

A man in a white kayak is shown from the waist up, paddling on blue water. He is shirtless and looking towards the right. The scene is set in the rain, with numerous white streaks representing falling raindrops. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an outdoor setting at night or in low light. The overall mood is serene yet dynamic due to the weather.

# STORMS ON PERFECTLY SUNNY DAYS

Some old friends from the Class of '74 University of Singapore Engineering Faculty had their annual reunion and were looking for mementos of their youth that they could show their grandchildren. After a long search, only one photograph could be found. It was a black-and-white photograph of a group of smiling young men in front of Singapore Polytechnic's main foyer with its signature mosaic facade. That was the only tangible memory they had of their undergraduate days.



Facets of campus life in the 70s and 80s.

For several years, Prince Edward Road campus housed the Polytechnic and the architecture and engineering students from the former University of Singapore.

The arrangement was amicable until the Polytechnic's Board of Governors announced the transfer of some students to a new campus in Dover Road.

A protest broke out as the Polytechnic students were unhappy that the move would break up their united image and the student body would lose its fraternity and identity. Instead, they wanted the university students to move. Nevertheless, the Polytechnic Students' Union and administrators came to terms after much clarifications and assurances.

The Nautical Studies, Civil Engineering and Building students moved to Princess Mary Barracks in the new semester of 1971.

There was no doubt that the fighting spirit was ingrained in the Polytechnic students and the strength of camaraderie existed among them even after they graduated.

When friends and colleagues meet their students or lecturers, they are transported back in time and break out in candid banter. Many looked back and laughed about the 'storms on perfectly sunny days', referring to the 1970s and 1980s stormings by students into the principal's office to demand for explanations and decisions on policies and changes.

In 1976, Principal Ager's contract expired and Mr Khoo Kay Chai was appointed as the acting principal.

1979



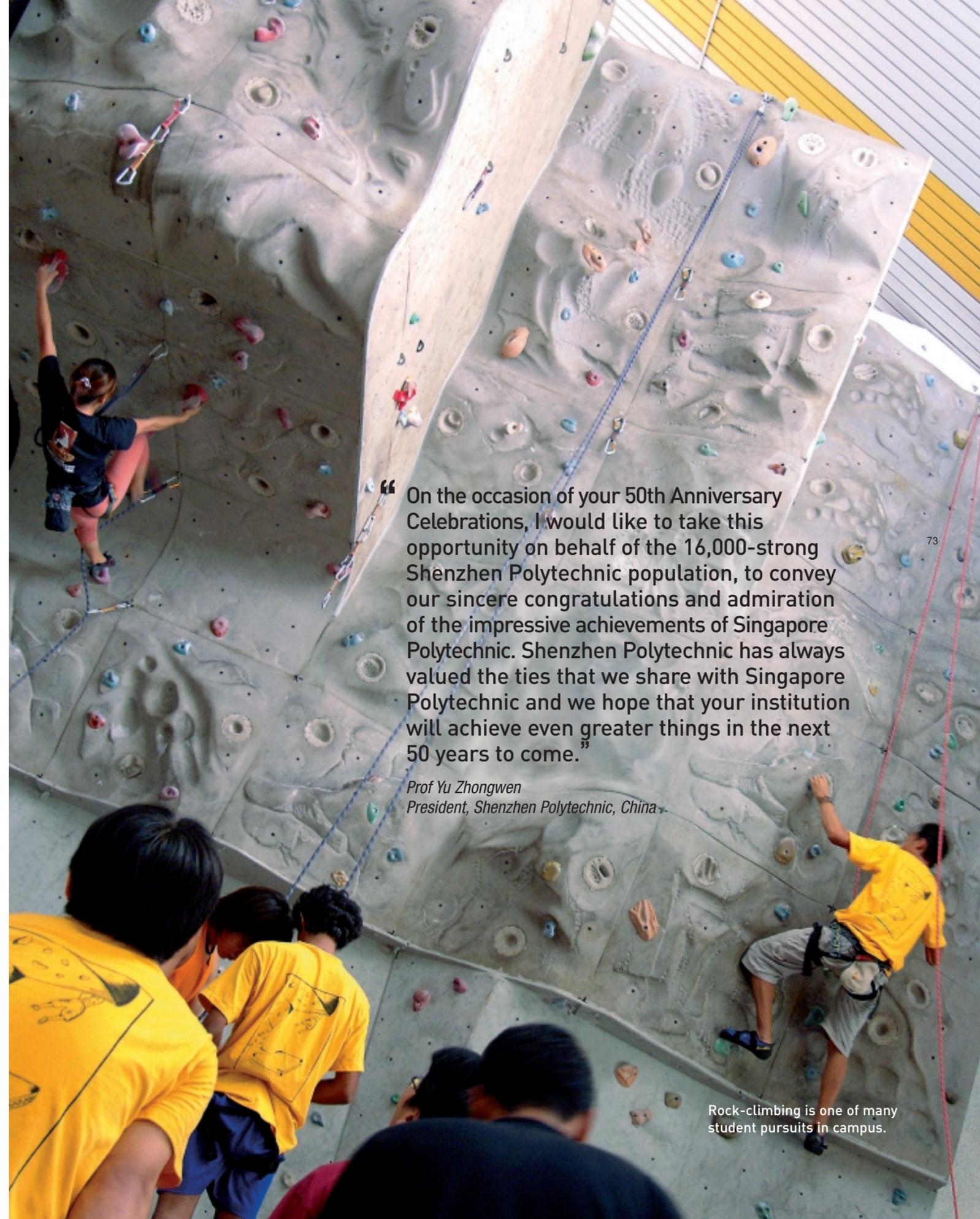
Dover Road campus officially opened by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew on 7 July

1980

Singapore Polytechnic (Amendment) Act passed in Parliament on 26 February, reconstituting the Board of Governors and reorganising student bodies



