

► Wong Kim Hoh

ADELINA Pang obviously lives the good life.

She wears a ring with a whopping solitaire and other classy platinum jewellery, sports a gem-encrusted Rolex and drives a Jaguar.

The 37-year-old also positively glows with health.

She defies the stereotype of geomancers as wizened old men, and looks more like a well-heeled society lady.

Before she took up geomancy 10 years ago, she was the personal assistant to the CEO of a multinational corporation. She speaks English and works with a computer besides her *luo pan* (geomancer's compass).

"I suppose fengshui is a calling. I guess I was born to do this."

She took up the art when fengshui dramatically improved the health of her first-born more than 10 years ago. Married to a businessman, she has two daughters aged 10 and six.

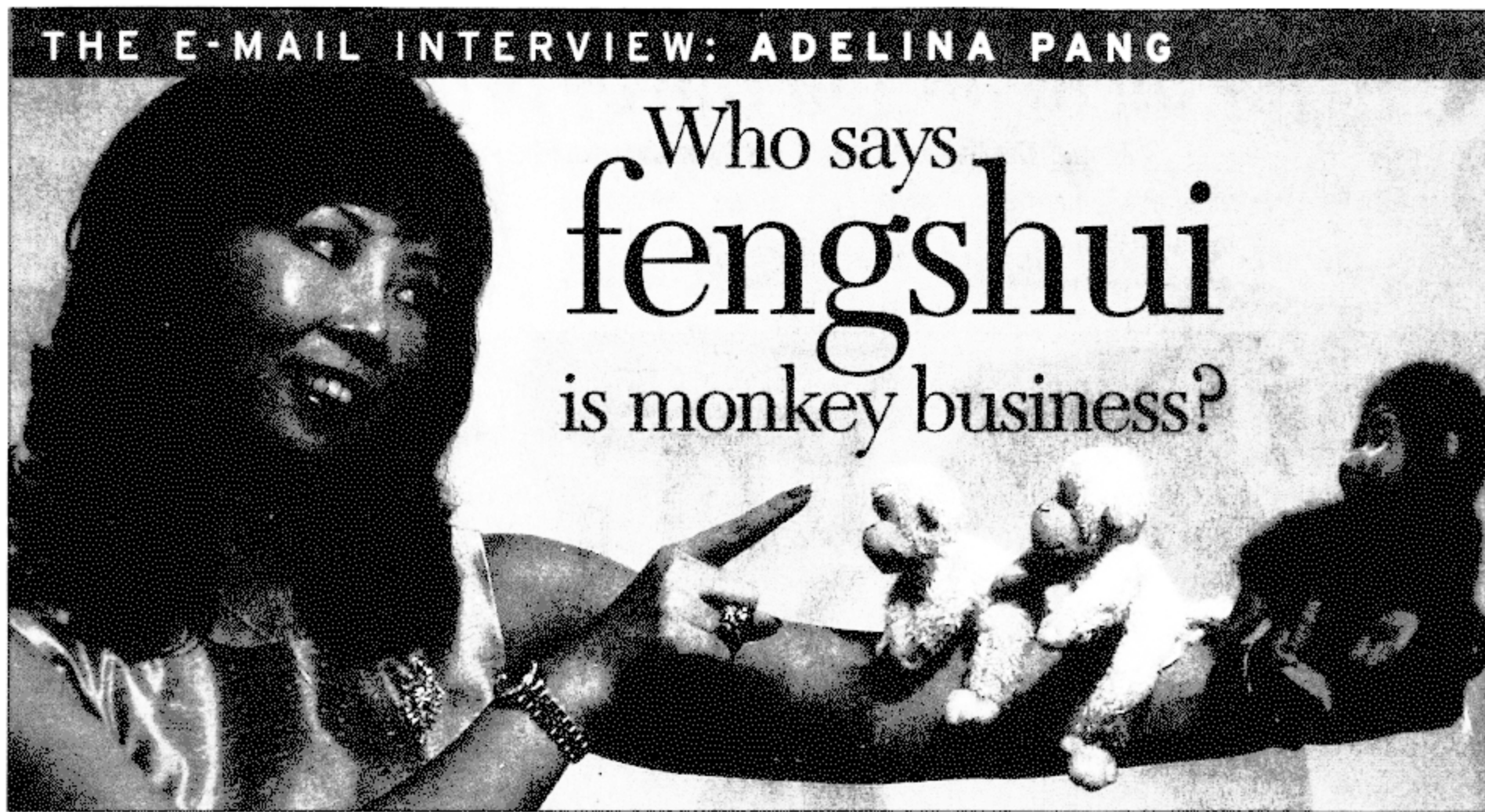
Ms Pang studied under a famous geomancer now in his 70s and is today very sought after in her own right.

