

# Woman tells why she has been with E&O Hotel for 45 years...and counting

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Lim Lean Poo

It was down memory lane for several staff of the Eastern & Oriental Hotel (E&O) as they ponder on the fond old memories as the iconic hotel's Heritage Wing undergoes major renovations.

With 134 years of history, there is a treasure trove of memories that evoke a sense of nostalgia from those who have walked its hallways.

Guests who have been to the hotel would remember the times they sat beneath the echo dome or enjoyed the buffet at the Sarkies Corner at the Heritage Wing before it was moved to Sarkies at the Victory Annexe.

It's not only the guests who have made memories at the grande dame. The hotel staff members too have their fair share of stories.

### **Lim saw the hotel renovated, twice, for the past 18 years**

One of them is accountant Lim Lean Poo, who has served the hospitality establishment for 45 years.

This is the second time she has witnessed renovation being carried out at the Heritage Wing. The first renovation was done in 2001 during the reopening under E&O Berhad.

"When the hotel was closed back then, I had to inform our returning Canadian couple John Reith Jekyll and Edwina Mavis Jekyll that we were unable to accommodate them then.

"The Jekylls came to meet me personally at the E&O site office to thank me for the reply. We stayed in touch ever since and would meet up at least once a year.

### **Even saw her daughter married off at her hotel...**

"The memory is precious as it led to one of my most treasured friendships," she said.

Another fond memory of hers was the wedding reception of her second daughter Kerryn Beh held at the hotel's Grand Ballroom in 2015.

"Since I'm attached to the hotel, I thought of adding another lifetime event of my family members to it," she said.

### **Meeting Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew**

Long-serving employee and guest relations manager Cheah Choon Loong said he had made friends with many resident guests.

"We meet many guests daily, but every one of them is special, especially those who visit often or stay for the long term.

"The connection is formed gradually through regular interactions with one another to the point where eventually we greet each other like old friends. We know their special requests even before they ask," Cheah said.

Among his treasured moments was attending to the late Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew at the hotel in 2009.

"It's my first time tending to a VIP. He was very kind and approachable, and that made it easy for us to serve him. It has left a lasting impression on me," Cheah recalled.

Several employees also returned for a second stint at the hotel.

One of them was hotel sales director Cillia Khoo who started off as a butler in 2003 before leaving three years later.

She rejoined the hotel under the sales and marketing team in 2008 and has been staying on until today.

"The team at E&O is really tight-knit. We have formed a bond where we are ever ready to back up one another. The top management is also very supportive of our efforts.



Cillia Khoo

“During the Sultan of Brunei’s visit in 2015, I was given the opportunity to be the main liaison for his stay at the Heritage Wing.

“I had to make sure that everything went smoothly through immense preparation and groundwork,” said Khoo, relating it as a great experience.

While some may regard the hotel as just a workplace, it goes beyond that for the E&O staff who cherished many moments behind its stately structure.

### **69-strong team keeping the Grand Dame of North Beach, alive**

The hotel has been in operations for 18 years under the management of E&O Berhad.

Today, it has 69 staff members who have worked for a decade or more, showing their loyalty and attachment to the set-up

In a press statement, the hotel updated that the Heritage Wing has been closed for refurbishment since March this year and scheduled for completion in December.

The reopening will see the hotel’s suites fully refreshed, complete with new dining concepts, whilst retaining E&O’s treasured style of timeless elegance, unique to this cherished heritage icon.

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