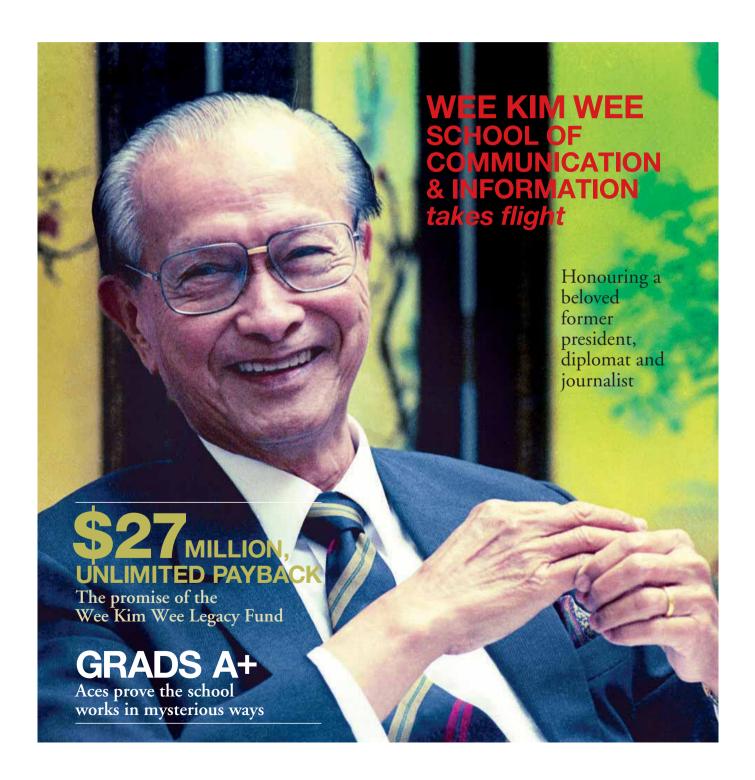


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Another 'Wow' Moment

here are days in life when you just have to stop for a moment and let out a big "Wow!". Like on 29 August last year when NTU celebrated its 50th birthday. Or from 8 to 17 July this year when NTU hosted the world's largest and most prestigious physics olympiad, featuring more than 400 young prodigies and Nobel laureates from 86 countries.

More recently, the university's School of Communication & Information has been splendidly named the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information, in honour of our late President Dr Wee Kim Wee, a former pressman and diplomat, who found in journalism his true calling.

At the same time, the Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund, set up last year to support the school's work and vision, has raised more than \$27 million. We thank the Chairman of the Fund, the Fund-raising committee members, and the many supporters and benefactors for their commitment and generosity.

This issue of @NTU is dedicated to the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information. In the following pages, you'll read about graduates and faculty who make us go, "Wow!". You'll find out fascinating facts about the school and learn all about the interesting programmes and projects our fortunate undergraduates undergo.

Get ready to be Wowed.

Ms Tan Su Yuen Editor-in-Chief

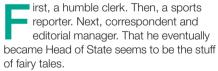
On behalf of the editorial team



ALIFE BEYON Dr Wee Kim Wee, the "People's President".

"People's President", inspired many with his gumption, spirit of adventure and sense of duty. But journalism was his greatest calling, and he leaves a living legacy for the future.

By EILEEN TAN



But in characteristic fashion, Dr Wee Kim Wee would have said he had done nothing extraordinary.

And if he could live his life all over again, he would have chosen to carry the human race forward on the wings of his journalistic pen. Journalism, he loved first and foremost.

Today, Dr Wee lends his name to one of the top schools of its kind in Asia.

Born the fourth and youngest child on 4 November 1915, Dr Wee cut short his studies at Raffles Institution to supplement the family income.

He landed a job at The Straits Times, moving from clerical duties in the circulation department to the advertising section, and



ILLUSTRATION: **JOANNA TAN,** WEE KIM WEE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION later, to the sports field as a reporter. By the late 1950s, he had earned his stripes, having also worked for the United Press Association as Chief Correspondent. He rejoined The Straits Times as Deputy Editor in 1959 and was later appointed Editorial Manager.

A LEGEND IN THE NEWSROOM

As a reporter, Dr Wee covered some of the biggest stories of the day. He was a truth-seeker, tenacious yet diplomatic, and extremely adept at getting reluctant newsmakers to open up.

In fact, some of the things he did became newsroom legends. In 1966, he scored a world scoop – an exclusive interview with Lieutenant-General Suharto of Indonesia, who had just ascended to power.

Dr Wee's story, "Peace: The sooner the better", was splashed across the front page of The Straits Times on 2 May 1966. It told of the Indonesian leader's desire to end a three-year-long confrontation in the region. Peace followed soon after.

The intrepid journalist found himself in other dicey situations. In 1960, he cut short a vacation in Copenhagen to report on the turmoil facing newly-independent Congo. Defying the odds, he entered Congo within 48 hours – with little money and no visa – and went on to file two stories a day amid the chaos.

DIPLOMATIC LEANINGS

Armed with numerous contacts he had made during his years as a journalist, Dr Wee moved on to the next stage of his career as a diplomat. He was High Commissioner to Malaysia for seven years – for which he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in 1979 – and later served as Singapore's Ambassador to Japan and South Korea.

He also championed the formation of the Singapore Press Club, as he believed in promoting camaraderie among journalists and the best values of the profession.

In his memoirs, Dr Wee wrote: "Journalism has given me so much and more, allowing me to meet kings and emperors, famous Hollywood actors and actresses to taxi drivers and sweet potato sellers. This moulded me

into a diplomat without any training and prepared me for the duties of Head of State that I performed without difficulty."

THE PEOPLE'S PRESIDENT

After retiring from diplomatic service in 1984, Dr Wee was appointed Chairman of the then-Singapore Broadcasting Corporation.

Journalism, his family and friends recalled, was his greatest calling and his truest passion.

A year later, at the age of 70, the man once described by Singapore's founding father Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew as "a man of integrity and dignity, without affectations", became Singapore's fourth President.

He served two terms from 1985 to 1993, ushering in the era of the elected Presidency.

As President of the Republic, Dr Wee made himself accessible to all Singaporeans, corporate honchos and ordinary citizens alike. He was also Chancellor of NTU and the National University of Singapore (NUS).

In 1994, Dr Wee received an honorary degree – the Doctor of Letters – from NUS. A year later, NTU established the Wee Kim Wee Professorship in Communication Studies as a tribute to Dr Wee for his contributions to the nation and the field of communication.

GIVING BACK

Dr Wee continued to nourish the people in his later years. For all his accomplishments, he lived a simple life, using his experience and position to serve the common man.

Despite his increasing frailty, he visited the less fortunate and celebrated festive occasions with the infirm and destitute.

In February 2004, at the ripe old age of 88, he completed his memoirs, Glimpses and Reflections. The book raised \$500,000 for eight charities.

Dr Wee's interest in journalism continued long after he left the profession. There were

scintillating conversations with current journalists and former colleagues – on topics such as filial piety, love of nation, and the quality of the Singapore media.

When Dr Wee passed away in the early hours of 2 May 2005, exactly 39 years after his world scoop on the Confrontation first made the headlines, Singapore mourned along with his wife of 69 years, Koh Sok Hiong, son, six daughters and 13 grandchildren.