She has been interviewed by the BBC and CNA and is regularly sought out by newspapers in Singapore and the region.

Besides lectures and courses, she also does more than 20 readings a month. Her client base ranges from yuppies to some of the biggest corporations in Singapore.

Q Aren't fengshui masters supposed to be old men carrying big *luo pans*? You, however, are a woman, speak English and use a computer. Does that work against you? Or is it an advantage?

A There's a Cantonese saying: "You don't call every man with a moustache your father." My sifu (teacher) once told me that geomancers in the past all looked old probably because their masters would impart their knowledge a bit at a time. By the time they had learnt everything, they had become ancient.



My sifu set up a school and I did structured modular courses and had to sit for exams. Modern geomancers do not wear robes or are affiliated to temples. Be careful of big titles and too much window dressing.

I think being a woman works to my advantage. Some folks, especially women, are more comfortable with me. After all, there are often stories about how they get molested or cheated by quacks.

The world is also changing, we have to be modern. The fact that I speak English puts people at ease. My PDA and my handphone keep me organised. I can retrieve information easily for reference.

Q You guys charge hundreds or even thousands for a reading. Sounds very lucrative. If I were to lose my job and still needed to live comfortably, how easy is it for me to learn the skill and be a geomancer?

A Frankly, I invested not only a lot of money, but also time to learn geomancy. Of course, there are many self-taught people in practice. I won't say it's easy or hard. Having a sifu to give guidance is best. But like he says, it's often a matter of affinity.

You can read up but you have to decide if the info given is accurate. The roots of fengshui are traceable to the classic I-Ching (The Book Of Changes).

In recent years, pseudo or New Age fengshui has become popular. It's really about marketing items which claim to bring good luck, gimmicks to cheat laymen. Authentic fengshui, as opposed to pseudo fengshui, deals with matters of energy and is personal to each individual.

Q So is it an art or a science? Are geomancers like priests? Is it a calling?

A It's a natural science. There are

formulas and methodology. It's not plucked out of thin air. Fengshui has nothing to do with religion although there are grand masters who are also Taoists. Fengshui can be practised regardless of any religious belief, culture, race and in any part of the world.

Q In Chinese, geomancy means wind and water. If I were to install lots of aquariums in the apartment and keep the fans running all day long, will it help?

A Having lots of water in the wrong place can cause more harm than good. Instead of bringing you more wealth, it can bring you more headaches and quarrels. Keeping the fan running all day will not only give you a huge utility bill but also more trips to the doctor.

Q Ever since moving into a new apartment, my friend has broken

off with his girlfriend and been constantly frustrated both professionally and personally. He refuses to see a geomancer because he believes that a person shouldn't believe in mumbo jumbo and instead take control of his own destiny. What is your take on that?

A Fengshui is not mumbo jumbo. It's understanding the forces of nature and how to tap into your energy cycle to make things work for you.

Effective fengshui is not ready-made. It's not a homogeneous effect that applies to everyone and everything. The best results require a highly personal approach, and recommendations specifically tailored for an individual based on his date and time of birth.

Your friend may like to visit my website windwaters88.com to use the kua calculator. It generates a personalised reading. With it, he can find out what his favourable directions are. He can use these to

position his bed and stove. Hopefully, he has his main door facing one of his favourable directions too.

Q Is the Merlion a good fengshui symbol for Singapore? Why?

A The Merlion is our guardian of wealth. It keeps the water moving in our Singapore River, so that the qi (energy) would not be stagnant.

Q The Year of The Monkey is upon us soon. Tell us what we can look forward to.

A For those of you wanting to get a new home, this is one of the best times because the property market will be depressed. Husbands should watch their wallets because their better halves will be spending more time travelling or at spas beautifying or keeping themselves youthful because the metal (jewellery) and water (travel, spas, beauty) trades will be buoyant.

People born in the Year of the Monkey and the Tiger should keep a low profile because they offend the Grand Duke or the Commander of the Year.

Q Apparently a shop here in Singapore has been doing a roaring trade selling red underwear with monkey patterns. People buy them because they believe it will bring them good luck. What do you think?

A This has nothing to do with fengshui. I guess for some people, red undies are a turn-on.

However, there is a double spring this year which means good tidings. So, the Year of the Monkey is a good year to get married or have babies.

Q Finally, I'm dying to strike 4-D. Can you give me some fengshui tips to better my chances?

A Try putting a water feature in the north part of your house this year because the prosperity star is in the north this year. When you strike, remember to buy me coffee.

hotthreads

► Anil Menon

A weekly roundup of the most interesting Web discussions by Singaporeans.

