

BY GODFREY ROBERT

He has a pleasant disposition, ringed with polite mannerisms and a personality that enjoys engagement.

And he is at home with any topic, be it politics, sport or economics.

In short, Melvin Choo, who celebrated his 48th birthday on Thursday, has an endearing demeanour.

Singaporeans are very familiar with Choo's exploits in motor car racing and golf, two sports in which he has competed at world level.

As racer, who graduated from go-kart racing, Choo had a distinguished career from 2007 to 2010. He had podium finishes at the prestigious Porsche Carrera Cup Asia in Class B.

But his highlight was when he became the first Singaporean driver to compete at the World Touring Car Championship in 2008 and the Super GT Japan in 2010.

And in golf, the single handicapper (index ranges from 4 to 8) qualified for the 2016 World Amateur Golf Championship in Durban, South Africa, in 2016 with a one-under 71 in the qualifying round at the Tanah Merah Country Club's Tampines course. In Durban, he played a pivotal role in helping the Singapore quintet claim the world title.

WEARS SEVERAL HATS

But few Singaporeans are aware that the family man who dotes over his four children, is now a chancellor of the Singapore chapter of the oldest wine brotherhood in the world that is originally based in Saint Emilion, France, known as the Jurade de Saint Emilion.

And fewer still realise that his other keen indulgence is professional photography, specialising in landscape and portrait-based fine art photography, namely in Provence, France.

But golf, a game he picked up at 12 when introduced by his dad Richard, a businessman who still plays socially occasionally, remains close to his heart.

He continues to play for Tanah Merah Country Club in the SGA League and sponsors his wine products for corporate events, like The Business Times Corporate Golf League.

His eyes light up everytime he talks about wines because he has appreciated wine since his time in San Francisco, even having worked at a harvest in Napa Valley during his youth.



CHOO'S A MAN OF MANY TALENTS

CELEBRATED GOLFER-RACER IS ALSO INTO FRENCH WINES AND PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Subsequently, he attended wine courses and has several certificates to prove his qualification that went a long way in inducting him into the Jurade.

The Jurade's Singapore chapter will be celebrating its inauguration with a gala dinner on Nov 29 at the Sands Expo and Convention Hall.

And Kravmanga, a form of martial arts, is his deep passion, which he practises often because it helps him with self-defence as it is not aggressive but a passive form that allows for good development of the mind.

He has also introduced this sport to his four children, namely Isabelle, 12, Emily, 11, Zachary, 7 and Alexander 6.

Driving them for lessons takes much of his time, but he still finds time to learn about wines from an education trust and via regular trips to Bordeaux in France.

Choo, who was born in Singapore, studied at Catholic High School and has spent much of his time in the United States, namely San Francisco. He is also a property investor.

On wearing several hats, Choo says: "I enjoy what I do. And I am one person who likes to broaden my knowledge and open new horizons."

On his past pursuits, Choo says: "I've had two concussions from car racing, but it did not prevent me from plying that trade further."

On golf, the talented sportsman says: "The game

has taken me to play in major courses such as Pebble Beach, Spyglass, Sawgrass and the like, and every experience is memorable."

Choo has struck five holes-in-one, but none from a corporate event. And his greatest asset in golf is course management, which when coupled with his strengths in steady drives, fine iron play and great putting, sees him constantly returning respectable scores.

The man of many talents, however, has his feet on the ground and keeps things in proper perspective. He says: "Despite all my achievements, I've never sought to pursue them as accolades or feathers in my cap. I've gotten to where I have today simply from following my passion, and having a no-holds-barred approach with a dare to dream, learn, discover and giving of my best in whatever I do."

"These are passions of mine that I hope to be able to share with my children, and that I would say is the most important feat of all that I'm striving to do daily; as I'm bent on raising them through good example."

Once the owner of several vintage cars, Choo talks about speed driving with an air of authority. And now that he has placed his family in the forefront, when asked about Audi cars, he replied: "The Audi Lemans Conquering race car, the R18 e-tron quattro, is my favourite. If I have to choose a road car, it would be the seven-seater."



AUDI RS 4 SPECIFICATIONS & FEATURES

Model name: Audi RS 4 Avant 2.9 TFSI quattro tiptronic
Engine: 2894cc, 2.9 TFSI twin turbo
Power: 450hp
Torque: 600Nm
Top speed: 250km/h
0-100km/h: 4.1s
Consumption: 8.9L/100km

Price: \$392,280 inclusive of COE

Features:

- Audi virtual cockpit with RS screen
- Head-up display with RS-specific display
- Flat-bottomed RS sport steering wheel
- RS sport seats with rhombus pattern and embossed RS emblem