INDELIBLE INFLUENCE

Dr Wee's compassion and humility has moved many.

To honour and cherish his memory, NTU has named its communication and information school after him. The Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information will nurture high-calibre graduates who will pursue their professions without compromise while being mindful of national interest.

It was also immediately after Dr Wee's passing that a group of community leaders came together to do something special for the man who had touched them in so many ways. Journalism, his family and friends recalled, was his greatest calling and his truest passion.

And so the Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund, in service of Singapore's only university-level communication and information school – a hub of journalism and media – was born. The fund-raising target of \$25 million has since been exceeded.

In his eulogy, Singapore's Prime Minister, Mr Lee Hsien Loong, described Dr Wee's life as an extraordinary and inspiring story of humility and service to humanity.

"His own life embodied what Singapore stands for and aspires to be – opportunity in the midst of difficulties, success through diligence and ability, humility despite high office, the power of integrity and human goodness, and the importance of respect, graciousness, compassion and love."

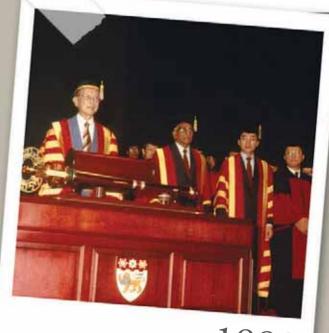
Faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends of the university could not have agreed more.

man for all seasons

As President of Singapore, Dr Wee was also Chancellor of NTU and officiated at Convocation ceremonies and other university functions. We remember his warm words and kind smile.



Official opening of the new academic complex at Nanyang
Technological Institute
Technological Institute



 $\mathsf{Convocation}\ 1992$



Convocation 1993



1997 Official opening of the School of Communication Studies building



 $1995 \ \, \text{Launch of the Wee Kim Wee Professorship} \\ \text{in Communication Studies}$



Remembering Dr Wee (1915 - 2005)

INSPIRATION

\$27 Million, Unlimited Payback

With the fund-raising target exceeded, the promise of the Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund unfolds. Many more generations of NTU students will benefit.

By EILEEN TAN

Reaching out in whole new ways: The Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund will help ensure that the future movers and shakers of the media and information industries get the best

ith more than \$27 million raised in 18 months, the Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund marks a happy milestone. The sum, which includes a matching grant from the Singapore government, will support the vision and work of the school and help ensure its vitality for years to come.

"Wee Kim Wee, the People's President, attracted donations ranging from \$5 to \$5 million, from more than 750 donors from all walks of life," says Mrs Marina Tan-Harper, NTU's Director of Development and Secretary-General of the Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund Committee.

Students will benefit the most as the money raised will go towards scholarships, bursaries and new, innovative programmes that enhance the educational experience of our students. The top brass of the industry will also be invited to enrich the school and wider community.

So far, 16 named scholarships, bursaries and awards of excellence have been instituted on the fund. Together with the general Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund, these components will help the school fulfil its mission of grooming top talent for the communication and information industries [see box story].

One example of a programme that resonates with Dr Wee's pioneering spirit is Going Overseas For Advanced Reporting (GO-FAR), inaugurated in 2005. As a journalist, Dr Wee travelled to a number of countries in the region and became a bridge between these nations and Singapore through his reports.

Says NTU President Dr Su Guaning: "We wish for his values and passion to be an inspiration to the future journalists and media professionals that we are grooming here in NTU. Graduates of the

school will be able to stand proud, and have the same pioneering spirit as Dr Wee, as they play a leading role in Singapore's bid to be a global media hub."

The Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund-raising Committee is chaired by Mr Kwee Liong Keng, Managing Director of Pontiac Land. In the 10-member committee are Ms Jennie Chua (President and Chief Executive Officer of Raffles Holdings Limited), Mr Sim Kee Boon, Mr Willie Cheng, Mr Patrick Daniel (Managing Editor, English and Malay Newspapers Division, Singapore Press Holdings), Mr Stephen Lee (Chairman of Singapore Business Federation), Dr Su Guaning, Mr Anthony Teo (Secretary to the University, NTU), Assoc Prof Ang Peng Hwa (Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information Chair), Prof Eddie Kuo (Professor, NTU), and Mrs Marina Tan-Harper. The Patron of the Fund is Mr S R Nathan, President of the Republic of Singapore.

Donations of \$5,000 or more have been acknowledged on the school's new Donor Wall.

The university and committee sincerely thank Mrs Wee Kim Wee and the Wee family for supporting the school's vision.

We are grateful to the group of fervent volunteers who have come together to start the Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund to honour and cherish Dr Wee's legacy. We are indeed honoured to be the beneficiary of this fund.

- NTU PRESIDENT DR SU GUANING

Eyes & Ears on the future

Singapore remains a significant node in the regional and global information highway. With the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information focused on turning out international talent for new global realities, the future looks bright.

he Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information, Singapore's only university-level communication and information school, is part of NTU's College of Humanities & Arts.

In just 14 years, it has gained iconic status as one of the finest schools in the region for communication and information education and research. Competition for entry is keen, with top students from Singapore and abroad seeking admission.

Through its five divisions – Journalism and Publishing, Electronic and Broadcast Media, Public and Promotional Communication, Communication Research, and Information Studies – the school meets the regional and global demand for well-trained talent.

Besides undergraduate and graduate communication and information degree programmes, it offers a second major to students enrolled in NTU's School of Humanities & Social Sciences.

As media and information professionals, the school's graduates are highly sought after for their expertise, problem-solving skills and creativity. Many have scooped top awards for their original work even as students.

The school's students and faculty continue to cast a critical eye on communication and information topics and policy issues relevant to Singapore and the region. These high-impact projects – undertaken with top universities, media groups, information organisations and government agencies – are regularly showcased in international journals and scholarly fora.







Abel Ang

VP at billion-dollar US firm Class of 1997

ome top executives see it coming when they forge a mind-blowing career.

Not Abel Ang. He remembers looking at his dismal grades in journalism class, saying to himself, "I'm in the wrong school."

In a faculty dominated by the future brass in news, TV and advertising, how did a medical school 'hopeful' with the unlikely passion for IT and telecommunications bust through the clutter?

2,000 jobs. But, first, the holder of a Bachelor's in Communication Studies had to earn a Master's in Computational Biology from Rutgers University – in a year.

"Miracles happen," he states – and that's that. "Many people are held back in life because they think they can't do it when, in fact, many things are not rocket science. What is Computational Biology but using statistics to solve biological problems?"

The School of Communication & Information gave me the flexibility to take what I was taught and create something that I was interested in.

Well, first, he had to figure out that he was in the right school.

"I realised what I was studying had relevance," he says. "The School of Communication & Information gave me the flexibility to take what I was taught and create something that I was interested in. I had a Research and Methods class, so what did I do? I developed research methods studying the Internet."

He also put together an almost telepathist e-commerce business plan for a New Technologies module in 1996 – about three years before the dot-com boom.

Having found a way to get through journalism class and armed with a First Class Honours degree, Abel joined the Economic Development Board's (EDB) then-new Communications and Media Group in 1997.

Truly believing "there is no higher calling" than creating jobs for fellow Singaporeans, he set about peddling the country to the rest of the world.

"I've actually cornered CEOs on planes before," the 33-year-old father of two says with a chuckle. "The guy couldn't get out, so I kept talking about Singapore during the whole flight, and why he should come and do business here."

