

*About*  
*Professor (Mrs) Tan Sau Fun*



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*~ The sweet and dainty lady ~*

Although gentle and subtle in her approach, Professor Tan Sau Fun clearly left an everlasting impression on those whom she taught throughout her academic career. The sweet and dainty lady was known affectionately by all as 'Mama Tan'.

Prof (Mrs) Tan was truly a most remarkable and respected person. Remembered fondly as a very caring and concerned teacher, ever gentle and gracious, she was also a most effective and efficient lecturer. Prof Tan was also outstanding as an academic and research supervisor. Following her BSc (Hons) and MSc from her home University of Hong Kong (1952, 1954), she obtained her PhD from University College, London (1956). She joined the Chemistry Department of our then University of Singapore in 1960 and in 1986 had the distinguished honour of being the first (and only one thus far) woman full Professor in Chemistry ever appointed in NUS.

Being an acclaimed academic with a warm and winning personality, making her very approachable to all, Prof Tan Sau Fun clearly left an everlasting impression on those whom she taught throughout her academic career.



*Despite her many achievements as one of the pioneers in the department, the sweet and dainty lady, was known affectionately by all as 'Mama Tan', remained simple and modest in terms of both her attitudes and actions, words and ways.*

She was also exemplary as wife and mother. She was homely and ever supportive of her dynamic and dedicated husband, Col (V) Tan Wee Kian, PPA, in both his civil service career and his contributions to the nation, especially in matters military. She was able to see her children through their successful student days and as they launched into their successful and useful careers, social and family life.

In an interview published to mark the 80th anniversary of the Department of Chemistry ("80 Years of Chemistry in Singapore: Making a Difference 1929 - 2009"), Professor Tan summarised her 35 years in NUS with 'I had an enjoyable time!' The best part of her job was teaching and interacting with her students, which she found to be most rewarding. Even 15 years after her retirement, she could still recalled many of her students. Her satisfaction came from her knowledge of their success in their individual lives. She particularly treasured the comradeship with her colleagues -- the encouragement, advice and discussions. Acknowledging the helpfulness of non-academic staff, she said, 'Without them, I wouldn't have been able to do any research work!' Professor Tan advised students to cherish their youth. They should not only take their studies seriously but they must also set aside time to enjoy other aspects of their life. She believed that half the battle's won with the right attitude.

She readily credited her family as her pillar of strength, especially her husband. Towards the later years of her life, much of her time and energy were channeled towards their six grandchildren, and in expressing her creative talent through painting.