Mr Chua Chor Teck appointed Chairman of the Board of Governors

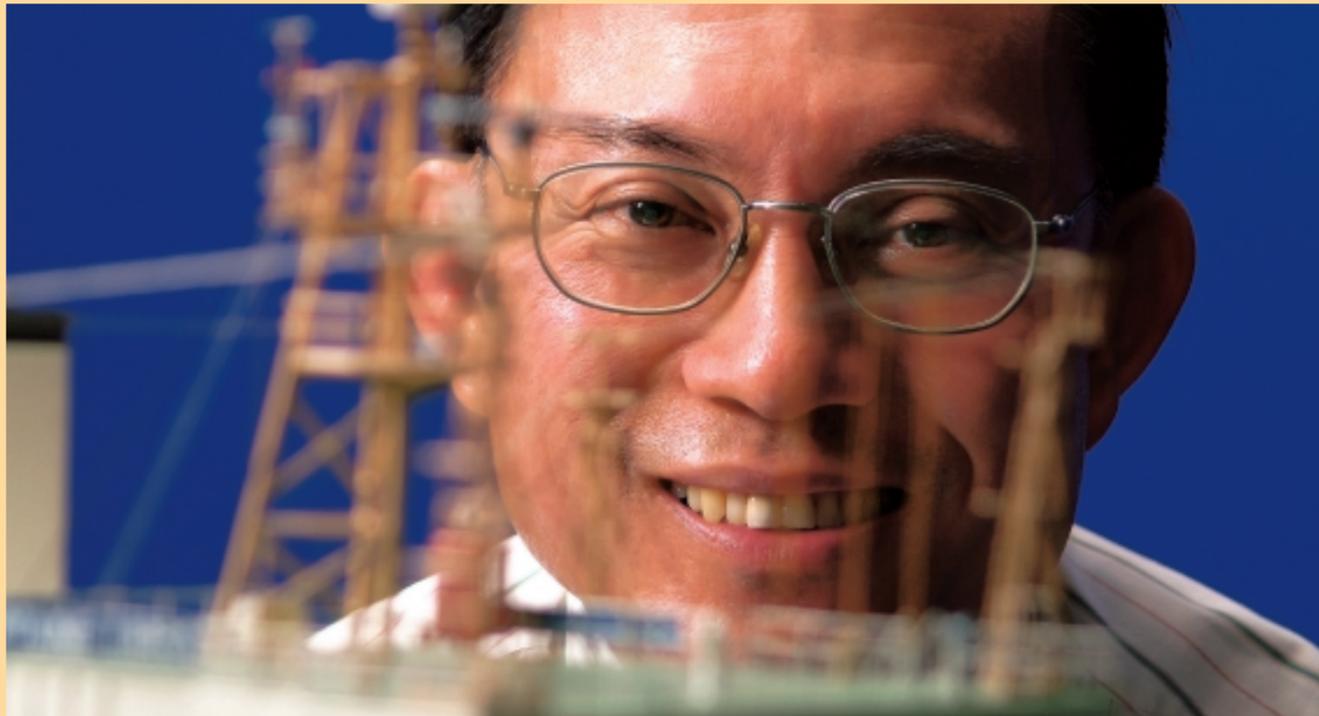


“ On the occasion of your 50th Anniversary Celebrations, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the 16,000-strong Shenzhen Polytechnic population, to convey our sincere congratulations and admiration of the impressive achievements of Singapore Polytechnic. Shenzhen Polytechnic has always valued the ties that we share with Singapore Polytechnic and we hope that your institution will achieve even greater things in the next 50 years to come.”

Prof Yu Zhongwen  
President, Shenzhen Polytechnic, China

Rock-climbing is one of many student pursuits in campus.

# SHAPED ME AS A PROFESSIONAL



**LIM TAU KOK**  
**GENERAL MANAGER, NEPTUNE SHIPMANAGEMENT SERVICES**  
**CLASS OF 1972**  
**SINGAPORE MARITIME ACADEMY**

**H**e remembered fondly the scent of the sea breeze wafting into the classroom at Prince Edward Road, and the large swimming pool across the road where he had to learn to swim as part of his course.

That was in the late sixties when he was studying for a Diploma in Marine Engineering at Singapore Polytechnic. He recalled how, even as a fairly new school, Singapore Polytechnic had very dedicated teachers who were very motivated. "It was then very much a part of nation building," he said. "People were excited about the future, and there was energy and drive to make things happen."

He was driven too by his goal to become a chief engineer on a ship and, later on, a technical superintendent just like his uncle who was working for Straits Steamship, a prominent shipping company in Singapore.

"I didn't know then that there were so many opportunities for seafarers," he shared, "and of course, I never expected that I would one day become a general manager of a ship management company." Lim Tau Kok is General Manager of Neptune Shipmanagement Services (Pte) Ltd and is also a member of the Advisory Committee for Singapore Polytechnic's Singapore Maritime Academy.

He feels that the diploma he obtained was a starting point for his career. Sailing up the ladder, he went from being a cadet engineer with Neptune Orient Lines to Chief Engineer when he was 27 years old, and finally to Technical Superintendent after an additional three years.

When the company sponsored him for a degree in Marine Engineering and Naval Architecture at the University of Michigan in the United States, Tau Kok was able to shorten his degree course. "Some of the credits I had from my diploma were transferable. So I didn't have to do much for the engineering part of the degree and spent time on the naval architecture part to graduate," he explained.

The training he received at Singapore Polytechnic also helped him to remain grounded. "The course (at SP) was very balanced where both theoretical knowledge and practical skills were given equal emphasis," he shared. "This hands-on approach has shaped many of us to be professionals who are in touch with our work and the people who work with us." Obviously proud of Singapore Polytechnic, he feels that it has changed over the years to provide an all-rounded education.

He was immediately tasked to produce 50 percent of the 13,000 technicians needed to meet the growing demands. More courses were added and the Continuing Education Department was established to cater to the needs of part-time students.

Mr Khoo was confirmed as the first local principal in 1978 but his new career was to have a rough start. Citing "unsatisfactory working conditions", 60 lecturers, instructors and non-academic staff left within a year.

Unhappy over the administration of the orientation programme, about 100 students staged a rowdy sit-in outside the principal's office and refused to let him out until the police was called to break up the group. Following that, there were campus brawls, ragging, student union disputes and more student sit-ins and protests on "lowering" standards.

