

Citation

For The Late Captain Leong Ming Sen

1920 – 2008

The honorary membership of the Association of Asian Aerospace Professionals is given to members who have brought credit to the profession and the nation.

This evening, the Association honours posthumously one such prominent personality, the late Captain Leong Ming Sen or M.S. as he was fondly known to his many colleagues and friends.

We live in deeds not words; in thought not breaths; in results, not in figures on a dial. He most lives who thinks the deepest, feels the noblest, acts the best.

These words aptly reflect the life and time of Captain MS Leong who departed from the glory of this world in the early morning of 28 June 2008.

The late Captain Leong was the first Asian to attain the distinguished rank of Flight Captain in Malaya. Before that, he was the first local pilot to attain the rank of First Officer in commercial aviation.

He was mentor to over 200 commercial pilots; he made his flying debut in wartime missions.

Interestingly, Captain Leong's first choice of a professional career wasn't that of a pilot. He had enrolled at Lingnan University, Hong Kong in 1941, to pursue an Economics degree.

That would most probably have kept him on “terra firma” or firm ground.

The war changed his life. After Hong Kong fell to the Japanese in 1941, he, at the age of 21, escaped to China’s wartime capital, Chungking, where he answered a call for pilot trainees from the China National Aviation Corporation, then China’s only commercial airline.

The late Captain Leong could rightly be deemed an “accidental pilot”. He cut his teeth as a pilot by flying on delivery missions over “the hump”; a treacherous route that spans, to this day, the foothills of the Himalayas.

The Late Captain Leong was a member of the Flying Tigers, a volunteer squadron of wartime

Chinese and American pilots, bravely engaged in anti-Japanese aerial combats.

When the war ended, he joined Malayan Airways or MAL, where in 1951, he became the company's first Asian pilot to hold the rank of First Officer.

A year later, he left MAL to do "newspaper runs" which were flights that delivered editions of the Singapore Standard from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Penang. After becoming the first local to achieve the top rank of Flight Captain in the Federation Air Services, he went on to teach trainee pilots with Malaysian Airways in 1963.

Malaysian Airways then morphed into Malaysia-Singapore Airlines and when the company split in 1972, due to the unfortunate political separation of

Malaysia and Singapore, he chose to join Singapore Airlines or SIA where he became a Training Captain on Boeing 737 aircraft.

When he retired in 1975, he held the rank of Deputy Chief Pilot, a lofty position within the management echelon of the Flight Operations Division.

The late Captain Leong clocked a total of 23,600 flying hours, the day before he formally ended his illustrious career in commercial aviation.

The lives of great men, and such as that of the late Captain Leong Ming Sen, showed us that we should live our lives sublime and in passing, leave behind us, footprints on the sands of time.

This evening, the Association of Asian Aerospace Professionals is honoured to confer, posthumously, its Honorary Member status and its Distinguished Aerospace Professional Award to the late Captain Leong Ming Sen.

I now invite the Association's President, Mr Watson Chong, to present the accolades.

03 October 2008