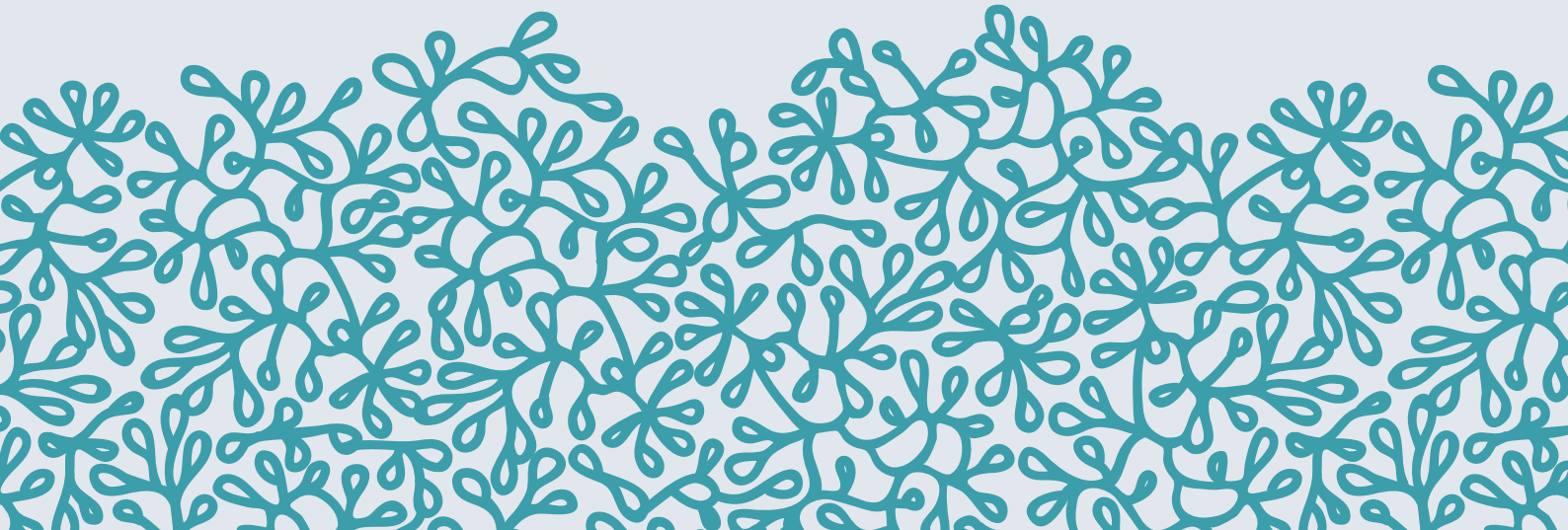




DOVER PARK HOSPICE
Every Moment Matters

Inspirational 90 year-old Mdm Sutiah Bte Rapan
Living Gratitude & Leaving Wisdom

(1928 – 2018)



“This is my only home, where else can I go?”

To Mdm Sutiah, Dover Park Hospice (DPH) was a place she is proud to call home. This is a story of how she had spent her last six months of life meaningfully in DPH. She truly valued each and every person whom she had established a relationship with at the hospice, and she was proud to call them her family, even though they were strangers. Mdm Sutiah was diagnosed with breast cancer nine years ago and pursued treatment relentlessly till she was admitted to DPH. Her display of resilience and perseverance continues to inspire everyone around her where we learn valuable life lessons through her perspectives and approach to life.

“Was it a bull or brown bear? I don’t know!” Mdm Sutiah said with a smile while pointing to a photo of a young lady in Reindeer hat.



She was recalling the event where the young lady came along bursting with joy so much so that Mdm Sutiah started laughing too. The young lady was a volunteer from a recent Corporate Social Responsibility initiative and she was among the many partners of DPH, who are fully guilty of spreading infectious joy.

“It was the gift and
beauty of life. Cancer
can spread anywhere
but it can’t take away my
life’s attitude and faith.”



On Service Regardless Of Status Or Ethnicity

You cannot help but notice how much Mdm Sutiah loves DPH. “Being here is better than being alone at home. Over here, you feel safe with the presence of so many people and this place is lively, always bustling with activities. I like making friends. If you ask me what I’ve learnt from here, it would be the good in humanity.”

She went on to talk about how meticulous, kind and smiley the nurses always are. They are also extremely responsive in meeting requests. “I know I can just press the button.” Then she turned and made eye contact with her Medical Social Worker, Michelle, and told me that this young lady is special; just like her grandchild and how everyone in DPH is like family.

“Today is today. Tomorrow is tomorrow.
Focus on the present.”

On The Small Touches

We were interrupted midway by one of the male staff who widened the door opening so that we could enjoy the piano pieces. “The piano playing in the background; it soothes me and gently puts me to sleep even when I am not sleepy.”



She has three photo albums by the side of her bed. As she flipped each page, I clung on to every sentence from Mdm Sutiah while she was reminiscing those moments. Even though she loves the outdoors, she is acutely aware of her mobility issues. She spoke in gratitude about the volunteers and staff who took the initiative to bring her on various awesome outings through DPH’s Make-It-Happen Project that allowed her to experience the world despite her bulky wheelchair. Those moments were therapeutic to her as it brought back fond old memories and created beautiful new ones. The months spent at DPH were truly months of healing and connection.

