Batok Heavy Vehicle Park #1380, Hares, Arse Grabber, Up Yours and Boo Little

The premise of the run was fine. Find an army training area, lay a decent run over decent terrain, then sit back have a couple of beers and wait for the pack to get back. This is of course under the assumption that no other hash chapter has had the same idea in the same area. On the day itself the some of the pack learned for the first time the initials "SBH" didn't stand for Seletar B Hash (stupid c*nts – if the B doesn't make any sense it should have told them something, right?) and indeed stood for the Singapore Bike Hash. Given that the Bike Hash typically sets a 40km or so trail, various members of the pack came in at various times and from various directions, including **GM Harshman and Whip Nurse Fucker**, who got back on the back of a truck with some very happy looking Bhais (they had to pay for their truck ride in kind). Needless to say the hares spent as much time on the ice as the pack did on the run and there were some very frozen balls that evening! After note: the following year in the same area, the same c*nts screwed up the Bike Hash in turn. Life is fair!

Who brought the chick?

Lorong Sesuai #1491, Hares Spiker and Slippery Dick

Crisis at Seletar! A f*cking clueless Harriet (later to be determined to be from the Singapore HH Harriets) cycled up to the runsite and decided to join the run. The blokes were either too piss scared (**Press Once**) or too bloody horny (**Brown Eye**) to inform little Ms Harriet that this was a batang hash! It had to take the collective wisdom (and the single shared brain cell) of two long-standing hashmen, namely the **GM Tight Arse** and the **Sweep Popeye**, to summon up enough courage to tell the Harriet to "f*ck off" halfway through the run. This led to a lot of recriminatory whining during the circle by said GM and Sweep. God help us if Singapore is ever invaded! We'd probably either welcome the b*stards right in, or try to shag them whilst running away!

Here we go getting lost again

Venus Drive #1441, Hares Pantat Berseh and 3KG

In the true tradition of the hash the hares had left it late, and engaged a clueless consultant to boot. After getting lost in the MacRitchie area for 3 consecutive recces (not to mention whilst setting the run proper!), the by now desperate hares went for broke and just "did it", through brush and thorns and streams and mud. As a result, lots of cursing from the pack and three venerable hounds that had to be led out by hand of the jungle late that night, including unfortunately, **Whip Nevercome**. Needless to say it was a night of freezing arses for the hares whilst the old-timers like Popeye moaned and groaned about how dangerous things were now that they were getting old and senile. Most dangerous run of the year!

I M F*cked tonite

Dempsey Road Car park #1433, Hares Opto and Cool Hand Luke

The power of one. Our usual two clueless b*stards decided in the midst of the International Monetary Fund Conference that it would indeed be a good idea to hold a run just next door to the American, British and Chinese embassies (didn't all the barbed wire fencing around Marina Bay tell them anything?). To their great disappointment, not one anti-terrorist unit showed up during the run. During the circle however, the police more than made up for their lapse by sending a whole army of squad cars to surround the circle and things got pretty tense from that point on. This was engineered so that our hero **Cool Hand** could then whip out his trusty Nokia phone, and save the day by making a couple of "strategic calls". Here's to the show-offs! ✎

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The Vanishing Hash Country

I contribution from **Nuts**

From the time that the Seletar Hash House Harriers Chapter was formed in 1980 till this day, we have witnessed the gradual disappearance of our good hashing grounds. There were so many run sites which were gobbled up by the construction of new housing estates, reservoirs, golf courses, emergency runways, MRT lines, LRT lines and 6 lane expressways.
In 1971, the government embarked on building an extensive network of highways to connect high-density satellite towns to be built around the central water catchment area. Five expressways, namely the initial 35 km stretch of Pan-Island Expressway (PIE), the 19 km East Coast Parkway (ECP), 11 km Bukit Timah Expressway (BKE), 14 km Ayer Rajah Expressway (AYE) and the 16 km Central Expressway (CTE) were completed by 1989.