Handpicked to head EDB's biomedical department, Abel, together with his team, roped in US\$500 million worth of investments between 2003 and 2005, creating about

Sounds easy when he says it. With such a can-do attitude, it's little wonder that billiondollar healthcare company Hill-Rom welcomed Abel in June to join its mix at its Indiana HQ as Vice-President overseeing the international side of Business, Technology and Strategy Development.

He had known the CEO of the American firm since the latter set up a research centre for another company in Singapore – with help from EDB – a few years ago.

"At the end of the day, business decisions are made by people," Abel says when asked how Hill-Rom decided he was The Man. "And people are driven by relationships and their perceptions of reality."

It's a reality that Abel took the programme at NTU and ran with it. It's a reality that he still flies Economy, wears a Seiko watch and dons off-the-rack suits – never mind that his annual income at Hill-Rom is likely to put him in a most enviable tax bracket. It's a reality that he cleans his own house – "at US\$30 per hour, I'll do it myself, thank you very much!" – and firmly puts family and people first.

While feeling "blessed" that he had "mentors" watching out for him at every stage of his career, he humbly waves away your suggestion that they did so because of his lively intelligence. His trustworthiness. His basic goodness.

"Maybe I'm just needy!" he quips. "I need looking after!"





Diana Ser

Nanyang Outstanding Young Alumni Award winner Class of 2003

n a year that saw TV overrun with almost-famous faces vying to be the next Superhost/ Superband/Supermodel, those of us withering from a reality-show overkill found salvation in Diana Ser's reality-check news documentary, Get Rea!.

Which was why the breaking news in October that the 34-year-old was leaving MediaCorp hit us – and Diana – particularly hard. "I feel very sad because my three years in Channel NewsAsia was about Get Real," she tells @NTU. "There was not a day when I didn't have a member of the public coming up to me and saying encouraging things."

So was quitting a hard decision?

I was looking for a lifeline actually. Something to inspire me further, to give me a fresh perspective for the job. What I liked best about the Master's programme was the return to theory and research.

"Yes and no," she says. "'Yes' because I love telling stories through the medium of television. 'No' because the media environment here can be very trying. The decision to leave was made easier when I got pregnant, and my baby happened to arrive just when my contract was up."

In case you're wondering, she tells us she's not going to be a full-time mum, without elaborating on her future plans except to mention that she would like to help aspiring TV journalists.

Diana, of course, married TV actor-turned-Citibanker James Lye after a reportedly onoff nine-year courtship. But we'll leave the details to the tabloids. Over here at @NTU, we print quotes about her long-term bonds worthy of a publication from an academic institution, such as:

"It's been a hell of a rollercoaster ride, burntout, experimental, foolhardy – all of which I consider good things."

Oh wait. She's talking about her eight-year stint as a TV actress-host before she took a study break to pursue a Master's degree at NTU.

"I was looking for a lifeline actually," she says, "something to inspire me further, to give me a fresh perspective for the job. What I liked best about the Master's programme was the return to theory and research."

In NTU, she met guest lecturer and The Business Times editorial product manager Mike Chua, who invited her to apply for a job at the Singapore Press Holdings. After spells at the now-defunct Streats and Channel i news, the intrepid Diana made a pre-merger move to MediaCorp News in 2003 to produce Get Rea!.

"Every decision was made as a leap of faith," she says about her seemingly foiblefree life. "Perhaps after I made the decision, I worked hard to make it the right one."



Serena Ng

Wall Street Journal reporter Class of 2000

ou can take a journalist out of journalism, but you can't take journalism out of a journalist.

Serena Ng's first internship was at a fashion magazine, where she had to buy coffee and lunch for colleagues everyday. But no matter. She stayed true to her calling, and is now earning a load of R-E-S-P-E-C-T as a spot-on, analytical business and financial reporter at the Wall Street Journal (WSJ).

From her base in New York, the 29-year-old covers the US financial and bond markets, possibly affecting stock markets all over the world with a few mighty strokes of her pen.

"I enjoy learning something new with virtually every story I write," she says. "Part of my decision to become a financial reporter is also strategic – while there are many reporters around, only a small percentage understand and can report business news in a clear and engaging way."

A former chief editor at NTU's student newspaper The Nanyang Chronicle, Serena did her Professional Internship at Reuters before joining The Business Times upon graduation in 2000.

"I wouldn't have ventured into journalism or business reporting if not for my studies at NTU, which made my stints at The Nanyang Chronicle and Reuters possible," she says.

In 2003, she applied for a fellowship to study business journalism at New York University (NYU) after seeing an advertisement in The Wall Street Journal Asia. She didn't win, but NYU offered a partial scholarship for the Master's programme.

"And I went for it," she says.

While in NYU, Serena applied to enter a summer internship programme at the WJS. "The paper hires several of its best-performing interns each year," she explains. "The 10-week internship is a venue for each student to prove himself or herself. There is little hand-holding, and straight news stories are seldom assigned – a lot depends on each person's ability to come up with good story ideas independently and write well."

To make up for her lack of a formal background in economics or finance, Serena devoured financial news stories and books about Wall Street, putting questions to friends, colleagues and industry contacts whenever she encountered unfamiliar concepts.

"There's no room for mediocrity in an organisation like the WSJ," she agrees with this writer. "It was either sink or swim, and I chose to swim hard."

Seng Choon Meng

Co-owner of Scrawl Studios Class of 2000

very now and then, the student photographer in this small office in the middle of Pagoda Street will ask Seng Choon Meng to snap his head around. And snarl.

And because he's so gosh-darn nice, the 31-year-old co-founder of animation firm Scrawl Studios obliges. The truth is, prim and placid Choon Meng doesn't look anything like his creation, Nanoboy, a nanosized superhero who fights evil bacteria in the microscopic world.

Nanoboy was developed in 2003 as a mobile game, but is being turned into a 13-episode digital animation series that will be distributed in South Korea, Thailand, the USA and Europe when it's completed next year.

But "maybe there's a little of Nanoboy in all of us," Choon Meng offers. "Ordinary in real-life, but exceptional when the call to action comes."

He should know – he and two National Service bunk buddies turned Scrawl from a no-frills, work-from-home outfit into a player to be reckoned with just as the local animation industry is heating up.

Travelling all over the world to meet collaborators at trade fairs has paid off as Scrawl looks ahead to a slew of co-productions with global partners such as Hong Kong's Agogo Productions.

Original animations aside, Scrawl also produces educational videos for the National Council of Social Service, animated TVCs for Safra Radio and Union Gas, and interactive animated CD-ROMs and comics for Citibank and the Singapore Discovery Centre.

"Being surrounded by classmates who were budding filmmakers helped stoke my passion for animated media," he says. "Classes like Film Theory, Visual Communication, and Video Production gave me the technical know-how and theoretical base for animated film production."





The
picture

Having steered the school these past few years, Ang Peng Hwa talks about the Penal Code, hiccups and the way ahead.

By HO PEK YEE

ASN'T HE A LAWYER? He was a law graduate, but never practised as a legal eagle. "I took the exam and joined a law firm to do pupilage," he says. "I even bought a suit that cost more than my allowance! But when I was called to the bar, I joined the Singapore Monitor [the last major alternative paper which closed in 1986] as a reporter."

