Montblanc celebrates its 110th anniversary by building on its best-selling 4810 Collection, a toast to the pioneering spirit of innovation that the brand has come to symbolise.

First presented in 2006 for the company’s centennial celebrations, the revitalised 4810 Collection ups the ante with its emphasis on peak performance and horological excellence. And it all began with three gentlemen who had a vision.

The year was 1906. It was an age of innovation and growth as manufacturing boomed and consumers developed a taste for all things new. Inspired by what they were witnessing and hungry to be a part of this march of progress, engineer August Eberstein, merchant Alfred Nehemias and stationery trader Claus Voss made the gruelling voyage to America.

Although the fountain pen and ballpen had been invented decades earlier, Eberstein’s creation in 1906 – the Rouge et Noir – a writing instrument with non-leaking technology and a piston converter, was considered an outstanding technical achievement.

It ensured simple operation without the need to keep dipping the nib into an inkwell, and without leaks that ruined one’s clothing. These deceptively simple innovations changed the very act of writing, transforming a functional tool into an object of desire.

The number 4,810 has always been iconic to the brand, hence the name of its best selling collection that goes beyond writing instruments to include timepieces and lifestyle accessories. And the pioneering spirit which led to its founding lives on today, 110 years later, and recognises kindred pioneering spirits.

The Blue Riband

The early 20th century saw the rise of the marine steam engine and improved methods for navigation and transporting people and goods across the world’s oceans and seas. This spurred a quantum leap in sea travel, especially across the Atlantic, which spurred international trade and saw the birth of the luxury passenger cruise vessel.

Passenger liners competed for the Blue Riband award – a prestigious prize for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. The record was based on average speed and only recognised the fastest speed westbound against the challenging Gulf Stream.

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DR ANN TAN:
CHAMPIONING LIFE

Known as a doctor who is passionate about her work, Dr Ann Tan is also a pioneer in the field of Obstetrics & Gynaecology.

The former chief of Foetal Maternal Medicine at Singapore General Hospital, Dr Tan is also a certified IVF clinician and is now the Medical Director of the Mount Elizabeth Fertility Centre.

“I strongly feel that preconception and prenatal health are a continuum of the same issues and seeing the patient through both aspects allows one to appreciate the complexities that any pregnancy can face. She also launched the First Trimester Pregnancy Screening for Down Syndrome in Singapore.

“"The test was the most sensitive Down Syndrome screening test when we launched it in 2003; it remains a very robust test. I was driven by the need of mothers to be reassured that their baby is normal and as quickly as possible. I never had those tests available when I was pregnant with my daughters and would definitely have wanted more accurate screening tests versus invasive diagnostic tests.”

Two years ago, a new free foetal DNA test came on the market. Dr Tan was one of its first adopters. “It afforded older mothers even greater reassurance than before.”

But one of the causes she champions most is the use of gamete storage for young cancer patients.

“Cancer and Fertility seem to be incompatible, but as oncology treatments improve, healthy life is possible for more cancer survivors. Young cancer patients too wish to get married and start a family. I would like the chance for storing eggs to be extended to women with limited egg reserves – due to ovarian cyst accidents or severe endometriosis – when they are at peak fertility but unmarried.”

“Social egg freezing is also important to women who don’t have a suitable life partner when they are most fertile or have no opportunity to conceive until they are beyond the optimal age. This might ensure that there are more babies born from Singapore women.”

“I like pushing boundaries so that my patients have the most current treatment options. So I always appreciate others who do that too.”

“I also fully appreciate beauty in design and love simple clean lines. As I wear black a lot, Montblanc accessories are perfect. I also love the Montblanc idea of preservation in today’s ever-changing landscape. There must be some things that remain constant; objects that weather the ages with you, and bear witness to the events in one’s life.”
No matter where I am today, I am forever evolving, forever pushing to get better – just like Montblanc.

DR MICHAEL WONG: DRIVEN TO ENLIGHTEN
Fueled by a burning passion to share knowledge in the field of Urology, Dr Wong is a pioneer in many ways. He founded the Asian Society of Endourology in 1998 to educate doctors running more than 20 regional teaching workshops during his term as President. “I was recently appointed Deputy Director of the Asian School of Urology to train the trainers in IndoChina, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand from 2014. I have a pioneering spirit and giving back is part of my DNA, inspired by my mother, who was Acting Chief Commissioner of the Girl Guides from 1965 to 1967 when Singapore achieved independence.”

The next frontier marked a quantum leap. Since 2013, Dr Wong has envisioned the creation of the world’s first and best online interactive education system that will benefit all urological residents. “With no limitations of time and travel, our aim is to improve the level of skills in underdeveloped countries. I am working on this with the British Journal of Urology International which has the resources to make this dream come true,” says the only Asian associate editor currently on this project which was launched in 2015. This Urologist of international standing is understandably proud of breaking through traditional barriers. He is the only Asian appointed as Co-Chairman of WHO 2nd international consultation in Urolithiasis in Paris, and the only ASEAN Urologist to date appointed Board director of US-Based Society of Endourology. He is also proud of his pioneering efforts – as SGH Corporate Director in Business Development – in developing medical services beyond traditional models. This was in the early 2000s when there was immense pressure – and resistance – to change. “The most common complaint was that it had never been done before. We had no precedents, and how would we calculate financial models for these new projects?” recalls Dr Wong.

So, for instance, the SGH Faculty Practice at Gleneagles Hospital was created to give senior consultants who had served SGH for more than 20 years the opportunity to evolve their practice with a well-defined platform. It also allowed SGH to retain select senior doctors and not lose them to private practice. There was also Southeast Asia’s first Academic Hyperbaric Centre. It combined the services of burns, vascular surgery and some aspects of Navy medicine under the leadership of SGH. He also broke barriers to operationalise Corporate Health Screening and SGH Private Wing.

Currently working at Mount Elizabeth Orchard, pioneer-at-heart Dr Wong says: “No matter where I am today, I am forever evolving, forever pushing to get better – just like Montblanc.”