The first was the PIE which serves as one of the main thoroughfares between the Bukit Timah area to the newly completed Changi International Airport. The other thoroughfare between the city and the airport is the ECP. This was followed by the opening of the CTE in 1991 connecting Yio Chu Kang to Bukit Timah Road. The BKE was constructed as a by-pass for traffic going to the causeway, and AYE eases traffic to the western part of the island. Subsequently, the government also built the TPE, SLE and KJE in the northern part of the island. Yes, these expressways also offer us an opportunity to lead the pack through tune-nells, but they also make the trails more predictable.

Gone are the lushes hashing country along the pipeline. No more bashing around the rambutan plantations in the Hong Kah area. Popular run sites such as the numerous tracks off old Jurong Road, the wetlands near Neo Tiew Road, the hilly runs through Nanyang University and Jalan Bahar area have all given way to new housing estates. We have not had too many runs lately north of Mandai Road because of the SLE. The good running area around the Gali Batu is also dissected by the BKE.

On the eastern side of the island, we have also lost all the good hashing country around the quarries off Tampines Road. The area around the Bedok Reservoir used to offer us some good long runs too. The whole Punggol area has been engulfed by the new township. Our run sites deep in Lorong Halus and Elias Road have been muscled out by the new Pasir Ris and Tampines townships, and even cemeteries like Bidadari will not be spared.
At this rate, we shall soon be running out of hashing territory, so credit must be given to all the hashers who put in their effort to recce and seek out new trails, week after week. At least, we will not make comments like "Another boring run." at the circle afterward.



Shaken but not too Stirred

I contribution from **Barbie Doll**

THE gaunt expanse of the Gobi desert is littered with skeletons of camels and other animals. As of last week, there is another carcass lying there under the unforgiving sun – that of a **Porsche Cayenne S Transsyberia**. The mangled heap of metal and plastic had started life as a gleaming piece of sleek, exquisite machinery. Driven by the Canadian team of **Nierop Kees** and **Laurance Yap**, it had performed more than adequately in the Transsyberia Rally 2007 till it hit one of the many concealed ridges that line the hard-packed mud of that region of the Gobi. The car became airborne and had the misfortune of doing so at a spot where the land just dropped away beneath it. It came down to earth nose first, flipped four to five times and ended up on its side, with the engine and transmission lying almost 100m away, looking like a T-Rex had taken a few bites at its front end.



But I digress

This story started on Aug 3, with 33 rally cars lined up under the picturesque shadow of the St Basil's Cathedral in Moscow's Red Square. Piloted by two-man teams – there was a mixed team and a two-woman team too – the cars were about to embark on a 7,100km journey called the Transsyberia Rally 2007 which is organised by Schalber Events, a company set up by **Mr. Richard Schalber** who took part in last year's event.



The Transsyberia Rally isn't for the weak at heart. If the arduous 7,100km drive through Russia and Mongolia doesn't exhaust you, the spartan life enroute will.

Beginning in the burgeoning Russian capital Moscow, a disconcerting mix of in-your-face affluence and old-school tradition, the route flowed east towards the harsh Siberian region and the Ural and Altai mountains. Once it crossed the border into Mongolia, it would wind through the vast Gobi desert before homing in on the Mongolian capital of Ulaan Batar. The distance was to be covered in a combination of Liaison and Special stages. The former comprised non-competitive transport sectors where the competitors just had to get from point to point, mostly on tarmac roads. The latter stage was made up of competitive sections on demanding off-road terrain to be covered in a specific time and route, and would count for the placings. Singapore was represented by car No. 7, a Porsche Cayenne S Transsyberia driven by me and **Singaporean Eddie Keng** and sponsored by Porsche Asia Pacific, which is headquartered in Singapore. We were part of a 24-car contingent from Porsche, which threatened to overwhelm the rest of the cars in the rally which included Toyotas, Suzukis and Mercedes-Benzes. In May, Keng and I had spent four days familiarising ourselves with the car at the Porsche factory in Leipzig, Germany. We felt as though the car was an old friend. But we were apprehensive about the 14-day adventure that lay ahead.



EQUIPPED with snorkels, winches, sand boards and GPS navigation systems, the cars were geared to take on the upcoming challenges: 7,100km of harsh terrain through Russia and Mongolia, with part of that distance being car-breaking Special Stages that called for measured speed, pinpoint navigation and razor-sharp driving.