BUT HE HAD BOUGHT A SUIT. What's a little tweed when a man has found his calling? Peng Hwa's two-and-a-half years as a journalist eventually led him to a doctorate degree in mass media from Michigan State University. He returned to help set up NTU's School of Communication Studies in 1993.

HOW DOES THE BIG PICTURE LOOK LIKE? It's panoramic, but

forget everything you've heard about perfect pictures. Lobbying recently for the chance to host the annual International Communication Association conference in 2010, he ran into a road block. "The Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Interest Group voted against us at first," he says. "They thought Section 377 of our Penal Code will throw them in jail." Peng Hwa, however, soon set the record straight – and got a resounding 'aye' for the school.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? "It's an endorsement for Singapore," he says. "People don't hold these meetings in places where they don't think they can discuss freely. We've managed to show that the research here is of such calibre that you can come and have serious discussions."

HOW SERIOUS? So serious that the school organised The Fourth Chinese Internet Conference in July, and will be seeing to the first World Journalism Education Congress next year. "My colleagues have been doing good research," Peng Hwa explains. "So people

say, 'Maybe there's something here.'" WHY SHOULD HE CARE WHAT PEOPLE SAY? "We want to influence," he says about the school's long-term plan. "We want people to look to us for direction in media education and research. We want our faculty to be able to go places for research, and for our students to be easily hired everywhere." SO IS THE SCHOOL EVERYTHING IT SHOULD BE? It's getting there. "Three things make a great programme - good infrastructure, good students and good faculty," Peng Hwa maintains. This is why the Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund will go entirely towards developing staff and students, with 40 per cent set aside for scholarships and bursaries, 40 per cent for research programmes, and the remaining 20 per cent for visiting professors.

We had a student who was accused of plagiarism while on an exchange programme in Missouri. They convened a committee of inquiry and she was confined to a room to write. And she wrote. After that, the lecturer who started the proceeding apologised. Now we have a good rep in Missouri.

brought 24 aspiring journalists to Aceh and Sri Lanka last year to cover the tsunami relief effort. As for having good teachers, "good faculty will come if you have a collegiate atmosphere that people can work and function in – that's something which money cannot

buy; that's up to the leadership to create."

WHAT'S ON TOP OF THE SCHOOL'S TO-DO LIST? "Our goal is to have good students from Singapore and the region, and to train good students to function in Singapore and the region," he says. "Media is linked to culture. If you want to know Singapore and the region, this is the university for you. Having said that, however. we do train students to function internationally, and many of them do very well on the world stage. Top universities like Stanford and Northwestern recognise our degree because they have experienced the quality of our students and graduates." HAVE THEY HEARD OF JOANNE PEH? "The biggest misconception people have of the school is that we

prepare students to be news presenters. The truth is, you can be shy and still do well here. Skills can be picked up quickly on the job, but not the ability to analyse and be creative. For that, you need an environment where students are motivated and challenged by one another – it's like iron sharpening iron."

NOT BUYING ANOTHER, SAY, WATER-COOLER? "We already have the infrastructure," says Peng Hwa. The school would rather use the money to sponsor study-abroad programmes for students – GO-FAR (or Going Overseas For Advanced Reporting), for instance,

Ang Peng Hwa's take on...

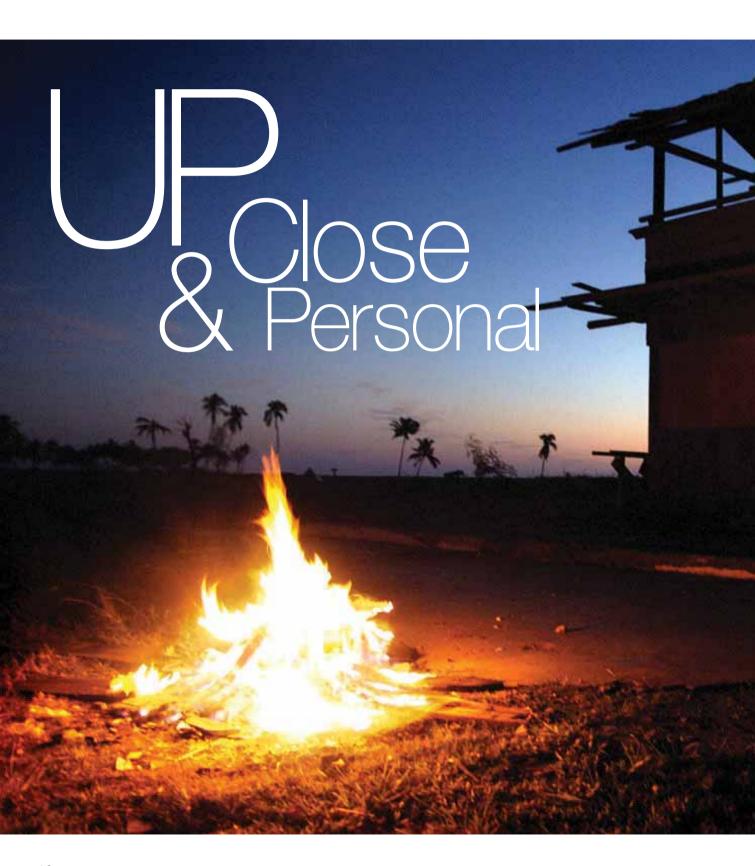
GOOD ADVICE "I told this former student who had left journalism to go back. It's not easy to find a calling in life. Pay is secondary because if you're doing a good job and (your boss) doesn't pay you well, someone else will hire you."

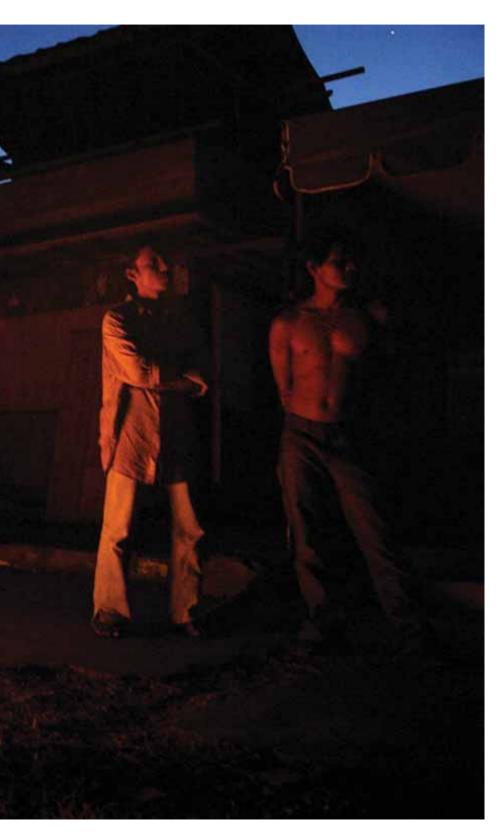
TEACHING "I remember playing golf with former journalism teacher Tan Lai Kim in Boston, and, when we both completed a par-four hole, he said he was happier for me than for himself. I think good teachers are happy when their students do well or even better than themselves."

FEARS "We have built a collegiate atmosphere, and my fear is of ever losing that and becoming a less friendly place."

'HICCUPS' "We had a student who was accused of plagiarism while on an exchange programme in Missouri. They convened a committee of inquiry and she was confined to a room to write. And she wrote. After that, the lecturer who started the proceeding apologised. Now we have a good rep in Missouri."