Having joined the Polytechnic at the end of 1964 as an assistant lecturer, Mr Khoo was not new to the institution when he became principal. A soft-spoken but tough man, he took the conflicts in his stride and focused on building the future. The principal and his staff got together to solve these problems by addressing the students' issues while sticking very firmly to achieving the Polytechnic's educational and organisational objectives.

And they did.



## BUDDING ART MASTERS



It was not quite the Guggenheim Museum but over the course of four days, some 80 staff, students and alumni put up over 300 art pieces and transformed the Concourse into an art gallery for Art@SP.

Gracing the event's official opening was Dr Lee Boon Yang, Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts. It was a pleasant surprise for the minister and the many guests who viewed the pieces to know that Singapore Polytechnic, known for its highly-trained engineers, had such talents.

The participants clearly illustrated their artistic bent even though their technical and engineering courses, jobs and training may have defined them.

Principal Low Wong Fook also participated and generously put up his Chinese calligraphy pieces at the exhibition for charity, along with some 100 other selected art pieces. Proceeds from the sale went to the Singapore Polytechnic Student Needy Fund.

Chairmen - Art@SP Committee:  
 Mr Liew Beng Keong  
 (Acting Director - Student & Alumni Affairs)  
 Mr Paul Gagnon  
 (Admin Officer - Edn & Staff Development)

1982



Five-year Expansion Plan (1982-86) approved, detailing new targets for student enrolment and staffing, as well as new courses

Industrial and Business Orientation Programme for students replaced by Vacation Training Programme with support from Skills Development Fund

1984

All full-time Technician Diploma courses restructured and revised to cater for high-technology needs

1986



Prof George Fong Wah took over as Chairman of the Board of Governors

“ You have so much to be proud of over the past 50 years. You have shown the capacity to be a serial innovator and to respond rapidly and imaginatively to the needs of the marketplace. University of Sheffield's links with Singapore Polytechnic stretch over half a century and my personal links with Singapore Polytechnic stretch over more than 20 years. We know you will go on to achieve even more in the future. We take great pleasure in extending our heartiest congratulations and good wishes to Singapore Polytechnic on this special occasion.”

*Prof R F Boucher  
Vice-Chancellor, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom*

“ I would like, on behalf of over 50,000 students and faculty members of Soochow University, to extend our warmest congratulations on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of your esteemed institution. I wish Singapore Polytechnic a prosperous future and greater achievements arising from the cooperation between our two institutions.”

*Prof Qian Pei-de  
President, Soochow University, China*

A proud tradition that started in the 1960s,  
the Poly 50 campus relay run lives on.

## LOW GUAN ONN



Besides being the Chairman of the Board of Governors of Singapore Polytechnic from 1975 to 1979, Mr Low Guan Onn was well-known as a pioneer of Singapore's shipbuilding and ship-repair industry.

Even then, Mr Low was already very ill and his health deteriorated steadily.

Despite his weak condition, he was determined to show up on 7 July 1979 at the official opening of the Singapore Polytechnic campus in Dover Road to accompany Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew through the new training complex.

Five months later, Mr Low passed away peacefully at the age of 64.

After seven years of operating in three separate locations, students and staff were finally united in 1978 in a single permanent campus they proudly called their own. The campus was opened by then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew a year later.

The well-equipped buildings were constructed around two natural hillocks. The administration building, library, ten blocks of classrooms and laboratories, nine blocks of workshops, seven lecture theatres, were all linked by bright yellow walkways.

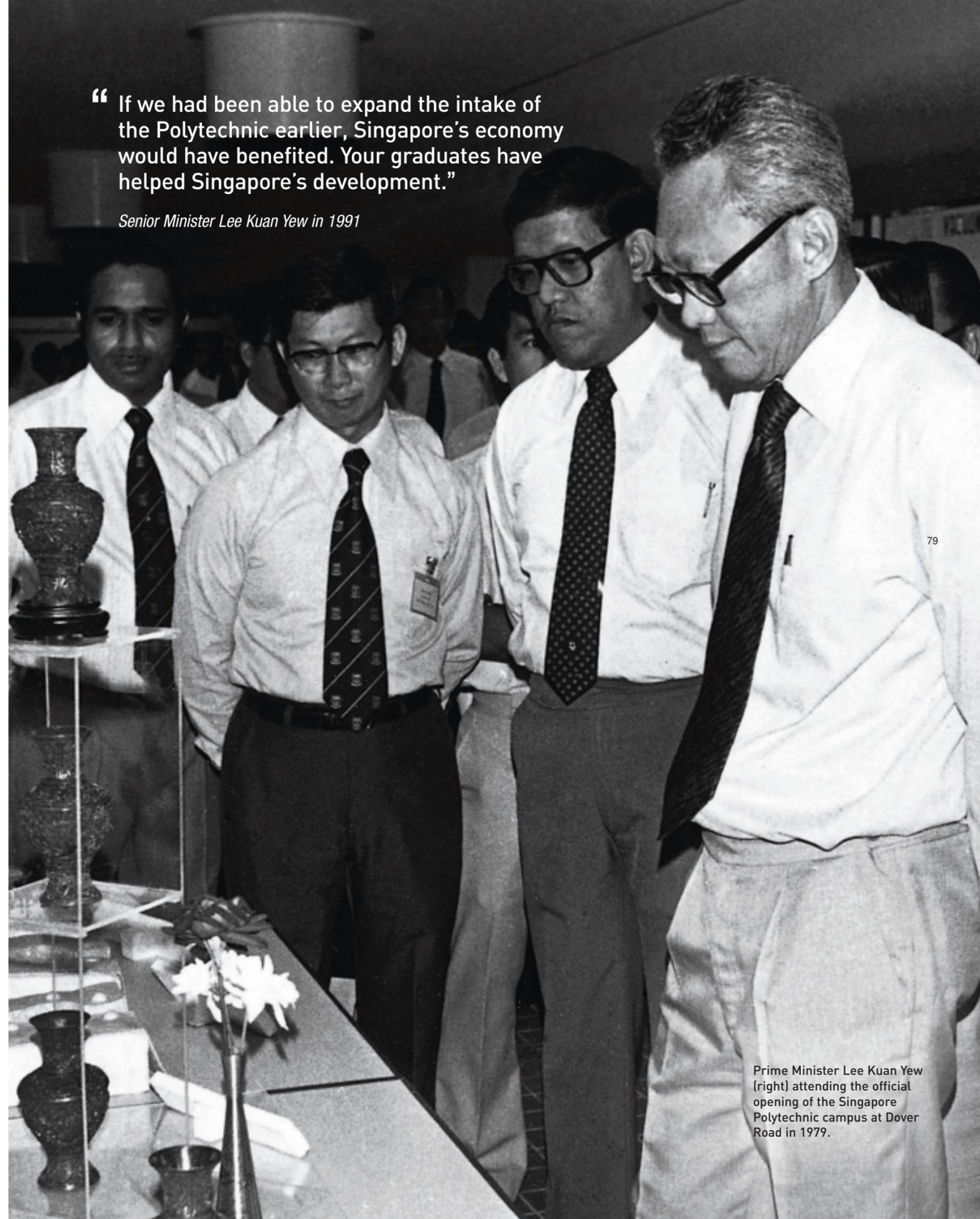
At the west end of the campus stood two blocks of staff apartments providing a total of 100 units of four-and five-room flats.