“I have no regrets now. Since young, I was busy working and trying my best to make ends meet. Recently, I get to see and experience so many things. Everywhere and everything is always evolving. I feel young again when I am outdoor and visit those places. My body does not feel so heavy.” She loves the surprises abound by each place that she has visited. Mdm Sutiah was also raving about the breathtaking views from VivoCity and Sentosa. She chuckled as I teased her about her wide smile in the photo of her on the tram.



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She had never travelled the world but at her favourite place, Sentosa, she can see the big globe at Universal Studios Singapore and touch the man-made clay-like surface of a stalagmite.

On Overcoming Limitations Through Imagination

Not only did Mdm Sutiah appreciate the amazing scenery, she was also admiring human creativity through all the man-made structures that she visited. Apart from the man-made cave in Sentosa, she also marvelled at the ability of the human mind to create things out of their imagination, such as the wire sculpture.

“We, as human beings, are given a powerful mind. Remember that well and utilise your creative powers.”



“Focus on the present moment,
we don’t have to think so
much about the past.”

Mdm Sutiah even had a photo of herself trying her hand at photography in East Coast Park. I cannot help but burst into a smile when she cheekily said, “I had a camera in hand and I look like a natural. I don’t have the strength to fish but I can pose for a photo holding the fishing rod.” Mdm Sutiah is indeed ‘creative’ in using her imagination to overcome her limitations.



“It’s easy to say, but
sometimes it’s difficult to
accept it within us. We
have to take it slowly.”



On Appreciating Your Health

As she spoke, she savoured a few spoonfuls of the bean curd that Michelle has bought for her. The love and care showered by the DPH staff and volunteers were evident. She reciprocated with another piece of advice. “Appreciate the food you eat now because one day, you may not be able to eat that much.” Then she commented on another photo of her in East Coast Park sitting ‘naturally’ on a bench instead of her wheelchair. That very small act of assisting her from the wheelchair and taking a photo together meant a lot to her. “There is a big difference between sitting on a wheelchair, and sitting on a bench, don’t you think?”

It was a celebration of who she was, without the stark reminder of her illness and mobility issues. She also had the opportunity to sit on a family quad bike with staff and volunteers that day. She could still remember the inner peace she felt looking at the calm water and feeling the breeze on her face as they cycled. “It brought back fond memories. I have always loved bicycles; racing and chasing others around my kampong. Time flies.”



“Everyone has a different way of life. I have mine, they have theirs.”

On Maintaining Good Familial Ties

Mdm Sutiah had an extremely enlightened view of familial relationships. Good familial ties are possible only if we reframe our perceptions positively. Love exists unconditionally even if people are living apart or if they are estranged. “Everyone makes mistakes and so while we are still alive, we just need to reflect on it. I love all my siblings and family members equally. I do not prefer one over the other. What is also true is that there may be some who are closer and some more distant to me. That is very natural. Everyone is trying their best.”

On Appreciating Beauty And Abundance In Nature

Her kampong days created extremely precious memories. Kids back in her time had great observation skills and could easily be contented with the beauty of nature. “As much as I love the sea and nature, I love sightseeing too. As long as I can see, I will see.”

“The brightly coloured birds in Jurong Birdpark reminds me of my days when I would pause and listen intently to the chirping of the birds in the morning at about 5.30am or later depending on the weather.”

“I am intrigued during the trip to the Singapore Zoological Gardens because I am interested to study the unique nature of every wild animal and to understand the chain of life. For example, the cranes, they are very clever at finding food.”



“I like fresh flowers because I am a woman. I did not have the chance to plant so many types of flowers. My favourite is the rose.” The sight and smell of various beautiful plants in Gardens By The Bay stimulated her senses and it was heartening to know that those trips enabled her to get in touch with her feminine side.

“I remember West Coast Park. The bamboo plants there reminds me of those days when I used to chop bamboo and cook them, in my kampong. The weather that day is good. I like the outdoors rather than the indoors. Most indoor places have air-conditioning installed and I was not born on ice.”

Concluding Words

Mdm Sutiah's eyes lit up when we told her that we would share her wisdom with the world.

“I would just like to say thank you very much.

To my brother, Rahman, you are the best brother one can ever have and I am proud that you are a good man.

To everyone else, love one another and aim to be good. Live in the present, day by day. May you all be healthy and enjoy abundance.”





Mdm Sutiah passed away peacefully surrounded by the presence of her loved ones on 28th December 2018. She may not be here with us but her legacy and inspiring life lessons are forever etched in the minds of those whose lives she had truly touched.



“Day by day, time will pass.
Let’s just focus on today.”

Words by

Mdm Sutiah Bte Rapan on 17 December 2018

Project initiated by

Michelle Lau, Medical Social Worker of Dover Park Hospice

Words captured by

Juliana Johan, Volunteer of Dover Park Hospice

Photos by

Mr Rahman Bin Rapan, brother of the late Mdm Sutiah
Volunteers of Dover Park Hospice
(Emerald Group and Volunteer Photographer Aundry Gan)

