



March 2010

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#01010

Guts & Gumption, Compassion & Humility

Imagine riding your Beemer or Duc along Singapore's busy streets at between 10km/h and 25km/h, with plenty of starts & stops, from 7am to 7pm. Imagine hot & sunny weather, with temperature peaking at 35degC. Then imagine repeating the same thing the next day. Not only is it tough on the machines, it's pretty tough on the riders too. And that was precisely what four Team 27 volunteers & marshals did on Mar. 3rd & 4th. Their task was to marshal & offer protection to a group of sixteen elderly cyclists.

Team 27 was contacted by Concern & Care Society, a VWO (Voluntary Welfare Organisation), through committee member Poh Chee Woon. Their request was for marshals to lead and offer some protection to a group of senior citizens, male & female, attempting to cycle from Bukit Batok to the East Coast and back. Total distance is 140km, to be covered in two days. This distance is what Team 27 members on m/cycles covered in an hour or less during tours in Thailand & Malaysia. But mind you, we are talking about bicycles now and the cyclists are ALL seniors. The oldest in the group is an 86 year-old gentleman and the youngest 55. They were not professional athletes during their youths. Ten of the cyclists are Taiwanese. The others and the support crew are locals.



A group of elderly cyclists - including oldest member Kang Meeng Lin, 84, from Taiwan (left) - setting off from Nanyang Girls' High School on a journey around Singapore to promote cycling among senior citizens. ST PHOTO: SAMUEL HE

The first day saw them having an early start at Nanyang Girls' High School, passing through Bukit Timah, Clementi, Bukit Batok, Admiralty Road, through Tampines and finally arriving at Costa Sands in Pasir Ris. It took them 12 hours. Temperature at its peak was 35degC, averaging at 32+degC most of the day. Not unexpected, a couple of the cyclists suffered heat exhaustion.

The second day saw them leaving Pasir Ris at 8am. They made their way to Peacehaven Nursing Home in Changi for a quick visit, and then towards Loyang, Changi Village, past Changi Airport runway, ECP, through the city and then home at Bukit Batok.

These seniors are admirable. They dare to dream. Not only that, they are brave enough to live their dream. It is a lesson that we as bikers, as younger adults, can learn. At some stage, we (hopefully) are all going to be that age & status. Would we still have dreams and would we be brave enough to live our dreams then?

It also wouldn't be possible if that were no local support. The Voluntary Welfare Organisation (or VWO) Concern & Care Society spearheaded this event. Kudos to this organization which unselfishly spend their time & effort caring for the elders and their welfare. It was they who contacted Team 27. And Team 27 thanks The

Society for inviting us to participate & contribute to this very worthwhile cause. We were even invited to dinner after that, in which Minister Lim Boon Heng was also a guest. And our contribution was acknowledged by the organizers during the dinner. Such a feeling!

On the surface, our task was simple; escorting cyclists. It is anything but that. 25km/h or less for 12 straight hours is not good for any big cc machines. Doing the same thing again the next day just doubles the stresses on man & machine. The machines were taxed to the limit at that speed and duration. Heat emitted from the black top and the ambient temperature caused the Duc to stall a few times. The heat doesn't do very much for the riders either. The left wrist and elbow are continuously engaged in clutching & declutching. Plenty of starts & stops as well. The 35degC heat cooked the brain in your helmet, and the heat from the engine cooks the rest of you. If not well-prepared, dehydration can set in rapidly.

This event also unearthed some personalities in Team 27.

Poh Chee Woon - tasked by our club committee to liaised with the organizers - briefed, equipped and prepared our marshals. Poh displayed tremendous composure during an incident at Changi when a cyclist went down. He managed the situation and passing traffic calmly and with authority, imparting a sense of assurance & confidence to the cyclists and support crew. They knew they were in good hands. Invaluable.

Kelvin Neo, who steadfastly stood by Poh and assisted him in routine marshaling & in emergency, as when the convoy broke up during the Changi incident.

Victoria Joy Wong, our lady marshal, who despite having to attend to work in the evening, bravely & gamely accepted the challenge when approached by Poh to assist.

Peter Poh, Club President, who promptly jumped, or hopped, in to filled a no-show. Despite hobbling about (his damaged ankle is not fully mended) on one foot, he turned up on a GS, punctually (& sober), and performed a perfect supporting role to the others.

Marshals/Volunteers during 35km inaugural run in Nov 2009 - **Vincent Miranda, Kor Johnlim, Edmund Woo and Ch'ng Eng Chye, (with Poh C W & Kelvin Neo).**

Comparing this event with Chingay, or marshaling 3NCR convoys, or even our Sunday Rides, this event lacked the 'glam' factor. All of us knew that. But you are the four who stood up to be counted. You made us realize that many of us are actually just paying lip service when we spoke about how far we rode for charity in Thailand or Malaysia. You guys are the real deal. You performed a community service without thought of rewards or glory. You gave from your hearts, just like you would at charities. You are our real-life Heroes.

To the Elders on two-wheels who dare to live their dream, to the Concern & Care Society who made it happened, and to our own 'biker-with-a-heart', thank you all for this lesson in guts & gumption, compassion & humility.

*Team 27 Committee ,
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