

Kindness to Children

Text by Dr Tan Su-Ming

I was at the petrol station today when I saw an elderly, urbane-looking gentleman in the queue ahead of me. He was buying ice cream for two young boys who looked like brothers, still in their school uniforms. Initially, I had assumed he was their grandfather, but as the conversation between the man and the cashier continued, and at the sound of the children's foreign accents, it became clear to me that he was their chauffeur.

After the trio left, the cashier told me that the chauffeur often bought the children treats and paid for them out of his own pocket. He did not seek reimbursement because his boss was good to him, and because the children – who were foreigners – did not have a mother.

That gave me a flashback to when I was five years old and attending kindergarten. Some children had parents or grandparents waiting to pick them up after school. But I commuted each day on a school bus with many bullies.

I cannot remember the exact circumstances now – but one day after school, I was waiting alone by the school gate, and the school bus was late. There was an ice cream truck, and I remember looking longingly as other children's parents bought them icy treats. Money was alien to me then; I was never given money to bring to school.

Suddenly a kind-looking man, who looked like someone's grandfather, smiled at me. He had bought his grandchild an ice cream cone. Without asking if I wanted one, he handed me

a cone. I do not remember whether I thanked him, but I hope I did. What I do remember was feeling overwhelmed – overwhelmed with joy.

The gentleman has likely passed on by now, as more than 50 years have elapsed. But that young child still remembers his act of kindness to this day. ♦

Dr Tan is a GP and graduated from the National University of Singapore. She is married, and mom to a daughter.