Necessary evil

FOLLOWING an Amnesty International report that Singapore has the highest execution rate per capita, the Government said that the people on the island appreciated that the laws were tough but that they contributed to a society with very little crime.

Many Net forums were abuzz with the pros and cons of capital punishment but most of the Singaporean ones reflected the official viewpoint that executions were a necessary evil.

<http://forums.hardwarezone.com>

What price maids?

WHAT price do you pay to employ a maid? And, what do you pay when she wants to return home? Is an air ticket part of the contract you sign or do you deduct it from the maid's salary? This is a bristling topic of discussion among expatriates in Singapore, if one is to go by what is seen online.

<http://www.expatsingapore.com/ubb/Forum4/HTML/017330.html>

Food for thought

"SARS, mad cow disease, chicken flu, salmon disease, dairy products ban, pork disease etc. I wonder what is next?" writes a vegan who hopes to convert more to the green cause. "There is no more hope for meat eaters, deny yourself and be a vegetarian," he says.

<http://www.spug.net/forums/showthread.php>

INBOX

Camaraderie, tee or me?

I THOROUGHLY enjoyed the article, "Who moved my golf ball?" (The Sunday Times, Jan 11), and would like to contribute my two cents' worth.

I love golf and even had a stint in a golf club as a golfing assistant. From my observations there are five interesting categories of golfers.

First, there are the "Father" golfers — of both sexes and all ages. They are the authoritative figures who, when they have a bad-swing day, would blame it on sudden change of wind direction, fairway not properly maintained, lousy caddy, etc.

They will repeat these excuses after the game, usually at the golfers' terrace. Often they would also reminisce about the good scores they had just a few days earlier to lend credence to their excuses.

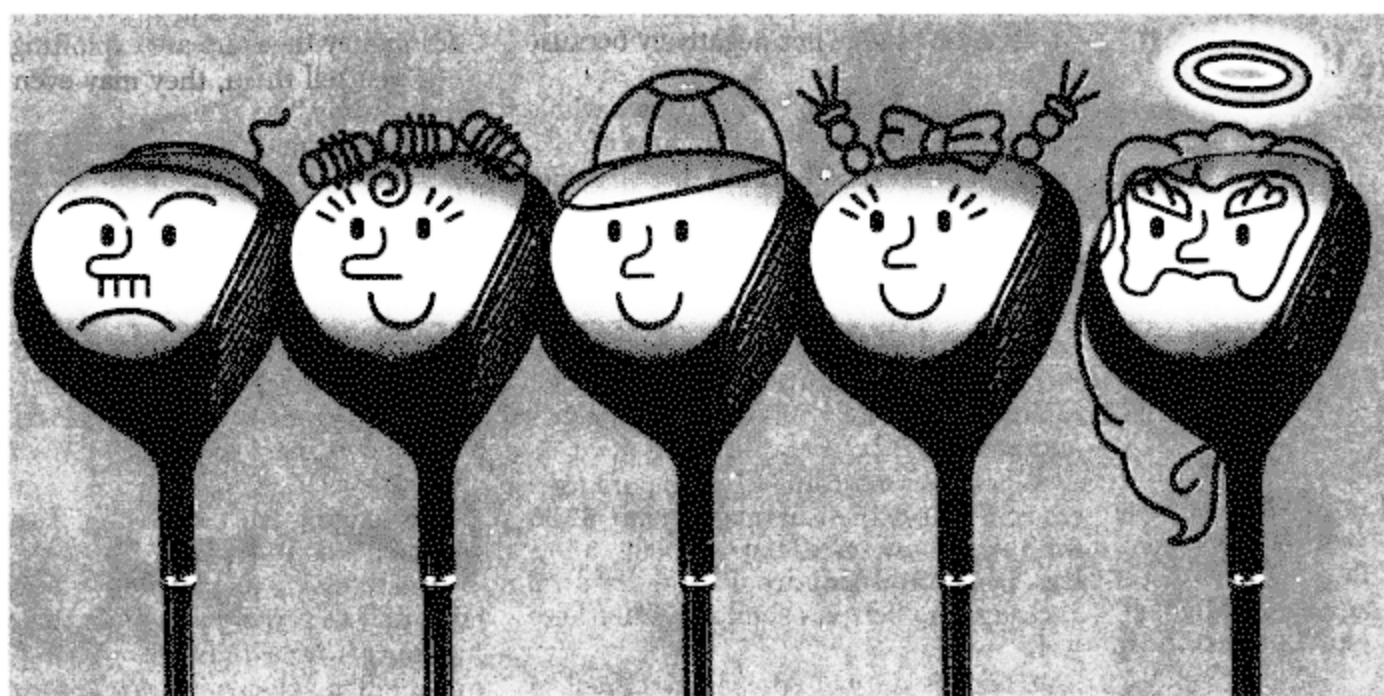
Second, there are the "Mothers", the most loveable of all. Forget to bring sun block? They will lend you theirs. Hit a ball into treacherous waters? They have a ball-scooper to scoop it out for you. Lose too many golf balls? They will spare you some. Leave the tee at the tee-box? They will alert you.

