



Drafting A Nation:

Memories of Conscription in Singapore



The third batch of Officer Cadets from the first batch [of full-time National Servicemen] was of different races and from different backgrounds. Some were seconded-policemen, others were teachers, graduates, and even illegal taxi drivers. Some spoke Hokkien, and others, English. I was slightly older than the rest.

The barracks at Pasir Labar SAFTI [pictured] had a tin roof and no fans. Training was hard. Cadets had to march with 20 kg field packs around the island [Singapore], and sandbags were added in cases of punishment. We did knuckle push-ups, and if it was as a punishment, with one or two claps in between each push-up. There was also the change parade [which has been since banned].

Hong Tuck Chuen



I registered to be in the first batch of National Service enlistees in 1954 [the first call-up by the British under the National Service Ordinance], at Beach Road [the site opposite the current Hai Nan Clan Association]. However, I was not accepted as the Singapore economy was doing badly at that time and there was a limit to the number of servicemen they could take in!

Ho Fook Cheong

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