Months after losing their homes to the December 2004 tsunami, residents of Indonesia's hard-hit Meulaboh still stay in makeshift huts and tents, bonfires as their only light at night. This picture and others featured here are taken by students on the NTU-sponsored GO-FAR programme. From the devastated coastlines of Indonesia and Sri Lanka to the Tibetan refugee camps in Nepal, the students come away with a new understanding of photojournalism - and the human spirit.

By HO PEK YEE

PHOTOS: JESSICA LIM, SHARON SEE, SHYAM TEKWANI, YEO GHIM LAY, PATRICIA YAP & GWYNETH YEO





PILLAR OF STRENGTH On a pillar at her home in Sri Lanka, Vithya has written the names of her mother and sister, whose lives were claimed by the tsunami.





THREE WISHES Sri Lankan siblings Pragashini, Priyanthashini and Pragash tell Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information graduate Gwyneth Yeo that they are confident their dreams of becoming doctors and teachers will still come true.

n 26 December two years ago, 13-year-old Vithya lost her mother and sister when 15-metre waves travelling a few kilometres inland killed about 30,000 people in Sri Lanka. In the crude hut where she now lives with her father, stepmother and brother, she has written the names of her perished family members on a rough pillar.

Her story would have been another untold tale in tsunami-battered Sri Lanka if not for Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information graduate Gwyneth Yeo, who visited Sri Lanka and Aceh last July and September together with 23 classmates.

Curtain-lifting for the school's GO-FAR (Going Overseas For Advanced Reporting) programme, the two weeklong learning expeditions were designed to expose students to hands-on foreign correspondent work.





UNSHAKEABLE FAITH A woman prays at the Murugan Temple, which was displaced by the tidal waves. "I am confident that the overseas experience will help boost my portfolio and aid me in landing a job as a photojournalist locally or overseas," says Gwyneth.

The fully-sponsored GO-FAR programme recently sent 12 students to civil war-torn Nepal. However, it was Meulaboh, the Indonesian coastal town closest to the epicentre of the earthquake, which left a firm imprint on Patricia Yap. Her photo essay, A Simple World, chronicles how the girls at an Islamic boarding school kept their faith while coping with the aftermath of the tsunami.





PAINFUL LOSS

Hayun Siman stayed alive by holding on to the wood from his former house in Aceh's Meulaboh as he was swept out to sea. Till today, he doesn't know where his wife's body is.



"The girls welcomed me into their little huts, and offered to share whatever little food they had," she remembers. "It was heart-wrenching to see the devastation. At the same time, it was moving to see the Acehnese moving on with their lives and slowly trying to forget their pain and fear of the sea."

According to travelling companion and The Straits Times freelance photographer

Jessica Lim, whose pictures capture a still-beautiful Meulaboh: "In the classroom, one can only speak in theory about many things. I was extremely relieved to find that the two weeks I spent in Indonesia not only confirmed what I believed to be my passion, it also strengthened it because I loved it more than I thought."

The two weeks in Indonesia not only confirmed my passion, it also strengthened it because I loved it more than I thought.



separates the classroom from the rest of the corridor.

22





LABOUR OF LOVE
Sharon See gets to
know 80-year-old
Gamo Tsering, who
takes care of toddlers
at a Tibetan refugee
camp in Nepal's
Kathmandu while their
parents are at work parents are at work.



The international faculty at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information give students a global context for success.

By HO PEK YEE



Intil 1492, people everywhere believed the world was flat. Columbus changed all that, and we now accept this simple fact: Set out in any direction and you will find your way home. So why is New York Times journalist Thomas Friedman telling us again that the world is flat?

Obviously, he isn't suggesting that parts of the world are dangling over the edge. Rather, he is underscoring how the knowledge-based digital networked economy has come of age – and how it respects no borders.

Competition comes not just from the shop down the road, but from anyone in any distant corner of the world with a good education, a good idea and an Internet connection. It's an exciting world order that allows opportunities for innovative startups everywhere. But those who can't keep up will be bulldozed – flat.

What then are the implications for schools plugged into this new reality such as the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information?

"Learning about other cultures and being able to relate to other cultures will be the way to thrive in the future," says Assoc Prof Katherine Toland Frith, a former New York copywriter teaching advertising at the school. "Singapore is an island, so (our students) have to learn how to look outward and absorb the cultures that have passed through this region. They have to be very tolerant and flexible, and adapt to change."

The Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information's international faculty, says Asst Prof Shyam Tekwani, help prepare students to make good in a flattened, connected

economy. "International faculty widen the range of ideas and traditions our students are exposed to. We bring with us a wealth of perspectives to nourish the strong academic culture that flourishes here."

Asst Prof Tekwani, who covered ethnic conflicts in India and Sri Lanka in the 1980s, specialises in teaching photojournalism and conflict reporting at the school's Division of Journalism and Reporting.

"Almost every young person I meet in India knows NTU," he says. "I am often besieged by e-mail and enquiries on how to apply for admission."

With teachers from Singapore, the US, Taiwan, China, India, Australia and further afield, says Assoc Prof Frith, "students who study in our school learn not only the subject matter but something about cultural differences from the faculty."

This global outlook is important, says one of the school's Master of Mass Communication students, James Chen. "With a melting pot of different nationalities, educational backgrounds and working experiences, students are able to learn how industries operate in different countries based on cultural and societal variables – we are not just restricted to our 'small pond'."

At a time when education means everything, the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information brings an important global perspective.

Singapore is the "developed frontier of the East," says Asst Prof Tekwani, "and (the school) offers students from countries like China and India an education that can match the best in the West for a lower cost, minus the culture shocks."



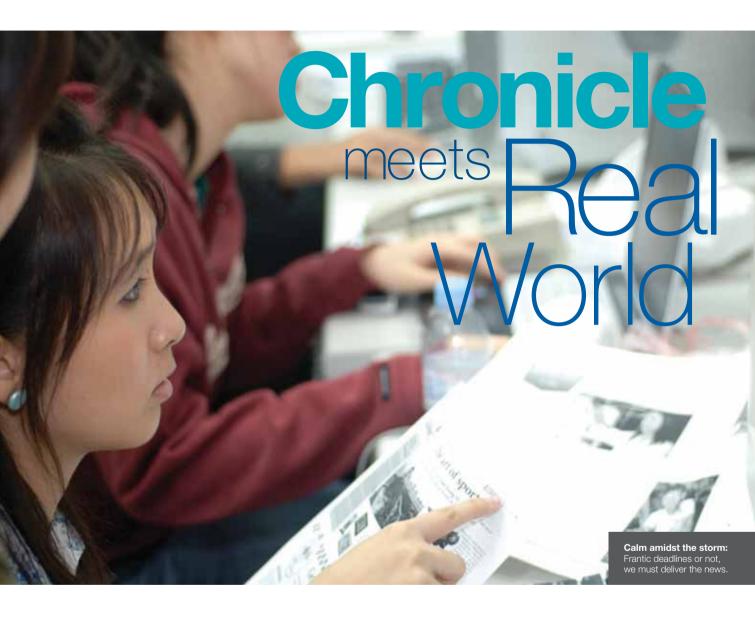
Learning about other cultures and being able to relate to other cultures will be the way to thrive in the future.