Russian Roulette

As the journey progressed eastwards, the terrain became increasingly unforgiving.

If we thought Russia's Special Stages were bone-jolters – narrow and slippery tree-lined mud tracks that undulated like a roller-coaster and sprang nasty surprises like rickety log bridges barely wide enough to accommodate a car or, worse, waist-deep patches of water that saw many cars bogged down and requiring a tow – the Liaison Stages (where you have to get from place to place without a time cover) were equally demanding.

Russia's two-lane highways are rutted with deep grooves carved by over laden trucks. Any effort to overtake requires bouncing out of them, cutting into the face of oncoming traffic, gunning the engine to get past the vehicle in front and then tapping the brakes as you bounce back into the ruts on your side of the road. On days when the Liaison Stage stretched over 900km, it became a little like the Gumball Rally – a crazy, no-rules-apply cross-country drive that originated in the United States where the aim is to get to your destination as fast as possible – with drivers and co-drivers trying to get to the night halt as soon as possible. Of course, the local police tried to make as much money – in official and unofficial manners – from these exotic machines doing well over the speed limit. Despite the third Special Stage in Russia being cancelled – rain made the demanding route charted by the off-road club of Ekaterinburg too demanding – it was a tired bunch of people who queued up at the Russian border on Aug 10.

But at least the convoy was complete, and damage to vehicles had been minor.

Mongolian Mayhem.

Things took a dramatic turn once the cars drove into Mongolia. This is a land of brutal road conditions. Tarmac is as rare as a chilled can of drink in the desert, and the dusty soil barely covers the hard rock that seems to layer the entire landscape. If the drivers and co-drivers felt the jolts through their spinal columns, the vehicles took their share of the pain via shredded tyres and damaged undercarriages. Let me try and paint this picture better: Imagine driving kilometres across a field of moss-covered basketball-sized rocks placed barely a tyre-width from each other. Imagine driving on a track that is made of an inch of dried, dusty mud on hard unyielding rock – with fist-sized pieces of sharp-edged rock littered all over it and even bigger pieces waiting to devour your tyres if you veer even inches off the track. Imagine some of these tracks having speed bump-like ripples on it – for kilometres. This wasn't the adrenalin-pumping stuff that makes the highlights of the World Rally Championship. This was a journey that threatened to chew up even the most hardy off-road vehicle and spit it out in venomous disgust. And to make matters worse, rally organiser Schalber had decided to test the survival skills of the humans too, by charting a routine that included camping outdoors throughout the Mongolian leg of the rally.



As we moved east, the hotels where we camped overnight became more spartan. And, by the seventh night, it was just tents and sleeping bags. Mr. Schalber's aim is noble: bring rallying back to its basics.

All murmurs of unhappiness over some of the more humble Russian hotels were soon forgotten as everyone struggled to pitch tents, find spots to go to the loo with some measure of privacy and ward off the cold with thermals, sleeping bags and, in some extreme cases, every jacket in the bag.

He noted that most rallies today, especially the Dakar (the other long-distance off-road trek which crosses the Sahara desert), have become too professional and beyond the reach – technologically and financially – of most people. "What I want with this rally is to give the man on the street the chance to experience true off-road thrills with virtually an off-the-rack off-road vehicle, a not too exorbitant budget and some guts," he said.

Unfortunately not all the participants shared his love for the wilderness. Exhausted after hours of driving, most would have preferred the luxury of a soft bed and a hot shower. Sure, the camping stuff was fun for a few days. But nine continuous days of it was trying, even for the more ardent nature lovers.

But everyone survived – even the two men who were in that mangled Cayenne. Both Kees and Yap walked

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away from that horrific crash with just severe body aches and, in the case of the latter, two stitches on his head. Even one-time race leaders Armin Schwarz and co-driver Oliver Hilger from Germany, who rolled their car in the Mongolian wilderness, were there at the finish line, shaken but not too stirred. This is a rally for the hardy. It doesn't just test driving and navigation skills. It tests the endurance of man and machine. And then some. ✎

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