

OVA Gala Dinner – 8 March 2009

Good evening, our Guest of Honour, Mr Dhanabalan, Mr Chiang Chie Foo, Vice Chairman, VEC/VAC, Mr Vernon Teo, President OVA, old boys and girls of Victoria School and Victoria Junior College, Ladies and Gentleman

First, I would like to thank the OVA for the invitation to my staff and student representatives to the dinner tonight. I also like to express our deep appreciation to the association for recognizing the efforts of our staff with the staff award scheme. This recognition will strengthen the dedication and commitment of the staff to the education of Victorians.

As compared to many of the government schools, a key advantage that Victoria School enjoys is the strong support from its stakeholders, especially the old boys. With 133 years of tradition, there are old boys of different ages. And if you were to speak to any one of them, they would share fond memories of their times in Victoria School, whether it was Thywhitt Road, Kallang Bahru or the present Siglap Link.

Victoria School has been and continues to be one of the choice schools for boys from different backgrounds and many from humble families. It is without doubt that the diversity of students in VS is so essential in the makeup of what we have come to know as the Victorian today. There are many pertinent qualities about a Victorian – passionate, determined, the ‘never-day-die’ and the ‘can-do’ attitude, just to name a few. And of course, if you talk to the retired and senior teachers (there are also here today), they would add the ‘play hard work-hard’ and the ‘last minute but still can make it’ attitudes as well. VS boys always seem to be able to pull it off despite the odds.

It is all these qualities and experiences that bond the old boys and girls and forge what many here tonight would call the Victorian Spirit. And the Victorian Spirit

continues to grow from strength to strength. Three years ago, the OVA brought together many old boys, 130 tables in all, to celebrate the school's 130th Anniversary at the school field in the present Siglap Link campus. That was also the birth of the EDGE fund, which the OVA raised close to \$300 thousands for its launch. The fund provided a big boost to give our boys an edge in the various co-curricular activities especially sports development. With support from the EDGE Fund, we were able to provide enhancements to sports development such as overseas training stints for the cross-country, soccer and hockey boys; we also engaged specialist coaches for the different track and field events; and we gave academic support programmes to our sportsmen to help them balance their sports pursuit and academic studies. The fund also enables the school to bring in talented sports pupils from the primary school by awarding them the VS sports scholarship. All these efforts have produced high level of attainments. We compete in 13 sports and all have either achieved zone or national top four positions. If you had caught the national schools sports programme on Channel 5 last Wednesday, you would be very proud to be a Victorian and our boys were featured in all the four sports throughout the entire 30 minutes programme.

At the same time, the school also uses the EDGE fund to give help to selected financial needy students whom do not meet the ministry's financial assistance guidelines.

Finally, besides supporting the school, the greatest value is the role modeling that the old boys provide for the present and future generations of Victorians. What many of you have done and continues to do for the school, it plants the seeds in the younger Victorians to come back and serve their school one day when they are able to do so. Such passing on of a tradition is invaluable in sustaining the Victorian Spirit.

Therefore, on behalf of the staff and students of VS, I thank the old boys and esp the OVA for your support as a key partners of the school. Nil Sine Labore