Then there are the "Brothers and Sisters". They can be supportive and encouraging and offer tips during the game. Frequent games with these people may even gradually improve your game. Stick to them if you can.

However, if there is competition, a la sibling rivalry, it is a different ball game altogether. It is like the family members in the reality show, The Family. They must win, by all means, even if it requires massaging of handicap or scores and, in some cases, it can even result in innovations in the interpretation of the golf rules.

Just hope that your superior or customers do not fall into this category.

The best golf games are with "Friends", where camaraderie shares the same importance as scores, if not more. These are



the best people to play golf with, even on a bad-swing day, as everybody laughs at everybody's boo-boos. In fact, at times, you may even feel out of place if you had not made a mistake to contribute to the entertainment.

Last but not least, there are the "Gods". They started learning with you with a 7-iron. You are just starting to get your 7-iron shot straight and at least 70m and these "Gods" have already started learning woods and are driving beyond 150m. You love them for giving you inspiration — if they can do it, so can you. But you hate them, too, as they make you appear incompetent.

Perhaps, a game of golf should replace the lie-detector in the reality show, Meet My Folks.

Thia Fong Yee (Ms)

Wolf or gentleman?

I REFER to the column, At Home Last Week ("Shankar's sentence... What do you think of the penalties he is facing?", ST, Jan 12).

With regard to the sentencing, it was reported that out of a total count of 6,253 views, "heavier than expected" accounted for 2,769; "lighter than expected" numbered 1,295; and "about right" held at 1,559.

Mr Darren Lai believed incarceration without caning would have been more appropriate, as Shankar Aiyar did not, in his opinion, "craftily lure the woman and prey on her".

Ms Jenny Tan felt it was too heavy a sentence on the basis — as she saw it — of his kind deed of taking her home (whose home?).

Shawn believed the sentence was about right — seeing him as a liar, taking advantage of an inebriated woman.

What was of interest was the diversity of views. Shankar was seen, by different people, in different light — ranging from outright liar, taking advantage of a drunk woman, to not luring her with the intention to molest, which implies some guilt on the woman's part, and, a kind deed of taking her home. How this kind deed encompassed stripping her naked in his bed was never explained.

The evidence was circumstantial and gave rise to the diversity of opinions. When evidence is mainly circumstantial, it has to be noted, it must not only be consistent with guilt but must also exclude to a moral certainty every reasonable hypothesis of innocence.

This, I believe, our court took into consideration, after evaluating the circumstances.

Dudley Au

Rule out live-in option

WHILE there are good reasons for live-in schooling, I am concerned for the growing children.

The child at 13 years old is not a baby. However, the child is still a child. Being away from home — and parents — five days a week at the tender age of 13 up to even 18, is not, in my opinion, an ideal way to grow up.

Is school then about education or about growing up? Or is this prep school for national service?

The school, as we know it, is responsible for academic education, some form of discipline and, perhaps, just perhaps, a tiny role in shaping the character of the student.

Where is the parenting role in this? I speak from personal experience. Even teachers of top schools are not equipped or trained to shape the characters of our next generations.

This growing-up phase will, in fact, be the foundation of a child's character, and very often it is neglected and the child grows up to be an adult who still behaves like a child.

I beg the institutions and parents to reconsider the live-in option.

Tan Hock Ann
Switzerland

What's in a school name?

I REFER to the report, "School name's same as road... but it may not be there" (ST, Jan 12), about schools which are nowhere near the roads they are named after.

Part of the reason for alumni calling for their alma mater to remain where they had originally studied is that such schools are usually neighbourhood schools whose strong image is linked to their original locations. Other schools with less location-based names and hence location-based reputations, like Raffles Institution, Raffles Girls' School, Singapore Chinese Girls' School and even Anglo-Chinese School, commenced operations as a pan-Singapore school catering to all, regardless of location.

Hence, when such schools move to new locations, there is little or no fuss about leaving the old building behind for better facilities.

Neighbourhood schools which are too small or have to move should be shut down and a new school re-established at a new location, with a new name and a new history.

Michael Loh Yik Ming

four-digit draw

JANUARY 17, 2004

First ► 9031
Second ► 2646
Third ► 6536

STARTERS

1165 2392 2723
7488 2776 0284
3349 7530 1355
0258

CONSOLATIONS

5306 2991 5576
2169 5180 3636
6519 5182 8805
7201