

**WELCOME SPEECH BY DR N VARAPRASAD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD, AT THE 2009 LAUNCH OF “TO MY
GRANDPA/GRANDMA”, ON SATURDAY, 17 JANUARY 2009, 10.30AM, AT
THE PLAZA, NATIONAL LIBRARY BUILDING**

RAdm (NS) Lui Tuck Yew, Senior Minister of State for Education, and Information,
Communications and the Arts,

Ms Lim Soo Hoon, Chairman of NLB,

Mr Gerard Ee, Chairman, Council for Third Age,

Mr Phua Kok Tee, Chairman of NLB's Advisory Panel for Seniors,

Mrs Susan Chan, Chairman of “To My Grandpa/Grandma” Project,

Distinguished guests and partners,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1 Good morning everyone. A very warm welcome to today's book launch of “To My Grandpa/Grandma”. I am very glad to see all of you here on a Saturday morning to witness the launch of the publications.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK FOR “LETTERS FROM GRANDMA AND GRANDPA”

2 In 2007, we published “Letters from Grandma and Grandpa”, a series of four books comprising letters penned by grandparents to their grandchildren. The publications were meant to foster inter-generational bonding as they provided a platform for the grandparents to pass on life lessons and values to their grandchildren.

3 The project was highly successful and we received extremely positive feedback from both the contributors and the public. At the launch event, I set in motion “To My Grandpa/Grandma” – to give grandchildren a chance to reciprocate and express their love and appreciation for their grandparents.

SHARED LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

4 Like its predecessor, the publications of “To My Grandpa/Grandma” will serve as a record of love and affection and shared legacy of families as the core of our society. Through the eyes of grandchildren, we are allowed a peek into their views and perspectives of their grandparents. The essays encapsulate a wide range of emotions, from joy and exuberance to remorse and regret. From their writing, we can tell that the writers have deep emotional ties to their grandparents who had taught them life values such as generosity, courage, responsibility, diligence as well as the meaning of family and heritage. They recognize and acknowledge the hard work, determination and suffering that the older generations had to go through, yet are tinged with regret that they did not take the full opportunity of learning from this generation for whatever reason.

5 For example, there is a letter which expresses great admiration and wonder as to how the grandparents managed to raise a large family successfully with such meagre resources, as compared to today. Another letter expresses regret at not making the effort to learn a few words of dialect so that they could at least say a few words to each other. A third letter expresses anxiety about being

reunited with her parents after being brought up to teenhood by her grandmother. Such poignant stories of happiness, admiration, joy, regret and other emotions can all be found in these books. I thank all the writers for their candidness in penning their thoughts.

6 I hope that these thoughts communicated through the letters and stories will bind the grandchildren closer to their grandparents, promoting a sense of identity and closeness among Singapore families, both young and old. It is also my sincere wish that “To My Grandpa/Grandma” will become a part of Singapore’s heritage, to be shared and passed on. To a young nation like Singapore, it is an important part of our oral history and social landscape.

APPRECIATION TO PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

7 NLB is appreciative of all our partners and sponsors who have worked with us over the past year to make this project possible. First of all, I would like to thank all contributors for their thoughtful entries directed to their beloved and cherished grandparents, including all those whose entries were not selected. I want to thank them for taking the time and effort to pen down their thoughts or put them into a video.

8 The successful publication and launch of “To My Grandpa/Grandma” is largely due to NLB’s Advisory Panel for Seniors, comprising seniors from key community organisations in Singapore. I wish to thank the members of the panel, especially Mr Phua Kok Tee and Mrs Susan Chan for their direction and advice as

co-chairpersons for this project. I would also like to thank the members of the judging panels for their hard work in selecting the final entries – a challenging task as many of the entries are of a high quality.

9 We are also grateful to the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts Innovation Fund, Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, and the Council for Third Age for providing the funding support towards this meaningful initiative. In particular, the Council for Third Age, otherwise known as C3A, has always been very supportive of NLB's lifelong learning and inter-generational projects targeted at seniors. Apart from this project, C3A had also funded the earlier initiative "Letters from Grandma and Grandpa", the recruitment of senior volunteers for the kidsREAD programme, and the production of Learning Resource Kits for Senior Citizens at our Public Libraries. C3A had also sponsored the prizes for the contestants of the recent *Seniors Tell It Their Way* Storytelling Competition held last November. I hope that NLB and C3A will be able to continue this collaborative working relationship to promote active aging for our senior citizens.

10 In addition, I would like to thank STOMP and My Paper, the media partners in this project, as well as SA Tours for sponsoring the trips to Japan for the winning entries.

11 I would like to add a special word of thanks to SMS Lui for taking his Saturday morning from his family to be with another family - the NLB family - of staff, partners and stakeholders. Thank you, Minister.

SPREADING THE LEGACY

12 Before I conclude, I wish to encourage both grandchildren and grandparents to continue to make the effort to share and communicate. Make time to visit our libraries together, use our resources and even participate together in our programmes and activities. At the same time, encourage your peers who are grandchildren or grandparents to do likewise so that they too can create a legacy for themselves and the future generations of Singapore.

13 Thank you and I wish you an enjoyable weekend ahead.