

# ONG TENG CHEONG



**Architect, Town Planner, Politician, President of Singapore**

**Born:** Singapore 22 January 1936

**Died:** Singapore 8 February 2002

**Attended AHS:** 1956

## **Career**

Ong Teng Cheong went on to graduate from the University of Adelaide with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1962.

It was during this time that his former Chinese High School girl friend and life companion, Ling Siew May, completed her matriculation year at Adelaide Girls High School and likewise graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1964. They married in 1963 and both worked in architectural practices during their time in Adelaide.

After returning to Singapore, Teng Cheong joined the Singapore Civil Service as a town planner, subsequently completing post graduate studies at University of Liverpool, UK, with Masters in Civic Design (Town Planning).

Ong Teng Cheong was invited to field as a PAP candidate in the 1972 Singapore general elections and emerged victorious. He went on to retain his seat in 5 following elections until he resigned from Cabinet and the PAP, in 1993 to contest and subsequently become Singapore's first elected President from 1 September 1993 to 31 August 1999. As a cabinet minister, Ong Teng Cheong put his training in architecture and town planning to good use and convinced his colleagues of the need for a Metro Rail Transport (MRT) system which came to fruition in 1987. The MRT is now a highly valued and indispensable part of all Singaporeans' lifestyle.

A passionate music lover, at times performing in public either as pianist or as orchestra conductor, Ong Teng Cheong was always looking to improve the standard of the arts in Singapore. In the late 1970's he was instrumental in the launching of the Singapore Festival of Arts. Another accomplishment is the Esplanade complex of Theatres on the Bay (which cost \$600 million and opened in 2002) which has proven itself as a highly successful performing arts centre for everyone.

## **Awards:**

In 1998 Ong Teng Cheong received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Liverpool. That same year he was conferred with one of Britain's highest honours: The Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George, by Queen Elizabeth II. He was only the second Singaporean to receive the award after the then Prime Minister, Lee Kwan Yew,