

Sunday Times, Jan 22, 2006

Mr Rock solid

New book on banking pioneer Tan Chin Tuan documents his illustrious career

By Sarah Ng

WHEN the late philanthropist and banking pioneer Tan Chin Tuan went to work, he had four to five attache cases with him, recalled Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean yesterday.



MADAM LEE'S ACCOUNT shows how astute and nationalistic Mr Tan (above) was.

It reminded him of someone going on a holiday, said Mr Teo at the launch of a book on the former OCBC chairman at the Old Parliament House in Empress Place.

The minister - whose late father Teo Cheng Guan worked for Mr Tan - shared this nugget of his childhood memory, drawing laughter from some 150 guests. They included Mr Tan's relatives and friends such as property tycoon Kwek Leng Beng, executive chairman of Hong Leong Group, and hotelier Jennie Chua, president and chief executive of Raffles Holdings.

Mr Teo was visiting his father at the bank when he saw Mr Tan and his attache cases. He later found out that they contained all his business documents. 'He was very dedicated to his work,' said Mr Teo.

'I remember him because he was very kind to my father. After the war, he gave my father a job at OCBC and my father worked with him for many years. He was always very kind to our family,' he added. His father headed the bank from 1989 to 1991.

The book, *Rock Solid: The Corporate Career Of Tan Chin Tuan*, was written by Madam Lee Su Yin, a consultant at Mr Tan's group of companies.

It is the third book on Mr Tan. The previous two, one on his bank career and the other on his life, were written by two other authors and published in 2000 and 2002 respectively.

Said Madam Lee, 43, a former senior tutor at the School of Arts at Nanyang Technological University: 'Mr Tan had an illustrious corporate career and I wanted to document it for posterity and share his stories with others.'

Mr Tan's nephew, former deputy prime minister Tony Tan, told the media after the launch that his uncle was a man of integrity who showed that great success in business can be achieved without doing anything dishonest.

Dr Tan said he has learnt one important principle from the late bank pioneer: 'Make sure that a transaction is fair and conducted in an open and transparent way, and that it benefits not only your organisation but the other party you deal with as well.'

Mr Tan died on Nov 13 last year. He was 98. The book was originally planned to mark his birthday on Nov 21.

The launch yesterday was a celebration of his life, said his granddaughter, Ms Chew Gek Khim, deputy chairman of the Tan Foundation. It was set up in 1976 by Mr Tan to support educational, medical and other voluntary organisations.

'Ah gong (grandfather) constantly reminded us that life is not a sprint, but a marathon. Rock Solid is a tale of ah gong's marathon,' she said.

Rock Solid: The Corporate Career of Tan Chin Tuan retails at \$38. It is available at major bookshops from Feb 1.

ngsls@sph.com.sg