With the new and bigger facilities to accommodate 10,000 students, there was more space for everyone to move, to grow and to work together as one. Singapore Polytechnic was becoming a formidable education institution.

In the 1980s, a trend was observed in the Polytechnic's enrolments. An increasing number of students with excellent 'O' levels results were drawn to the Polytechnic. The new campus, the multi-faceted and practical curriculum, and the success stories of graduates were some of the reasons for this talent draw.

“ If we had been able to expand the intake of the Polytechnic earlier, Singapore's economy would have benefited. Your graduates have helped Singapore's development.”

*Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew in 1991*



Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (right) attending the official opening of the Singapore Polytechnic campus at Dover Road in 1979.

1986



Completion of Second Phase campus development programme which took five years



Visit by His Excellency, Mr Wee Kim Wee, President of the Republic of Singapore

1987

Japan-Singapore Institute of Software Technology (JSIST) transferred to Singapore Polytechnic

# DEVELOPED MY PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL SKILLS



**DR AARON LOH**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO, LENSPEC TECHNOLOGY  
CLASS OF 1976  
SCHOOL OF CHEMICAL & LIFE SCIENCES

A large part of his life was spent at Singapore Polytechnic, first as a student, then as a lecturer and finally, as Honorary General Secretary and Chairman (Membership) of the Graduates' Guild.

"I am ever thankful to Singapore Polytechnic, and will do whatever I can to help further its development," confided Dr Aaron Loh. He feels that his time as a student in Singapore Polytechnic has contributed to his current success. He is President and Chief Executive Officer of Lenspec Technology Pte Ltd, President of the Singapore Optical Trade Association and holds a PhD in Materials Science.

"A lot of my success has to do with the life that the Polytechnic gave us – working hard and playing hard. We did a lot of other non-curriculum activities that allowed us to develop our personality and social skills," he said.

"To be really successful as an entrepreneur, you need to have good social skills, and you need to interact with people to develop that."

He graduated from Singapore Polytechnic with a Diploma in Chemical Process Technology in 1976 and he feels that in his time, there was a more relaxed curriculum, which allowed students to really enjoy learning.

To those who feel that a polytechnic education is second-class, he replied, "If only they had met and known the many Singapore Polytechnic graduates who have done so well in life, they would not feel that way."

"A polytechnic education for the right person, in my assessment, offers the best all-rounded opportunity for one to develop into a very effective, cheerful and contributing professional."

Filled with a sense of gratitude to his alma mater, Dr Loh hopes that there will be many more graduates who feel the same way. "I wish that the Polytechnic will continue to flourish in years to come and have many graduates like myself who feel a very great sense of gratitude towards Singapore Polytechnic for having shaped their lives."



## THE PEOPLE FACTOR



"Never lose sight of the people who make it all happen in education," said Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Acting Minister for Education to the 1,000 delegates at the opening ceremony of the first Global Conference on Excellence in Education and Training.

Held as part of Singapore Polytechnic's 50th Anniversary Celebrations, 160 speakers from over 15 countries offered insights on the latest methods in teaching and learning.

Indeed, just as Singapore Polytechnic has clearly shown for the last 50 years, even with technology improving by leaps and bounds, it is still the personal efforts of teachers and educators that make the difference in the lives and the future of the students.

Chairmen – Global Conference Committee:  
Mr Lau Lee Yee  
(Director – Educational & Staff Development)  
Mr Liao Kuo Tang  
(Director – Mathematics & Science)  
Mr Francis Chan  
(Section Head – Edn & Staff Development)

It was an affirmation that the institution was going in the right direction. Many graduates returned for upgrading courses while others rejoined as teaching or administrative staff.

Mr Goh Chok Tong became the country's second Prime Minister in 1990 succeeding Mr Lee Kuan Yew who stepped down after 32 years.

In the same year, a third polytechnic opened in the eastern part of the island as Singapore Polytechnic marked its 30th graduation ceremony with its 50,000th graduate.

At the ceremony, Principal Khoo Kay Chai launched several changes that included the introduction of a foreign language programme and a four-term system to replace the existing three-term in order to accommodate longer industrial attachments. He also announced the adoption of the Swiss-German model of technical education and the acceptance of mature full-time students.

With the dawn of the New Economy, business and communications courses became topical and knowledge in these areas was extremely valuable. Trained professionals were highly demanded by the increasing number of multinational corporations that were establishing their headquarters here to reach out to the expanding regional markets.

