

# 78-year-old S'pore retiree with passion for long-distance

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Correspondent

Retiree Bernard Moey, 78, is not letting his age define him.

In fact, the septuagenarian is letting his legs do the “talking”, participating in marathons across the globe – from the Middle East to India, and from Papua New Guinea to Thailand.

His passion for long-distance running, however, has its roots in Singapore.

“What started me off seriously was The Straits Times Run of 2018. It had three distances – 5km, 10km and 18.45km. I took part in the 18.45km. I was 71. That same year, I signed up for the Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon in De-

cember and was disappointed (with myself). I managed to complete only 25km of the 42km after injuring my left kneecap,” Mr Moey said.

It did not stop him. The next year, he signed up for both marathons again – this time completing the 42.15km of the StanChart marathon. “That was my first great achievement – for someone in his 70s,” he said, adding that he never looked back since.

He became a member of Masters Athletics Singapore, a non-profit organisation that organises track-and-field, road running and cross-country competitions for athletes aged 35 and above in Singapore and abroad.

Apart from long-distance running, Mr Moey has also taken part in several vertical marathons,

completing the 40-storey race up a block at Whampoa Dew in Lorong Limau in June 2024 in just 11 minutes.

His latest event was in Chennai, India, in November 2025, where he ran holding his walking stick, “in case my legs gave out”.

Mr Moey said he started his journey in sports in his childhood, thanks to his late father, who was a pole vaulter and a boxer.

“He taught my older brother and me how to box, but we did not take it up as a sport. I had always been fascinated by distance running and took part in my first national event when I was only 10. It was the Singapore Free Press Race of 1957 from Kallang to Farrer Park,” he told ST, adding that he was not placed in that event.

Mr Moey said that during his

school years, he never engaged in serious training for any sporting events.

“I used to walk every day from St Gabriel’s School, which was then in Upper Serangoon Road, to my home in Balestier (Road), just to save 10 cents in bus fare. That probably served as training in a way,” he said, laughing.

Trained at hospitality training school Shatec in 1983, Mr Moey worked in several jobs but never liked working behind a desk.

“At Shatec, I learnt and specialised in mass feeding, so I moved to Brunei and worked in the mass catering industry,” he said.

It was there that he was headhunted and went to the Middle East to work on oil rigs. Once again, he was headhunted to set up food stations in 1990 for the Amer-

ican troops taking part in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm.

“There was no time to be behind the desk. I was constantly on the move, driving from east to west, providing food for hundreds of thousands of soldiers,” he said.

While there, Mr Moey managed to squeeze in several desert runs.

After his stint there, Mr Moey worked at Grasberg Ridge Camp in Central Papua, Indonesia, where he had the opportunity to climb the 4,660m-tall Carstensz Glacier.

While Mr Moey might have been regarded as a phenomenon at his age 20 years ago, today, he is considered an impressive athlete, as there are many top-notch senior athletes.

In his speech at the SPH Media Asia Future Summit in October

2025, Health Minister Ong Ye Kung said that as Singaporeans live longer, non-communicable diseases have become more prominent.

Consequently, the success of healthcare is now measured not only by how long one lives, but also by healthspan. Healthspan refers to the number of years a person lives in good health, remains functional, active, and free from chronic illness or serious disability.

He said a key mission in healthcare today is, therefore, not just to prolong life, “but to narrow the gap between our healthspan and our lifespan – in Singapore it is about 11 years – and that way our added years are healthier”.

Geriatricians ST spoke to said Mr Moey has “invested well” in his health to ensure he lives free of

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chronic diseases and functional limitations.

Dr Tan Li Feng, the geriatrics lead at the National University Health System Regional Health System Office, said: “Ageing is not just about chronic diseases, but also about our functional capacity and preserving that in the years to come.”

She said investing in one’s healthspan to ensure an additional 10 years of healthy longevity “is a lot of work and this occurs in early life”.

Agreeing, Dr Grace Chia, an associate consultant in geriatric medicine at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, said: “(One should start) ideally from early adulthood. Peak muscle mass and strength are achieved in young adulthood, and this becomes the ‘reserve’ we draw upon

in later life.” Dr Chia said the 2022 Asian Working Group for Sarcopenia clinical practice guidelines have shown that a large part of the decline in age-related muscle mass, strength and performance is actually modifiable.

She added that studies have shown that resistance training in one’s 40s, 50s and beyond improves muscle mass, strength and function, and “even individuals in their 70s and 80s can meaningfully reverse elements of sarcopenia”.

“While the physical part is important, equally important is the social and psychological resilience of the individual – the push and the motivation he or she has to continue their vitality and zest for life,” Dr Tan added.

Both geriatricians agree that medical advancements have significantly improved the chances of individuals living into their 70s and 80s with better overall health and preserved bodily function. But sustaining good health throughout those extended years requires in-

tentional lifestyle choices.

“I do not have any health issues. I usually go for half-yearly medical checks and have been given a clean bill of health,” said Mr Moey, who works part-time at a fast-food eatery. “The only times I feel unwell are when I compete after working a night shift or when the weather gets too hot.”

He said that although his three children do not adopt his healthy habits, one of his three grandchildren has.

“My grandson Julian joined me at the 2024 StanChart marathon. He was 14 then. That day was too hot, so I stopped after completing 38km. To further encourage him to run, I gave him some of my medals as keepsakes,” he said.

His next target? The World Masters Athletics Championships in Daegu, South Korea, in August.

“There are several road-running events there and I hope to compete in them,” he said.

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