- ASSOC PROF KATHERINE TOLAND FRITH



International faculty bring a wealth of perspectives to nourish the strong academic culture that flourishes here.

- ASST PROF SHYAM TEKWANI



ANDREW DUFFY describes a paper chase of another kind – one that provides the best training ground for journalists, photographers and editors.

n many ways, NTU is a microcosm of Singapore.

Leafy avenues connect clusters of highrises. Different races and nationalities are integrated, yet there is debate on the place of foreign talent.

Singapore is committed to being a hub. NTU is the hotbed of three areas where the nation plans to lead the world: science, education and computer animation.

And people go all the way across campus for the best food.

So where does this put The Nanyang Chronicle, the campus newspaper? It was

launched 12 years ago, and is written and edited by students. Nearly 15,000 copies hit the campus every three weeks, five times a semester.

It's a reality check for students used to the elegant theories of the classroom. It teaches the practical skills of putting together a newspaper, and that accuracy, fairness and balance are all-important.

But most of all, it teaches that journalism is about people – newsprint isn't black and white; there are shades of grey, judgment calls and people's feelings to consider. So while Chronicle reporters learn the

nuts-and-bolts of journalism, they also learn soft skills of empathy and charm, and to work with the authorities instead of against them.

JUDGMENT CALLS

On one sensitive story, the student editors wanted to name and shame the

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alleged culprit. The authorities didn't. Legally, we could have named him; morally, it was right not to. It gave him a second chance, instead of possibly destroying his life.

So when an editor asked me with a puzzled look: "So you teach one thing in the classroom and another here?" I was able to say, "Yes! Now you understand journalism."

Interestingly, when the national press picked up the story, they, too, drew a veil over his identity.

Two issues later, a triathlon article had a photo of a girl running in a swimsuit.

She was in a public place, so the photo was fair game. But it could have been embarrassing for her. The editors were keen to use it – girls in swimsuits raise readership, they pointed out.

But when asked, "Would you want to be photographed like that?" the editors relented, and used a more discreet picture.

These reality checks help to prepare them for the future.

AMPLE REWARDS

Former editors have gone on to win awards in the national press, and even to return to teach at NTU. And each year brings a new cohort of enthusiastic, passionate writers, photographers and editors, brimming with ideas and creativity.

But is the Chronicle like The Straits Times,

or is it The New Paper? Zaobao or Wanbao?

It wants to be all of them, to bring the voice of authority to the people, and take the concerns of the students to those in power.

Thanks to the commitment and sheer energy of the Chronicle team, news stories are very wide-ranging. They

> have been delighted by new inventions from the engineering schools, and singing superstars from campus competitions. They have dealt with policy changes and peeping Toms. And they have learnt from visiting dignitaries and cheered local sporting heroes.

> The readers pick up The Nanyang Chronicle to see what the hot topics are, catch the tech, music, movie and book reviews, refresh their Mandarin, and see if the opinion pages raise hackles or set their heads nodding.

And that's the reward of working on the Chronicle. It can

make a difference to what people think. Some people like to quote Confucius, but I prefer Spiderman: "With great power comes great responsibility" is a lesson (and a delight) for all Chronicle reporters and editors when their stories leap from classroom theory to campus talking point.

But the main reward is still that pursuing a hunch, uncovering the facts and chasing a story – whether it's across campus for the Chronicle or across Singapore for Lianhe Zaobao – is a lot of fun.

Andrew Duffy is a lecturer at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information and a teacher-advisor to The Nanyang Chronicle. He has worked on The New Paper and The Straits Times.



Bouncing ideas off each other in The Nanyang Chronicle room.



In this piece that won him the inaugural FCA Dennis Bloodworth Memorial Journalism Prize this year, Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information graduate and The Straits Times reporter KEITH LIN steps into the lives of the elderly and lonely.

t is six in the morning. The tiny threadbare apartment is pitch dark save for the incandescent red glow of the traditional Chinese altar lamps casting shadows on the drab stain-streaked walls.

Clasping three lit joss sticks between her palms, 77-year-old Song Yuk Ching mutters a deep prayer before placing the smoldering lot in an ash-caked prayer urn guarding her dead husband's tablet. He passed away from kidney failure 12 years ago.

"I tell (my husband) Ah Chan, 'Your life is good now that you're dead. Me, I still have to suffer so much,'" Song laments as

she gingerly massages her knees, purple from years of neglected arthritis.

The bespectacled Cantonese-speaking lady insists that it was her husband's macabre 'rice bowl' – an odd-job "lam po lou" [funeral band member] – that drove the final nail into his own coffin.

"Two days before he died, he was still sitting at a funeral, playing the gongs until he said he couldn't take it anymore," mutters the childless Song, her wrinklecreased face ashen with renewed grief.

Shaking her head in disbelief, she adds, "We were a really loving couple – who knew he would die so early before me?"

A GROWING ARMY OF SENIORS

Coming to terms with the twilight years is a sobering reality for Song and many others like her, a growing army of seniors haunted by the daunting triumvirate of seclusion, poverty and disease.

While frenzied industralisation has transformed Singapore, a former British colonial backwater, into an ultra-modern metropolis within decades, birth rates have dwindled rapidly. One in four citizens will be aged 65 years and above by 2050, making the

island-nation one of Asia's fasting aging societies.

The aging population problem notwithstanding, Ngiam Tee Liang, a sociologist from the National University of Singapore (NUS), said that the traditional notion of families taking care of their aged parents is also disappearing in Singapore's nuclear family society.

This has exacerbated the lonely elderly predicament that is troubling the country.

A survey conducted by the Housing Development Board in 2003 showed that 24.3 per cent of aged persons are living out their final years in solitude, a sharp rise from 15.2 per cent five years ago.

Some of these elderly folk do not have any offspring to begin with. For those who do, more of their children are uprooting and moving overseas, as Ngiam pointed out. Some elderly also choose not stay with relatives and children for fear of friction. A good number, though, have no other alternative.

"Many of the elderly usually don't live alone out of choice, but because they don't get along with their grown-up children or relatives," Ngiam said.

One example is 76-year-old Nancy Tan, who was robbed of her loving husband by a stomach ailment two decades ago, and then bundled out of her own house by a pernicious mother-in-law.

The diminutive former ice-seller did have a son. But just like the umbilical cord that briefly bonded mother and child, she was forced to sever all ties shortly after giving birth to him.

"My mother-in-law took my son away at the hospital - she was very superstitious and thought I brought bad luck to the family," bemoaned Tan, now the lone occupant of a rented one-room public flat courtesy of her ex-employer's charity.

SAVINGS OF \$9.72

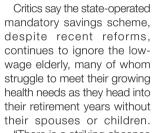
The government's policy against dishing out social subsidies means that chronically poor seniors like Tan, who counts her paltry savings

> of \$9.72 as one of her few prized possessions, will have to depend on the constant patronage of others in order to survive.

Critics say the state-operated

"There is a striking absence of a multi-tiered (social security) system to protect the lifetime poor," a report jointly published by NUS researchers Mukul Asher and Wasana Karunarathne in 2001 said.

"The limited nature of health insurance and the issues of long-term care of the aged will also pose major challenges to the policymakers," the report added.





OLD-AGE DEPRESSION

For the widowed, the damage is exacerbated: Experts say the sudden loss of a life partner in old age can inflict a psychological blow that lasts far beyond the initial months of bereavement.

