



Madam Chin wearing a pendant (close-up on right), the centrepiece of which is a 0.4-carat diamond made from her sister's ashes. Her sister died after a stroke in February.

ST PHOTOS: KEVIN LIM

Keeping her sister close to her heart

Woman's pendant has diamond made from her late sister's ashes; she may be first here to own such a gem

Ang Yiying

For the past week, Madam Chin Siat Ngo, 83, has been proudly displaying a diamond cross pendant around her neck – and it is no ordinary pendant.

The centrepiece of that pendant, a 0.41-carat bluish diamond, is made from her late younger sister Mee Ngo's ashes.

Madam Chin may be the first person in Singapore to own a memorial diamond made from her loved one's ashes – a gift from her son and daughter-in-law that cost \$9,399.

She wears her pendant only when she goes to church or out with her family because she fears losing it.

"It is a good idea for remembrance," Madam Chin said of her daughter-in-law Penny's somewhat unusual suggestion.

The sisters – one a widow and the other unmarried, who were 15 years apart in age – had been close and lived together for 62 years until Mee Ngo died after a stroke in February this year.

Madam Chin's gift took about six months to produce – her sister's ashes were sent to a laboratory in Switzerland in February, where carbon from the ashes was extracted using high temperatures.

To create such a rock, 500g of ashes are needed. Depending on the size of the gem, it can take up to 52 weeks to make.

The diamond can then be taken to a jeweller for setting.

Madam Chin's gem order is the only one from Singapore since Swiss company Algodanza International began offering this service here this year. It has been available in more than 20 countries since 2004.

Algodanza Singapore's prices start from \$6,399 for a 0.25-carat stone, and go up to \$9,399 for a 0.4-carat one and \$33,999 for a one-carat gem.

The colour of the gem can range from clear to blue, depending on the level of boron present in the ashes. Boron, a mineral that occurs in soil, is ingested by humans along with fruit, vegetables, water and consumer products.

Algodanza Singapore chief executive Ang Ziqian, 29, said it has received more than 100 queries since March.

What surprised him was that almost half of the queries came from people who wanted



Ashes to gems
Ashes are sent to a Swiss lab, where carbon is extracted using high temperatures. Depending on the size of the gem, it can take up to 52 weeks to make.

to turn their own ashes into diamonds after their deaths, by putting it in their wills.

The company is now studying how such orders can be carried out, he said.

And what do those who have seen Madam Chin's special pendant think of it?

She said with a smile: "They say, 'Very nice'."

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