1988



Graduates' Guild's clubhouse officially opened by Senior Minister of State for Education Dr Tay Eng Soon

1990



New \$3.3 million Sports Complex completed



50,000th graduate received his diploma at the 30th Graduation Ceremony

# GRATIFYING TO SEE SO MANY OF OUR STUDENTS COMING HOME WITH FIRST CLASS HONOURS

As the longest serving and the first local principal, Mr Khoo Kay Chai has been privileged to have seen Singapore Polytechnic grow when he first joined as an assistant lecturer before rising through the ranks to head it.

A graduate in Civil Engineering from the University of Malaya in 1961, Mr Khoo had envisioned being involved in buildings and bridges, the size and scale of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.

"Sadly, Singapore wasn't ready for another Golden Gate Bridge," the man recalled wryly. But Singapore Polytechnic was clearly ready for the man who spent his first four years as an engineer in the Public Works Department of Singapore and then as a lecturer in the Civil Engineering Department at the Polytechnic.

In 1972, he took on administrative duties, looking after the then Ayer Rajah campus. Mr Low Guan Onn, the then-Chairman, and his Board of Governors at that time knew that Mr Khoo's past experience would stand him in good stead and thus appointed him acting principal in 1976 and confirmed his position two years later.

Recalling the traumatic times of the Polytechnic, Mr Khoo said matter-of-factly, "After the Schools of Engineering, Accountancy, and Architecture and Building were transferred to the university in 1969, students had no path to take after their polytechnic education. There was no way they could go on to university which only accepted the crème de la crème; polytechnic graduates were looked upon with disdain – second-class technicians."

With morale low after the painful surgical cuts, Mr Khoo nevertheless took his staff, students and the Polytechnic through a difficult healing period. That the graduates had no option of going on to university was a painful disappointment for Mr Khoo, who opined, "They were good students, certainly not second-class technicians." Slowly and surely, the students' performance began to

catch the eye of a foreign university. "Strathclyde University at Glasgow was the first to give our Poly graduates the opportunity to further their studies by accepting them into its degree programme. It even went as far as to exempt them for a year," Mr Khoo noted with pride, "Our students didn't disappoint and they came home with first-class honours."

"Of course, even with those degrees, our graduates' ability and capability were still regarded suspiciously," said Mr Khoo. But as he was to discover, the tides soon turned. It was this developing trend of top quality graduates that soon made all the other foreign universities sit up and take notice of the Polytechnic's ability to turn out top-notch potential degree holders.

Soon, other universities started taking in Singapore Polytechnic graduates and even more came home with first-class honours. "That was gratifying. It was also ironic that our local university had to see others take a chance on our Poly graduates before they realised that they were missing out," Mr Khoo said ruefully.

For Mr Khoo, the Polytechnic's beginnings was rooted in overwhelming negative forces with students and their parents unwilling to take the polytechnic path. However, the tables were soon turned when record numbers of top 'O' levels school leavers rushed to enrol at the Polytechnic instead of junior colleges.

Of course, the former principal had his fair share of problems while heading Singapore Polytechnic. As the head of the institution, Mr Khoo often found himself surrounded and even hemmed in at his office by angry students who wanted him to take action on issues ranging from increased bus fares to bad canteen food.

Mr Khoo regarded the protests as more irritating than frightening. "I knew they would not lay a finger on me. For some reason, the students back then were aggressive and angry most of the time," he said, "But really, they were harmless."

Other teething problems included consolidating the campus at Dover Road when it was in the throes of its Big Move; the pressure to provide enough places for school leavers in the 1980s when technical training institutions were limited; competition for staff between the Polytechnic and industries; and the restructuring of the curriculum to cater to the increasing demand of industries in an environment that was rapidly becoming computerised.

"But we were very fortunate that our government backed us when student capacity was expanding furiously and new student intakes were increasing," said Mr Khoo. This was the period when new polytechnics were being established to meet the demand for technical education.

But Mr Khoo will be most remembered by his students for giving them an outlet through their co-curricular activities. "I believe in giving them as many opportunities as possible to explore this other facet of student life. Whatever clubs or social activities that the students wanted, we tried our best to oblige," Mr Khoo explained. "This is a people-oriented institution. By giving them leeway where possible, we were giving the staff and students at SP a chance to reach their highest potential and capability."

Under Mr Khoo, the Polytechnic launched an anthem in 1988 to foster its identity. He also introduced advanced diploma courses for graduates so that they have even more avenues to explore. To strengthen rapport between lecturers and students, Mr Khoo initiated the Personal Tutor Network. He established the first polytechnic Graduates' Guild clubhouse to foster alumni links and launched the Entrepreneurs' Club in February 1993 for successful alumni entrepreneurs to inspire students and instill the entrepreneurial spirit.

Looking back, Mr Khoo, who is retired and happy to travel and take leisurely lunches at his favourite haunts, said, "I really enjoyed my time at SP. It wasn't a walk in the park, but it was certainly meaningful and personally enriching."



**KHOO KAY CHAI**  
PRINCIPAL (1976-1995)

## TOUGH TIMES



Principal Khoo was a worried man in 1985. He had brought home a stack of freshly printed diplomas that he would personally sign after dinner. The diplomas were to be awarded to over 3,000 young men and women who had just completed their courses. They would be joining the workforce as graduates in the past had, but this year was different.

Singapore was facing a recession, the worst in the nation's history with a negative growth of 1.5 percent. The economy was badly affected by a worldwide slump in the petroleum and marine-related sectors, over-capacity in shipbuilding and repairs, and a slowdown in demand for semiconductors and electronics from the United States.

In the past 10 years, an average of 90 percent of Singapore Polytechnic graduates were employed within three months upon graduation. In the recession of 1985/86, this had dwindled to only 67.5 percent.

Singapore Polytechnic responded by focusing on three areas – curriculum, technology and international links. A modular system was adopted with credit accumulation and transfer system to make learning flexible. But as the Polytechnic surged ahead with its plans to attract more students and launch new courses, it had also to deal with unforeseen incidences.

A public debate brewed over the building of a hospice near the Polytechnic's sports complex. Newspapers reported students' appeals not to site the hospice next to their campus and highlighted the views of hospice committees and sympathisers who felt a sense of compassion was missing for those dying and their families.