A major study on old-age

depression conducted by NUS in 2002 revealed that eight per cent of elderly persons living in public housing estates, which house close to four-fifths of the populace, were chronically depressed, up from five per cent a decade ago.

Suicide is a distinct possibility, says Prof Kua Ee Heok from the university's Department of Psychological Medicine.

"'What am I going to do with my life? Where is the financial security? Who is going to care for me in the future?' These are the questions that will run constantly through [the elderly





Headline news: Keith Lin receiving the inaugural Dennis Bloodworth Memorial Journalism Prize from Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew at the Singapore Foreign Correspondents' Association's (FCA) 50th anniversary gala dinner in May this year.

widow or widower's] mind," said Kua, who headed the 2002 survey.

SURROGATE SONS AND DAUGHTERS

To battle the problem, voluntary welfare organisations such as the Lions Befrienders are stepping in to provide the lonely aged the kind of support they have lost or simply never have.

At least twice a week, the association's 1,044 volunteers, mostly middle-aged women, bring some genial cheer to the doorsteps of the elderly residents living in some of the city-state's poorest housing estates.

The volunteers spend hours chatting with them, doing their dishes, and occasionally even play surrogate sons and daughters by helping them to buy groceries or pay phone bills.

"They are in need of friendship and company," said the association's executive

director Jennifer Yee. "By engaging them, we hope to prevent early institutionalisation and help them remain in the community for as long as possible."

But it could be too little too late for Song, the habitually depressed elderly widow. She spends most of her days holed up in her flat desperately seeking to reunite with her long gone husband.

"I saw (my husband) again that day (in my dreams), just sitting there. He was wearing his old clothes, a white short-sleeved shirt. I asked him when I'll die but he didn't respond," she grumbles.

Convinced that this was an ominous sign that she was close to her own demise, she visited a Chinese medium, who managed to summon his spirit, and foretold that she would live till the age of 79.

"I prayed to him and said, 'Please, I'm very pitiful. Why won't you take me with you earlier?'"

What's In A Name?

By DOROTHY HO

y name is Dorothy. But you can call me Dot.
And just once – this year actually – someone sent a birthday card addressed to Dottie. Obviously they did not know me. It took a while to realise they meant me.

The only difference? It takes me an extra millisecond to respond to Dorothy, and definitely more than a few milliseconds to respond to Dottie.

And in the case of a roomful of Dorothys, then yes, excuse me while I figure out which one you're calling out to.

But whatever your pleasure, I'm still me. Dorothy, Dot or Dottie. I am the one with the scar on the knee because I fell off a bike in Sentosa when I was 13; I am the one with the unhealthy Hello Kitty obsession; I am the one with the NTU School of Communication Studies degree.

Oh wait. I mean School of Communication & Information.

Actually, I mean the
Wee Kim Wee School
of Communication
& Information.
I know why
they did

To honour a lifelong journalist and popular President, affectionately remembered as an exemplary diplomat, truth-seeker and peoplemover. To embrace his values of discipline, responsibility, hard work, solicitude, integrity and passion. To give the school an added impetus to soar.

And, truly, it is poised to take flight, with more outstanding students and richer educational opportunities than ever.

Looking back, memories of mugging with my friends, falling asleep in The Nanyang Chronicle room as we raced to meet deadlines for the NTU newspaper, and taking classes in the museum-esque Chinese Heritage Centre (where the school started in 1993) will stay with me.

Safe with me, too, is the knowledge that the sense of adventure and idealism that started with the original School of Communication Studies will live on.

Dorothy Ho (Class of 1997) is an editor and writer living in Seattle. She also taught at the school from 2003 to 2004, winning a school award for teaching excellence. Follow her obsession with Hello Kitty at www.dorothyho.com



14Things We Want You To Know

PHOTO: SHYAM TEKWANI

Why 14? Because the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information has turned 14, and because students GAVIN LIOW and CHERYL TAN have made a list of their favourite things.

THE STUDENTS WHO GO-FAR

The GO-FAR (Going Overseas For Advanced Reporting) programme started last year brought 25 students to Sri Lanka and Indonesia's Aceh over two separate weeks in July and August to report on the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami. This year, a group hopped over to Nepal to document the lives of the Nepalese. Check out their pictures and blogs at www.ntu.edu.sg/gofar

THE HD TV STUDIO

The school's TV studio is equipped to operate in high-definition format in anticipation of the digital and high-definition age of the future. Students are allowed to experiment with HD-enabled equipment. They are ready – the digital industry can run, but they can't hide.

THE ROOFTOP PENTHOUSE PARTIES

The school's rooftop parties – or "penthouse parties" – are where students let their hair down and dance under the stars to live music performed by student bands. Held at least twice every semester, they are a great way to celebrate the start of the new term and traditions like the Mid-Autumn Festival.

MEGA STAGE PRODUCTIONS

Paparazzi is the school's annual studentdirected theatrical production, and one of many events students look forward to at the start of the semester. This year's show, Alice in Wonderland, was a modern adaptation of the original fairytale. And who could resist the post-performance supper trips to popular food spots around the island?

A WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE

The school's graduates are making waves across the continents with their Final Year Project films. At HATCHfest USA, audiences had the privilege of watching Inspector X and the Eternal City by Chong Yew Meng, a 2006 graduate. His ground-breaking film, with a mix of 3D graphics and live action, is a tongue-in-cheek detective thriller set in a dystopic, futuristic Singapore. Closer to home, Singapore Standard Time, which explores our culture of speed, won the 2006 Media Development Authority (MDA) Book Prize for Best Video Drama.





THE 24/7 CONNECTION

Tech-savvy students can't live without their laptops. They used to 'fight' over power sources, but now that every seat in the lecture theatre comes with a power plug, they are one step closer to the e-learning culture of a modern educational system.



7 THE BENCHES

This gathering place is where contacts are formed, ideas are conceived, and the occasional romance is made. Here's where the future big players of the local media and information industries have their humble beginnings.



THE MEDIA HUB

Students run The Nanyang Chronicle, a campus newspaper, as well as Radio Fusion and Nanyang Spectrum, a radio station and TV show respectively. Many also 'moonlight' as cub reporters, radio DJs and television producers in the industry. This way, they get a chance to build up their portfolios and also learn more about the local media players.

A FUTURE THAT LOOKS GOOD

The way this school plans ahead, no one would be surprised if a crystal ball turns up somewhere. The Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund, for instance, is aimed at giving students the added edge to achieve excellence in their areas of interest. With opportunities for research, scholarships and bursaries, the sky's the limit.

10 THE WORLD AT THE DOORSTEP

From Hong Kong to Sweden, they have seen it all. With one of the highest proportions of NTU students going on overseas exchange programmes every year, the school turns out resourceful global citizens. Highly qualified international faculty also offer wide and varied perspectives that help mould the students into leaders.



It may look like something only the highfalutin can appreciate, but this bronze sculpture standing tall and proud at the school courtyard is completely relevant to everyday life. Named BC-AD and created by artist Sun Yu-Li for the 10 May 1997 opening of the school building, this two-piece abstraction makes a statement about the never-ceasing, ever-changing nature of communication.

12 THE BITS AND BYTES

The school has done away with traditional film tape to make way for a purely digital environment. Technology is up-to-date with current industry standards. Attuned to the times and adaptable, students hit the ground running when they graduate.

