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Don't mess with my Gran

Personalities pay tribute on grandparents' special day today

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WHEN people see the tiny white-haired Chinese lady standing next to the towering 1.87m Darryl David, some do a double take.

They wonder what the relationship is between the two, as there's no resemblance.

But Darryl, 38, a media consultant and presenter, who is of Indian-Chinese parentage, takes the curious glances in his stride.

It's something he is used to when it comes to his maternal grandmother.

Darryl said with a laugh: "Even when I was growing up, people used to wonder what the association was between this little brown boy and this Chinese lady."

Though they share little in looks, the two couldn't be closer.

From the time he was a baby, till he was in his late teens, Madam Alice Lim, 80, took care of Darryl, as his parents were both working.

And for Darryl, his grandmother was the constant loving presence during the troubled years of his parents' tumultuous marriage. His parents divorced when he was in his early teens.

Recalled Darryl: "My grandmother was the person I would go to for comfort. She was the stable factor for me and my sister when we were growing up."

When he was in Secondary 3, for instance, Darryl moved out from his parents home and lived with his grandmother for four months because of the unhappiness at home.

Though staying with his grandmother meant sleeping on a mat-

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SHE'S MY GRANDMA: Darryl David, with son Immanuel and grandmother Alice Lim.

TNP PICTURE: AFP



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tress on the floor, he felt happy because she "was just there".

He recalled: "My school work didn't suffer when I was living with her. She was like a refuge, a haven for me."

That wasn't to say that Madam Lim never disciplined the oldest of her eight grandchildren.

Feather duster

During the interview at his five-room HDB flat in Ang Mo Kio, Darryl recalled being at the receiving end of a feather duster whenever he was naughty.

And how was he naughty?

"Being very possessive," said Madam Lim.

She said fondly: "He wanted me to himself all the time and when I wanted to go out to talk to neighbours, he would pull me in because he didn't like it."

While he credits his mum, 62, for imparting professional values to him, Darryl thinks it was his grandmother who taught him to be resilient in the face of adversity.

And she provided the personal examples.

For instance, Madam Lim told The New Paper on Sunday that when she found out her husband was cheating on her, she threw him out of her home.

Madam Lim is now able to put a smile on those hard times. She said with a grin: "It was the happiest day of my life after all the pain I went through."

The couple later got divorced.

She had to bring up a family of six, but the independent mum survived. She took on stints as a supermarket cashier and also ran her own tontine, or private investment pool.

Though grandma and grandson don't live together any more, they meet up several times a month for outings.

Now, Madam Lim lives with her youngest son, 50, a trader, in an executive maisonette in Toa Payoh.

And she isn't any less active today.

One of her favourite solo past times is to catch the latest Hollywood blockbusters. Added Darryl: "She's so independent that she refuses having domestic help and she takes the bus everywhere."

Madam Lim now relishes her new-found role as what she calls a GGM (great grandmother).

Darryl and his wife, Ms Christina Sim, 34, a legal counsel, have a son, Immanuel Sim David, who is just two months old.

Beamed Madam Lim: "My proudest moment came when I was able to see my first grandchild have a son of his own."

■ In honour of the occasion, a Grandparents' Day Walk will flag off this morning at the Esplanade Park. The event, which is set to attract over 4,000 people, is organised by the Council for Third Age (C3A).



MUSIC TO GRANDMA'S EARS: Inch Chu plays the guitar for her supportive grandmother, Madam Yeo Ah Wai.

TNP PICTURE: SHREE ANN MATHAVAN

This grandma can rock 'n' roll

AMONG the sea of funky dressed youth at this rock gig, you might spot a white-haired old lady gamely bopping along to the music.

While senior citizens are a rare sight at the gigs of local indie band Allura, they have a loyal fan in lead singer Inch Chua's grandmother.

Madam Yeo Ah Wai, 74, a housewife, doesn't attend all of Inch's performances because of her arthritis, which makes it painful for her to stand up for long periods. But she attends if seating is available.

Beaming proudly, Madam Yeo said: "I went last year to the durian (the Esplanade) to see Inch perform."

"Seeing her up there on stage, singing and jumping, makes me feel happy."

Never mind that Madam Yeo doesn't understand English or listen to rock music, she still appreciatively moves her arms around whenever the music comes on.

Inch, 20, a second-year arts management student at the

LaSalle College of the Arts, has an undeniably close bond with her grandmother.

After all, she was brought up by her "Ah Ma", as was her sister, 22, a full-time dancer, and brother, 17, who has just completed his O levels.

Whenever Inch's mother, now 52 and a part-time child care administrator, was busy with work, she would drop the trio off at their grandmother's semi-detached house in Bishan.

Inch's parents have been divorced since 2002 and her businessman father now works in England.

While Inch's mother initially raised objections to her pursuit of music as a career, it was her "cool, happening" grandmother who tried to talk her mum around.

Inch said with a grin: "It was a bit good cop, bad cop."

"My mum would raise objections, while my grandma would spoil market and tell her, 'let her do what she wants'."



PICTURE: COURTESY OF APPLE HONG

Gran's tough love inspired me

TOUGH love was good for her, reckons Malaysian actress-singer Apple Hong.

Her grandmother, Madam Chew Kuan Ying, 90, would often discipline her and her siblings with a much-feared cane.

Apple, 30, recalled: "We were from a generation that was raised by the cane. My grandmother loved us but she didn't spoil us either."

Apple's parents divorced when she was just 4 years old. Her father, now 62, was often away for work then as a factory supervisor in Kuala Lumpur, while she was not in touch with her mum until recently.

So it was her Johor Baru-based grandmother who looked after her and her brother, 33, a violin teacher.

The doe-eyed beauty spoke to The New Paper over the phone from Kuala Lumpur where she was filming.

As Madam Chew had lived through World War II, she would often keep Apple spellbound with her survival tales. "She would tell me how she would blacken her face with charcoal to make herself look unappealing," said Apple. "There used to be tales of soldiers going after young women, so she would try her best to look ugly."

Those stories that she heard during her childhood also served to get her into the proper acting mindset whenever she acted in war-time dramas.

Her grandmother has also proven to be her number one fan, cutting out and collecting newspaper clippings about her, though she is illiterate.

Said Apple, with a laugh: "She will watch all my shows and if I have no shows on, she will ask me why I haven't been appearing on television."