

The Man in Charge

by Joe Ng

National Day Parades are not complete without the fighter jet fly-past, freefalling commandos, fireworks—and the man shouting all the commands that get the whole show going. The voice of the NDP this year is 40-year-old Lieutenant-Colonel Gan Eng Khoon, a weapons systems officer with the RSAF Air Defense Artillery and the father of a three-year-old son.

How did you interview or audition for the job?

I didn't have to. Parade commanders are selected based on their merit and performance. We are actually appointed for a two-year period. I was the reserve parade commander last year.

What makes a good parade commander?

The parade commander is only as good as the participants—I'm only the voice behind the parade.

Where do you practice yelling your commands?

Well, my wife does find my voice more booming now, but I must stress that I do not practice at home. I've had many chances to practice throughout my career, so I do not train specifically for this. Rehearsals are still where I perfect my vocal techniques.



During the parade, what's worse: an itch in the butt or a mosquito buzzing around your ears?

Definitely mosquitoes, since they are not within my control. We are trained to focus and blank out our other senses, even an itch in the butt.

How would you react when your voice breaks in the middle of a command?

There are special techniques used to revert to my normal voice.

When you need to pee?

It's S. O. P. (standard operating procedures) for all participants to empty their bladder before the parade starts.

Will you be wearing any lucky charm on the big day?

No, I don't believe in such stuff.

Putting on any skin defense systems?

Nope, I'll be going natural—no sunblock or lip balm for me.