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(March to October 2024)

The Legacy of Soo Kim Lan: A Tribute to Malaysia's First Woman Doctor

Written by:

Associate Professor Dr. Soo Kum Yoke

Introduction

In the annals of Malaysian history, a shining beacon of inspiration stands tall, illuminating the path for generations to come. The story of Malaysia's first woman doctor deserves to be etched in the hearts and minds of all, for her legacy transcends the boundaries of gender and embodies the unwavering spirit of service and equality.



Reminiscent of the pioneering women doctors who made significant strides in Korea's modernization

such as Esther Park, my grandaunt's journey was marked by a deep-seated commitment to the well-being of her community. She too, recognized the importance of addressing the unique healthcare needs of women, but her vision expanded beyond the confines of gender, encompassing the holistic care of all individuals. Her unwavering dedication and competence earned her the admiration and respect of her peers, and she became a true role model, inspiring generations of women to follow in her footsteps.

As we honor the memory of this trailblazer, we are reminded of the power of perseverance, the transformative impact of leadership, and the enduring legacy of those who dare to challenge the status quo. Her story stands as a testament to the boundless potential of the human spirit, and her unwavering dedication to the betterment of her community will continue to inspire us, generation after generation.

The Legacy of Soo Kim Lan

Malaysia's Golden Orchid

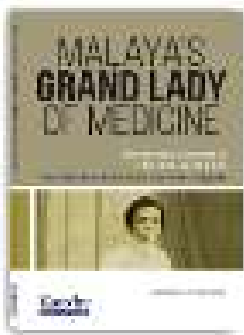


The story of my grandaunt, Soo Kim Lan, and the legacy she has left behind is one that is deeply intertwined with my own family history. Born in Taiping, Malaya in 1894, Soo

Kim Lan was a remarkable woman who dedicated her life to the service of others. After receiving a scholarship to study medicine in Singapore in 1917, she went on to become a trailblazer in the field of healthcare, serving as a volunteer at the Chinese Maternity Hospital in Kuala Lumpur for over 33 years and operating the first woman's clinic in the city. Her achievements were recognized with several prestigious awards, including the Order of the British Empire, and she was affectionately known as the "Grand Lady of Medicine" in Malaya.

Soo Kim Lan's influence extended beyond her professional accomplishments, however, as her love for orchids and the natural world deeply impacted my father's own enthusiasm for plants. Growing up in the lush surroundings of Kenny Hills, overlooking the vibrant city of Kuala Lumpur, she nurtured my father's passion for orchids through her own affinity for the flowers, which earned her the title "Malaysia's Golden Orchid" (NST, 2017).

A Tribute to a Remarkable Woman



As I reflect on the life of Soo Kim Lan, I am struck by the depth of her impact, not only on my own family but on the larger community of

Malaysia. My sister, Jacquelyn Soo, has written a beautiful tribute to our grandaunt, capturing the essence of her remarkable spirit and the indelible mark she left on the world. With little personal recollection of this fantastic woman, I am grateful to have this written record to help me connect with her legacy and understand the significance of the name she passed down to me, "Kim" or "Kum" which means "Gold" in Chinese.

Conclusion

The story of Soo Kim Lan is a testament to the power of dedication, compassion, and a deep connection to the natural world. As I honor her memory and the lasting impact

she has had on my family and country, I am inspired to follow in her footsteps, striving to make a positive difference in the lives of others and nurturing a deep appreciation for the beauty that surrounds us.

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Link to the book: <https://kanyinbooks.com/products/malayas-grand-lady-of-medicine-malaysia-jacquelynsoophd?srsId=AfmBOopFCBd1IO7nJZs0UHnzc6bfQ9H5gFgqVXcxJmKTeIlpnM9BE38S>

Dr Soo Kim Lan Scholarship (McGill University, Canada) Link: <https://www.scholarshipscanada.com/Scholarships/12910/Dr.-Soo-Kim-Lan-Scholarship>