

LIFESTYLE
MOMENTRetirement
at 65?
Not for US
boomers

WASHINGTON

THE baby-boom generation turns 65 on Jan 1, marking a milestone in the greying of the United States that portends vast economic, social and cultural changes.

As the first of the 76 million US boomers reach the magic age next year, they will likely transform the notions of retirement and old age instead of following in the footsteps of their parents, say experts.

"Even though 65 is the conventional retirement age we've become accustomed to, this generation doesn't look at retirement as the ending of a career that previous generations had to experience," said Mr John Challenger, chief executive of the consultancy Challenger Gray and Christmas.

"Today...people are working for a much longer period at this stage of their lives.

"There are many studies showing that continuing to find meaningful work into your 60s and 70s is an important part of health and longevity, and life balance."

A report by insurance firm MetLife confirms this view. It shows that fewer than half of the boomers expect to be retired between the ages of 65 and 69, whereas in the past, three fourths expected to be retired within a few years of hitting 65.

Report author and demographer Peter Francese says that the first of the generation, the so-called "leading edge" boomers, have a tradition of being "trailblazers".

"This group was among the first for whom college education was commonplace. They were also among the first to have a sense that their lives would be better than those of their parents," he said.

"While their retirement years will be met by financial challenges, they may end up having more social and personal fulfilment than that of their parents through their continued presence in the workplace."

AFP

BY CHRISTINA NG

AMERICAN poet and novelist James Dickey was criticised in the 1960s for introducing a journalistic device – a footnote – into his work, *The Eye-Beaters*.

It caused the man, who also worked for *Life* magazine, to remark: "I don't see why there always has to be a barrier between art and journalism. Journalism can be a great vehicle for a true poetic vision."

There are poets in Singapore who think much like Dickey, who died in 1997.

Eight writers are launching their poetry books next Saturday at the National Museum of Singapore, with five having published poetry before. Of that number, four can call themselves journalists, covering everything from news to writing columns.

The poets, a mix of veterans and emerging talent, include *my paper* movie reviewer Yong Shu Hoong, 43, and Straits Times journalist Grace Chua, 25. They agreed that poetry and journalistic writing can complement each other.

Ms Chua, who covers the environment beat at *The Straits Times*, said that journalism exposes her life experiences that she inevitably uses in her poetry.

Mr Yong, who has written for *my paper* for three years, and who also contributes to *The Straits Times*' Life! section, said that poetry and review writing are, in a sense, the same.

He said: "Review writing is about the essence of what a movie, for example, is about. Poetry works the same way. It's

More than words



WORD LOVERS: (from left) Cyril Wong, 33, Yong Shu Hoong, 43, Teng Qian Xi, 27, and Grace Chua, 25, are among eight launching their poetry books next Saturday. (PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN)

about the essence of an emotion, for example."

Others in journalism releasing books are Mr Cyril Wong, 33, and Ms Teng Qian Xi, 27.

Poets like Ms Mika Yamaji, 32, and Ms Eleanor Wong, 48, also have other pursuits. Ms Wong, a Singaporean, is also a lawyer and a playwright.

Tokyo-born Yamaji is a film-maker based in Singapore, who has worked as a bartender and an oil trader. Her book, 86 Benevolent Street, speaks of her university days and coming of age.

Asked how her pursuits help her poetry, Ms Wong said that everything she does informs who she is and, therefore, the work she produces.

"I don't make too much distinction in the different areas that I delve into – they are all part of who I am. I like doing A to Z, and there are no categories between them," she said.

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◆ *Firstfruits launch 2010: layang-layang will be held at The Salon, National Museum*

of Singapore, next Saturday from 7.30pm to 10.30pm. Admission is free. The eight writers will be at the event.

HELPDESK 我的字典

Journalism: 新闻业
xīn wén yè

Poetry books: 诗集 shī jí

Essence: 本质 běn zhì

Coming of age: 成熟 chéng shú

JOURNALISTS WHO ARE POETS

YONG SHU HOONG, 43

Look out for: *From Within The Marrow*

Writing experience: Yong – who majored in computer science at the National University of Singapore – won the Singapore Literature Prize in 2006 for his work, *Frottage* (2005). He has published three collections of poetry to date – *Isaac* (1997), *Dowhile* (2002) and *Frottage*.

He lectures at Republic Polytechnic, and is a freelance writer. He contributes movie and music reviews, as well as cultural commentaries, to *The Straits Times* and *my paper*.

On journalism versus poetry: "I don't prefer writing poetry to reviews, or the other way round. I see review writing as a livelihood. As for poetry, it's an outlet for me to express how I feel about certain things or people."

CYRIL WONG, 33

Look out for: *Oneiros*

Writing experience: Wong is the author of 11 publications. He was the recipient of the National Arts Council's Young Artist Award for Literature (2005) and the Singapore Literature Prize (2006). He started writing book reviews for *The Straits Times* 10 years ago and, from last year, began writing concert reviews.

Wong – who has a doctoral degree in English Literature from the National University of Singapore – has had works published in *Atlanta Review* and *Poetry International*.

On journalism versus poetry: "When someone reads my poetry, it's like they are reading very deeply into my life. I reveal my vulnerable side. Reviews are a passing perspective on an event to encourage or discourage readers towards a show or a book."

GRACE CHUA, 25

Look out for: *The Stamp Collector's Wife*

Writing experience: She has been a journalist with *The Straits Times* since 2008 but started writing poetry seriously when she was 15. *The Stamp Collector's Wife* is her debut poetry collection.

Background: Chua holds a Bachelor of Arts in literature and psychology from Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, and a master's in science writing from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her work has been published in literary journals.

On journalism versus poetry: "Poetry is more of an organic process, whereas news writing is like a structure that you build and put together. Poetry doesn't require information gathering, and it comes from within."

TENG QIAN XI, 27

Look out for: *They Hear Salt Crystallising*

Writing experience: She started writing commentaries for Singapore publications in 2003. She is also a publicist and translator. She was a Simon Elvin Young Poet of the Year winner in 2000 and 2001. *They Hear Salt Crystallising* is her debut poetry collection.

Background: She graduated from Columbia University in comparative literature and society. She has given poetry readings in Singapore, and has translated poems by poets Chiu Wei-Li, Koh Beng Liang and Tan Chee Lay.

On journalism versus poetry: "I have a specific question to ask and explore when I write commentaries. For poetry, it doesn't have to be so clear-cut. I enjoy writing poetry more as there are no deadlines."