13 THE STIMULATING COMPANY

Bold and ambitious, the school aspires to advance media and communication in the region – from studying global cultural rights to the Internet's impact on society – by collaborating with the closely-affiliated Asian Media Information and Communication Centre and Singapore Internet Research Centre, both housed in the school.



THE FIRST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH

Alumni get together at Brewerkz to catch up every first Thursday of the month. What's better than meeting old friends – and all the beer that you can drink at a school-subsidised rate? Now that's a reason to celebrate.



The school looks boldly back.



Tenth anniversary toast: (Left) Mr Cheong Yip Seng, Editor-in-Chief of the English and Malay Newspapers Division of Singapore Press Holdings, and School of Communication & Information Chair Assoc Prof Ang Peng Hwa celebrating The Nanyang Chronicle's first decade.

Grand convention: Prof Eddie Kuo speaking at IAMCR 2000, which attracted more than 350 participants from 40 countries.

2006

The school is named the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information, after Singapore's fourth President. More than \$27 million is raised for the Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund.

2005

The Nanyang Chronicle celebrates its 10th anniversary at Trader's Hotel. NTU President Dr Su Guaning makes an official visit. The Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund is established to support the vision and work of the school.

2004

The Singapore Internet Research Centre is established. A fifth floor is added to the school as it expands with new programmes.

2003

Assoc Prof Ang Peng Hwa is appointed the next Dean of the school.

2002

The school is renamed the School of Communication & Information to reflect the addition of the Information Studies track.

2001

The Division of Information Studies is added to carry out research and graduate teaching in information science, library and information services, knowledge management and information systems.

2000

The school successfully hosts IAMCR 2000, the annual conference of the International Association for Media and Communication Research.

1999

The school graduates its first PhD candidate. A \$6 million endowed professorship is established by the Shaw Foundation to focus on new media technologies.

1998

The media industry celebrates as the school graduates the first class of communication professionals enrolled in the Master of Mass Communication degree programme.

1997

Faculty and staff mark the graduation of the pioneer batch of students from the Bachelor of Communication Studies honours degree programme. The Communication Studies Alumni Association is inaugurated.





A white cockatoo helps out: Many stood under the hot sun on 17 January 2002 to witness the school's dramatic name-change ceremony. Sassy, a sulphur-crested performing cockatoo from Jurong Bird Park, flew from the school's rooftop with a rope towards then-NTU President Dr Cham Tao Soon. When Dr Cham pulled the rope, a gigantic blue curtain cascaded to the ground, unveiling the school's new name as dozens of colourful balloons floated towards the sky.

Staying rooted: A *Gardenia carinata* tree being planted on 15 November 1997 to mark the birth of the Communication Studies Alumni Association.

Double celebration: Dr Wee Kim Wee blowing out candles on his birthday cake after the launch of a professorship named after him.

1996

The school moves into a new \$22.6 million building at the western edge of NTU's Yunnan Garden Campus. The gleaming, four-storey facility houses the latest in print, audio/video, photo and multimedia technology.

1995

The first PhD student matriculates. A \$4.5 million endowed professorship is established in honour of former journalist and Singapore's former President, Dr Wee Kim Wee.

1994

A campus newspaper, The Nanyang Chronicle, is started to provide students with practical experience as reporters, photographers, designers, editors and advertising sales executives.

1993

The school enrols its first class of 96 undergraduates and Master's degree students. The National University of Singapore stops taking in new students for its Mass Communication course.

1992

The School of Communication Studies is established with the appointment of Prof Eddie Kuo, then-head of the Mass Communication department at the National University of Singapore, as founding Dean. The setting up of the school is in line with the recommendations of the Committee on NTU Future Directions led by Dr Michael Fam, Chairman of the University Council.



MRTODAY, Once More

Back manning Today newspaper, PN Balji, a lecturer at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information and sometime The Nanyang Chronicle advisor, wants to make a movie about AIDS in the not-too-distant tomorrow.

By HO PEK YEE







PHOTOS: PATRICK KHOO





his is the Red Dot Traffic Building, a coffee place on the ground floor, a hazy afternoon. It's the end of a work week for PN Balji, and there's one last thing to do. For once, the NTU lecturer and sometime The Nanyang Chronicle advisor, who helped launch local tabloids The New Paper and Today, is being interviewed. Carrying the latest issue of The Economist, he looks relaxed and deadline-free. He doesn't look 58. He doesn't want a drink. We place a coffee cup in front of him - for appearance's sake. "You want to talk about my history?" he asks. "You're making me into a museum piece." His teasing rhetoric doesn't hide a shrewd, critical mind.

He regales with stories of union strikes in the 1950s, of trying to bribe the fire brigade – a crucial news source – in the 1970s, and of the premature closing of The New Nation to make way for the Singapore Monitor in the 1980s. Bring the conversation to the present and his reported involvement as a consulting editor with a new magazine, however, and he seems more reticent: "I'm playing a small part because I don't want to be a financial burden to the publisher. Rather than 'degrade' me [by paying a small amount], it's better that they don't pay me at all!"

Any man who knows his worth knows his past. And, from where he stands, Balji's past is almost worthy of a memoir.

THE UNIVERSITY OF HARD KNOCKS

"My father was a poet and the president of the naval base labour union. He organised one of the last strikes. Although I was a young boy, I remember vividly how he wasn't paid for many months. The British were not giving in, and the strike was just prolonging (the problem). We had absolutely no money. When a relative from Malaysia visited and gave me \$5, I could see the joy on my mother's face as she told me, 'Go and buy rice.'

"Getting a job wasn't easy at that time. I studied at the University of Hard Knocks. After I got my Higher School Certificate in 1966, I did a bit of relief teaching, and joined The Malay Mail on April 1, 1970. I had also applied for a job at the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, who made an offer later."

'P' FOR PHILOSOPHY

"Fortunately or unfortunately, ink is in my blood. After I left Today in 2003, I got to do two interesting newspaper projects. One was to help convert The New Straits Times in Malaysia from a broadsheet to a tabloid. The other was to help conceptualise a new paper for The Hindustan Times Group in New Delhi. They wanted a downmarket tabloid, but, after studying the market, I felt that was not doable – the cover price would be as small as two rupees! So I came up with a new idea – a newspaper for women.

"I teach a course called Total Journalism at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information. The point I try to make is that people have less and less time to read, so whether they read your article or not will depend on your headlines, visuals and page layouts. The reporter or correspondent has the most intimate knowledge of the story, yet the person who writes the headline in the newsroom is the person with the least intimate knowledge. Ideally, all editors should write, but you know ideals never happen.

"My favourite drink is *kopi si kosong – kopi* with carnation milk, not condensed milk, and no sugar. I wouldn't pay \$4 for an ice-blended coffee. It's a waste of money!

"The 'P' in my name stands for Philosophy and the 'N' for Nuisance. Okay, they don't, but my name is too long to tell you. It says 'PN' on my identification card. I was born in Kerala, India. It's a beautiful place – not just the land, but the ladies, too.

"I would like to make a movie in my lifetime – a story about AIDS (because a movie should have a mandatory sex quotient). I've heard of a place in India where people with AIDS are sent to live, and I'd like to make a movie about a man who contracts AIDS and goes there." n



Fortunately or unfortunately, ink is in my blood.



