

# Imperial College Alumni Association of Singapore



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## ICAAS Newsletter (Issue No. 1, 2008)

### Sponsor Poh Joo or Donate to Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund

I chanced upon the Atacama Crossing when doing a search on extreme races. This race is part of the four desert race series including the last desert in Antarctica. Atacama Desert, nestled along the coast of Northern Chile, is also the driest place on earth. Some parts of the desert have not had rainfall for over 400 years. Some river beds have been dried for over 120,000 years! However, the desert has some interesting landscapes that are thought to be very similar to the Martian environment, and NASA takes their robots there for testing. The average elevation is approximately 2300m and temperature ranges from -5 to 32 deg C.



*Crossing Khongryn Espa*

The last time I took part in an organised event in a desert was 9 years ago where I trekked across the Gobi Desert in Outer Mongolia. The trekking distance was the same as the Crossing but the duration to complete was three times longer. I gained valuable experiences and made wonderful friendships. I reckon it is timely for me to participate in another event to gain different experiences and to meet like-minded friends.

When I told my friends about my participation in a desert race, they all thought that I was crazy. To some, running 250 km across the desert in 6.5 days is hardcore, but to many others, doing it with a 10 - 12 kg load is insane! As I struggled to complete my 18-km run with a 12 kg load yesterday morning, I tend to agree with my friends.

The Atacama Desert Crossing is one of the toughest races in the world, where participants have to cover a total of 250 km in 6 consecutive days, which averages out to running a full marathon each day, 6 days in a row. It is a self-sustaining race, that is, participants have to carry their own backpack containing, among other items, food and water rations, sleeping gear, clothes, and a first aid kit, to last for the entire 6 days.

The race is broken down into six stages:

- Stage 1: Navigation by Rock (50 km)
- Stage 2: The Slot Canyons (35 km)
- Stage 3: In the Shadow of the Incas (40 km)
- Stage 4: Endless Salt (40 km)
- Stage 5: Marcha de la Muerte (March of Death) (80 km)
- Stage 6: San Pedro (15 km)



My love for nature and adventure is probably one of the main contributing factors for my participation in the Atacama Crossing on 30 March 2008. It is also my personal conviction in character building through adversity and hardship, which has constantly led me to challenge myself and push my physical and mental limits. I believe this race experience will be worth every cent and effort.

Another motivation for taking part in this 'torturous' race is to raise funds for a charity, specifically The Straits Times Pocket Money Fund. I used to run a tuition centre in a HDB estate, with my students coming predominantly from working-class families. They were the luckier ones whose parents could at least afford some form of tuition. Through my close interactions with them, I learnt that some had classmates whose families had difficulties in making ends meet. These classmates would often go to school hungry as their parents could ill-afford to give them pocket money. My heart goes out to these under-privileged students. I am greatly heartened by how the Straits Times Pocket Money Fund has helped them over the past years. I now hope to make a difference for these needy children by soliciting a target of \$50,000 for this charity.

The race organiser has appointed me to be one of the four official race bloggers, which means that I could gain access to the Internet everyday after my race to blog about my experiences. If you are keen know to read my blog and follow my race, you can logon to [www.racingtheplanet.com](http://www.racingtheplanet.com) or [www.4deserts.com/blogs/](http://www.4deserts.com/blogs/).

I am seeking sponsorship to help defray the cost of participating in the Crossing, which works out to approximately S\$10,000 (inclusive of airfare).

[Editor's note: Hitherto 3 ICAAS members have kindly agreed to sponsor \$1,000 in ICAAS's name. If you like to join them, please contact me at email address: [hing-yan.lee81@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:hing-yan.lee81@imperial.ac.uk)]

For donations, please kindly make the cheque out to "The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund" and send it to: The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund, Singapore Press Holdings Limited, Finance Division, 1000 Toa Payoh North, Singapore 318994. Please indicate the following information at the back of the cheque:

- For Individual Donor (Full Name, NRIC Number/FIN, Contact Number, Address)
- For Corporate Donors (Name of Company, Company Registration Number, Contact Person, and Contact Number)

Do remember to write "Atacama Desert Race" at the back of the cheque. Donors are eligible for a tax-deductible receipt for donation of more than S\$10. The receipt will be issued by the National Council of Social Service and it will take about 3 to 4 weeks before one is sent to you.



Article and photo by Toh Poh Joo (IC alumnus and chair, ICAAS Youth Wing).

## ***We Seek Your Contributions ...***

If you have had a class or year reunion recently, do drop us a few lines and/or send us a photo to share with others in the newsletter. This is a great way to catch up and/or locate long lost friends.

## More Photos from the Centenary Gala Dinner...



Current and past ICAAS presidents joined President Nathan, Sir Richard Sykes, and J Y Pillay in singing the birthday song before the cake-cutting.

Lee Yew Wei (Chairman, Gala Dinner Committee) and Dr. Lee Hing Yan, with Amelia Chang (Most Outstanding JC Science Student Award winner) and her parents.



From the above photos, alumni and friends were clearly enjoying themselves, amid good food, great company, and wonderful ambience.

## ***Photo Order***

The Gala Dinner photos used in this newsletter are provided courtesy of Gabriel Aloysius. If you are interested to view his entire collection of shots taken at the Gala Dinner on 30 November 2007, please peruse the photos at URL: <http://s21.photobucket.com/albums/b273/AGsilversurfer/Imperial%20College/> The password is: 100th. Should you wish to place order to purchase the photos, please liaise directly with Gabriel.

## ***Change of Email Address***

In order that you continue to receive updates on ICAAS activities, please inform us of your new email address. Do send the information to Prof. Wong Limsoon ([wongls@comp.nus.edu.sg](mailto:wongls@comp.nus.edu.sg)), who has kindly been maintaining the ICAAS mailing list and web site.

## ***Call for Nominations***

### ***IDSA***

The ICAAS Distinguished Service Award is the highest form of recognition offered by the alumni association. Past IDSA winners are Prof. K K Phua, Raymond Kwok, Prof. Wong Limsoon, and George Ong.

### ***Honorary Membership***

According to the ICAAS Constitution, this recognition is given to "persons distinguished by eminence in public life or by service rendered to the College/Association shall be eligible to be conferred Honorary Membership." This recognition has not previously been given out.

See the criteria at [www.icaas.org](http://www.icaas.org) under Awards. The Award Committee, chaired by ICAAS President, comprises Han Neng Hsiu (vice president), Prof. Wong Limsoon (past president), Toh Poh Joo (Youth Wing), and Alex Fung (MBA Wing). The period of nomination is 1 January - 31 March 2008.