The issues were extremely sensitive and the Polytechnic was caught in an awkward position. Eventually, the students' appeals were taken into consideration and the hospice was located elsewhere.

Crossing one hurdle after another, the longest-serving and first local principal, who fought with and fought for the students, the staff, the industries and the governing bodies, was preparing to retire. Mr Khoo Kay Kai had seen the institution transform from the darkest hours to the brightest moments and had his signature on more than 50,000 diplomas and certificates.

1990

In line with government's effort to assist local companies, the Polytechnic took on second mission of providing expertise and resources to these enterprises



Move made towards Swiss-German model of technical education

1991

Three-term academic calendar changed to one with four terms



Dual Training Scheme for workers to study part-time at the Polytechnic and receive on-the-job training at their companies introduced



“ Bournemouth University congratulates Singapore Polytechnic on the achievement of its 50th Anniversary and sends all good wishes for the future of the institution.”

Prof Gillian Slater  
Vice-Chancellor, Bournemouth University, United Kingdom

A campus icon, the *Daiko* Drum at a National Day Observance Ceremony.

# MET AMBASSADORS, MINISTERS, PRESIDENTS, A PRINCESS AND EVEN HIS WIFE ON CAMPUS

**H**e has been with Singapore Polytechnic, first as a Clerical Officer and now as a Corporate Communications Officer for nearly 40 years. Important milestones in Eddie Sim's life were reached at Singapore Polytechnic – he met his wife here and took up a part-time Diploma in Business Administration which paved the way to a Degree in Business Administration in 1995.

As Eddie's lot improved, this long-serving staff member and former student saw Singapore Polytechnic progress over the years. He recalled working in a five-storey high building in Prince Edward Road, where the small group of staff members knew everyone else. Today, Singapore Polytechnic has a sprawling 38.5-hectare campus at Dover Road and a staff strength of 1,500.

Eddie has stayed so long because of "the nice colleagues, sports facilities, staff welfare schemes, the food in six foodcourts and a staff restaurant, the educational opportunities to upgrade myself on campus and the opportunity to meet different people in my job".

Part of his work responsibilities included co-ordination of visit requests from foreign governments and institutions of higher learning, education agencies as well as various

ministries in Singapore. Over the years throughout his career, he has met dignitaries like Ambassadors, Ministers, Heads of States, *Menteri Besars* and even a Princess!

However, it was not all work for Eddie. This affable personality who always wears a ready smile remembered balancing work with lots of fun playing carrom or table tennis with colleagues at the end of each working day. He also remembered fondly the Poly 50 annual race, an event that has been organised since the 1960s.

"It was the only mass activity for students and staff in the small Prince Edward Road campus," he reminisced with a huge grin, with only a hint of sentimental undertones. "A 'boom boom' sound was created as runners stepped on the corridors that were laid with loose concrete slabs and utility pipes installed in the ground. In the enthusiasm to complete the race, many teams would 'reduce' the roundabout circuit by running across the blocks! It was more a fun thing than a serious competition."

"But today, the Poly 50 at the present Dover Road campus is very well organised and runners run in a beautifully landscaped and conducive environment."

An indication of how far Singapore Polytechnic has come over the years, just as Eddie has too.



**EDDIE SIM**  
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

# GAVE ME ADDED ADVANTAGE IN UNIVERSITY



**DR FINIAN TAN**  
**CHAIRMAN, VICKERS FINANCIAL GROUP**  
**CLASS OF 1982**  
**SCHOOL OF DESIGN & THE ENVIRONMENT**

**H**e applied for the Polytechnic because he failed Chinese. And because he was strong in Mathematics and Science, he opted for civil engineering at Singapore Polytechnic, the most popular course then. Although the beginning seemed humble, the end result was not. He wound up as a Doctor of Philosophy, no less.

Dr Finian Tan remembered that it was a big change, moving from rote learning in school to a lecture and tutorial

system. But when he went to university, his polytechnic background really helped. The subjects in his degree course in engineering had already been covered as part of his diploma course.

“It was like a revision with more depth, so it was very advantageous for me and for other diploma holders,” Dr Tan explained. “If I had gone to a junior college, I probably would not have done so well,” he added. “The rest was a lot of hard work. I kept doing better and better and that really spurred me on. And after that, I won scholarships to everywhere, including Cambridge.”

Dr Tan has a doctorate in engineering from Cambridge University in Britain, and a degree in engineering from the University of Glasgow, where he was the most distinguished graduate.

It was uphill all the way for this prominent personality in the financial industry, moving from Shell to Goldman Sachs, to the top echelons of the Civil Service, Credit Suisse First Boston and Draper, Fisher & Jurvetson and, currently, Vickers Financial Group as Chairman.

Even as a high-flyer who jetsets around the world, Singapore Polytechnic holds fond memories for Dr Tan. He smiled when he described how he was involved in a lot of sports like water polo, handball and squash. He was even in his class netball team!

For all that he has experienced and received from his alma mater, Dr Tan seeks to give back to it. “I feel proud of Singapore Polytechnic, having been a product of the Polytechnic myself. That’s why I try to contribute in as many ways as possible,” he shared.

And as a member of the Board of Governors of Singapore Polytechnic, he is in a unique position to help shape policies and directions. “I think that if we can achieve half our vision, it will already be very good because we have big goals. We need to put in the effort and lead with vision and inspire everybody to follow,” he said determinedly.

“We have good leaders in the chairman and the principal. And at the end of the day, it’s all about the people. So I’m looking forward to a very exciting new chapter for Singapore Polytechnic.”

In 1996, Mr Low Wong Fook from the Ministry of Manpower succeeded Mr Khoo as the new principal. Mr Lim Yong Wah took over as Chairman of the Board of Governors from Professor George Fong Wah in 1995.

In its formative years, the Polytechnic had benefited from the exchange and funding programmes provided by foreign governments and universities, as well as the Colombo Plan, the United Nations Development Programme, the Ford Foundation Grant and the Asia Foundation Grant.

In the post-independence period, it was the Singapore Government’s unwavering commitment to education that allowed the Polytechnic to stay on track with its expansion and upgrading plans.

In recent years, former students who have become captains of industries and leaders of their professions have returned to contribute to their alma mater and to serve in various advisory positions to make Singapore Polytechnic a breeding ground for even more successes.

From the early protestors to the new-age mobile generation, a trail of success has been blazing out of Singapore Polytechnic. Its alumni now include a Minister of State and members of Parliament, chief executive officers, entrepreneurs, engineers and research scientists; the list goes on.

## A GUILD OF THEIR OWN



The Graduates’ Guild was registered in 1971 and had been operating in shared premises until 2001 when a ritzy clubhouse, the first among the polytechnics, was opened for its 3,000 members.

Designed by a group of architects who were former students, the \$10 million modern resort-style building comes complete with recreation facilities and a business centre to help budding entrepreneurs develop and market their ideas.

**President:**  
 Dr Lim Boh Soon  
 (Group Corporate Director – Autron Corporation  
 1976 Alumnus – School of Mech & Mfg Eng)

**Honorary General Secretary:**  
 Dr Aaron Loh Chun Pong  
 (President and CEO – Lenspec Technology  
 1976 Alumnus, School of Chem & Life Sciences)

**1991**  
 Foreign language programme offered for the first time



Vacation Training Programme replaced by a longer and more structured Industrial Training Programme

**1992**



Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong officially opened the Third Phase campus development project

Modular system adopted for courses offered by the Polytechnic and at the same time, the credit accumulation and credit transfer systems were also introduced



**LIM YONG WAH**  
**CHAIRMAN & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INTER-ROLLER ENGINEERING**  
**MEMBER, SP BOARD OF GOVERNORS (1986-1995)**  
**CHAIRMAN, SP BOARD OF GOVERNORS (1995-2000)**

## GOING BEYOND CONVENTIONAL PUTS SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC ON THE RIGHT TRACK

I prefer to look forward and move ahead rather than to dwell in the past.” So gently declared Singapore Polytechnic’s former chairman Lim Yong Wah, who served on the Board of Governors from 1986 to 2000.

Calm and measured, the Chairman and Executive Director of Inter-Roller Engineering Ltd was a former student of Singapore Polytechnic back in the 1960s at Prince Edward Road campus.

This quiet and well-respected man began his career at the Economic Development Board where he was a member of the pioneering team that established the Development Bank of Singapore in 1969. He went on to join the bank until 1990.

Mr Lim prefers to keep below the radar and focus on the tasks at hand with an eye on the future. But this is a man who does not think he has seen it all and learnt it all. “I’m still learning and I never stop learning,” said Mr Lim.

While chairing the Board of Governors at the Polytechnic, Mr Lim encouraged change and virtual learning. Even though he no longer serves on its Board of Governors, Mr Lim still keeps very close contacts with his alma mater and the current principal. By regularly giving talks to the Polytechnic’s staff, he hopes to pass on ideas and approaches to doing things from other perspectives.

“We need to stay relevant. So the challenge [for the Polytechnic] is to continue to anticipate changing needs, and use different methods to get people to continue learning – it is a lifelong process. In this respect, I think Singapore Polytechnic has been quite successful,” Mr Lim emphasised.

Continuing in this train of thought, Mr Lim explained that even with graduates, learning does not and should not

stop. They should be engaged to continue to learn, to relearn and to cultivate the will to change.

For Mr Lim, dealing with work and life means constantly trying to think beyond the conventional, “because our brain itself has limitations”. So, to progress, he emphasised the need to think beyond the conventional by reading and by talking to others. Constantly using information and processes beyond the conventional will enable change.

Based on his unconventional wisdom, Singapore Polytechnic, other institutions and even organisations should, in his opinion, be able to change and to make the necessary cuts, no matter how painful, to keep up with future trends.

Continuing, Mr Lim said, “To me, rebooting is the essence of everything. One cannot be right every time. One should constantly monitor whether matters are executed rightly or wrongly and to reboot. It is a challenge to find people who believe in this and I believe SP’s current team is on the right track.”

It comes as no surprise then that his hobby entails collecting driftwood and constantly visualising if they can be fashioned into something else. “I leave some pieces alone while I take my time to consider if they can be carved into interesting forms. Other pieces are worthless and have to be thrown away,” Mr Lim said.

Yet, even in collecting and shaping these pieces of driftwood, the man’s philosophy comes through. “A piece of driftwood has good and bad parts. Sometimes, even if a section of it is in excellent condition, if it doesn’t fit or gel in with the rest to make sense, it has to be thrown out.”

# SHAPED MY LIFE AND CAREER IN TOTALITY



**TAN THENG WEE**  
**MANAGING DIRECTOR, CYANSYS**  
**CLASS OF 1986**  
**SCHOOL OF INFO-COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

**H**e was awarded a Diploma in Programming and Systems Analysis by the Japan-Singapore Institute of Software Technology (JSIST) in 1986. The following year, JSIST became an autonomous department in Singapore Polytechnic and in 1997 was renamed as Department of Software Technology.

Life at the JSIST World Trade Centre campus was “like a working experience”. The diploma course was intensive, with lessons starting as early as 8.30 am and ending at 5 pm every day.

“It was the beginning of my IT career and the place where I met my wife. So, I guess the experience really shaped my life and career in totality,” Tan Theng Wee said.

Today, he is the Managing Director of CyanSYS Singapore and Malaysia, an IT business solutions company specialising in financial and business management software applications.

“I am thankful that I got a solid foundation from the diploma course,” he shared. “When I pursued my postgraduate degree at Glasgow University, it was really easy for me. The skills acquired have remained with me until today.”

Studying for the diploma was a wonderful experience for him and he could vividly recall the moments of joy, anxiety and comradeship, as well as the excellent lecturers, staff

and students.

In those days, he and his friends would always camp in his “little three-room HDB flat” during exams and slog through the nights together. “We took turns to do the housework, cook and also conduct revision for our weaker classmates,” he reminisced.

He has kept up “an intimate relationship” with Singapore Polytechnic too, as some of his lecturers are still teaching there. Every year, some Singapore Polytechnic students also do their attachment programmes at his company.

His wish is for Singapore Polytechnic to continue producing quality graduates who can differentiate themselves not just academically but also possess an entrepreneurial spirit and are willing to take calculated risks. Such risk-takers, by working for budding local IT businesses or by creating start-ups themselves, will bring more value and create job opportunities for Singaporeans.

“A polytechnic diploma is a quick jumpstart to your career,” he commented. “It is just like reading books for ‘dummies’. You can get a job easily with a polytechnic diploma. Thereafter, exposure, experiences and your attitude towards lifelong learning take over.”

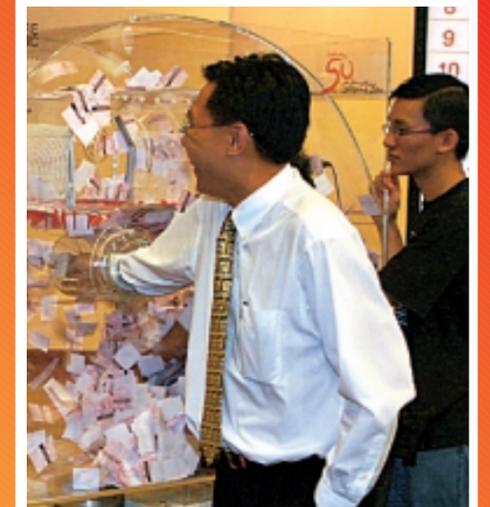
There is a certain resilience and depth of character in people who have been through Singapore’s first polytechnic.

Perhaps it is being part of the technical workforce that won the hearts and minds of industrialists and technologists. Perhaps it is the competitive nature that drove so many to continuously upgrade and seek new opportunities for themselves. Or the attitude of not taking things as they are presented to them and the boldness to demand for acceptable answers.

But clearly, it must be the Polytechnic’s values that have been inculcated in them to make the most and the best for themselves in their careers and for their fellow beings in society, regardless of whatever storms there might be on perfectly sunny days.



## ENDOWMENT DRAW



Singapore Polytechnic students were enticed with movies, cappuccinos and drink vouchers from the Polytechnic’s Food Haven to sell tickets for the Singapore Polytechnic Endowment Fund Donation Draw.

The Donation Draw was a resounding success, raising \$128,000.

This healthy contribution to the fund will support many worthy activities like financial assistance for needy students, prizes and awards for outstanding graduates and help promote excellence in teaching.

Chairman – Donation Draw Committee:  
 Mr Lim Peng Hun  
 (Director – Industry Services)

1993



Launch of Singapore Polytechnic Entrepreneurs' Club for graduates who had become successful entrepreneurs

1994



Official opening of Fourth Phase campus development project by Minister for Education Lee Yock Suan

“ Kanazawa Technical College is proud of its long established relationship with Singapore Polytechnic. Over the past 20 years, more than 3,000 of our students, staff and alumni have visited your campus. All were impressed by Singapore Polytechnic's outstanding quality of education and returned enriched by the cross-cultural experience. Best wishes for your continued growth and success.”

*Dr Masakiyo Horioka  
President, Kanazawa Technical College, Japan*

“ Singapore Polytechnic is one of our highly valued strategic partners for exchange programmes. I look forward to many more years of close collaboration with our friends in Singapore. My best wishes to Singapore Polytechnic for continued success and prosperity in the years ahead.”

*Prof Morakot Tanticharoen  
Director, National Center for Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology, Thailand*



Fanfare horns making a debut appearance at the 2005 River Raft Race.

“ The University of New South Wales is proud to have been associated with Singapore Polytechnic for many years. Singapore Polytechnic has much to celebrate as a proactive, innovative and outward-looking institution that serves the needs of Singapore, the Asian region and beyond. UNSW looks forward to further deepening its relationship with Singapore Polytechnic over the next 50 years. On behalf of all the staff and students at UNSW, we wish Singapore Polytechnic all the very best.”

*Prof Wyatt R Hume  
Vice-Chancellor and President, University of New South Wales, Australia*

Thirty-eight-hectare campus with lush greenery offers an ideal learning environment.

“ The friendship between our two institutions has been going well since its establishment. We highly appreciate it and strongly believe that our cooperation will be strengthened with many achievements in scientific research and training in the coming years. I wish you great success for your 50th Anniversary Celebrations.”

*Prof Tran Quoc Thang  
Rector, Hanoi University of Technology, Vietnam*



“ Tianjin University of Technology is proud of its 10 years of relationship with Singapore Polytechnic. May the links between our institutions continue to develop with each passing day. I look forward to many more years of close collaboration with our friends in Singapore. My best wishes to Singapore Polytechnic for continued success and prosperity in the years ahead.”

*Li Jun  
President, Tianjin University of Technology, China*

“ Singapore Polytechnic and The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences share a rich educational history. While Singapore Polytechnic celebrates its 50th year in 2004, The Michener Institute will celebrate this milestone in 2008. Both institutions have made a long-term commitment to providing students with a quality education that prepares them for work and life. The Michener Institute sends congratulations and best wishes in celebration of 50 years of ‘Opening Minds and Shaping Lives’.”

*Dr Paul Gamble  
President and CEO, The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences, Canada*

Experiment using animal cells in the Hybridoma Technology Laboratory.



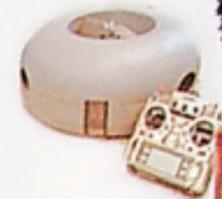
“ I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for Singapore Polytechnic's effort to promote closer cooperation between the two institutions. I sincerely hope that the ties between our institutions will be strengthened in the future.”

*Prof Yu Shicheng  
President, Shanghai Maritime University, China*

**PROJECT V67**  
VTOL UAV

**OBJECTIVE**

Design and Build a Vertical Take-Off / Landing (VTOL) Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV).



Model  
Distance  
Photography

**Future of Commercial UAVs**

The vertical take-off/landing unmanned aerial vehicle is one of many final-year student projects on show at the SPINNOVEX 2005 exhibition.