



TESTED THROUGH TIME

The Journey of the
Singapore Polytechnic
Graduates' Guild

SPGG
Get Connected, Stay Connected



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Disclaimer

To portray an accurate and objective history of 46 years, this book was assiduously researched from written archives of the Singapore Polytechnic (SP), Executive Committee (Ex-co) meeting minutes, and extant copies of SPGG newsletters. To further confirm the facts, interviews with former Ex-co members and SP staff were sought. Despite this we cannot vouch complete accuracy of events and facts that happened so many years ago. We apologise unreservedly if indeed there are any errors or misrepresentation of facts.

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*Dedicated to all Executive Committee Members who selflessly
devoted much time and energy for the Guild; and to all members
who have stood by the Guild through thick and thin.*

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Foreword

Nurturing the Spirit of Giving Back

The Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild (SPGG) is the oldest of our polytechnic alumni associations. It was established during Singapore's crucial formative years, when we were still developing our approach to education and manpower training. Singapore Polytechnic (SP) and SPGG have come a long way since then.

Over the last few decades, SPGG has offered SP students the chance to stay connected even after they graduate, be it through the provision of recreational facilities or networking events for both current students and alumni. I am pleased to hear that many SP graduates continue to have strong affiliation with their alma mater, and give back to the Polytechnic through SPGG, including setting up an endowment fund to assist students in need.

All of these initiatives have been made possible through the hard work of the SPGG, under the leadership of its Executive Committees. This book is a tribute to their efforts.

I wish SPGG many successful years ahead as it approaches its golden anniversary.

Ong Ye Kung

Minister for Education (Higher Education & Skills)

7 September 2017

Messages



The Singapore Polytechnic Graduates’ Guild has had a long history. I congratulate the Guild for putting it all down for future generations.

The lessons learnt are valuable. It shows that the various Executive Committees have been fully aware of the value of good governance and the importance to learn from failure. Without this it would be hard for the Guild to refine their vision and directions.

I am happy to see the buzz in the Guild, with all sorts of activities to cater to the various needs and interests of members. This speaks of a willingness to make their customers happy. The Endowment Fund and the Smart Clubhouse initiatives are indicators that they are willing to support and cooperate with their alma mater. I hope to see more of such collaboration.

I wish the Guild more good years of trying, learning, and making itself relevant to the alma mater and the student population.

Mr Chan Soo Sen
Guild Patron, 2004-current





I joined the “Journey” of the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates’ Guild (SPGG) 20 years ago. My association with SPGG began in 1997 when I had the honour of being appointed her Patron.

Most alumni bodies would use the word “Association” or “Society” in their names, but SPGG is different. It has incorporated the word “Guild” in its name. True to its name, SPGG is more than just another “alumni association”.

Historically, the word “guild” has been used since medieval times for a fraternity of merchants or artisans. The word “Guild” in SPGG’s name hence connotes an abiding interest in the graduates of Singapore Polytechnic and the wish to maintain a continuing link with the alma mater. SPGG has more than lived up to her name and avowal, as exemplified by two major undertakings: the SP Innovation Centre and the SPGG Endowment Fund.

SP graduates play an important role in the development of Singapore’s industries. Many of them work in multi-national companies or small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Indeed many SP graduates themselves become entrepreneurs. They go on to start up SMEs operating in Singapore and even venturing overseas. But they mostly start from “zero base”, barely able to afford the luxury of an office, an address or other office help. SPGG’s provision of an “Innovation Centre” serves to meet their needs and helps them maintain contact with fellow alumni.

SPGG members, having themselves been the beneficiaries of their education and training, feel a strong sense of obligation to help those who follow in their footsteps. The SPGG Endowment Fund is the expression of their gratitude and their way of reaching out to and caring for the “future” alumni!

I wish SPGG every success in their ongoing journey!

Peter Chen
Honorary Member
Patron, SPGG, 1997-2009





My heartiest congratulations to the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild (SPGG) for the launch of its history book, "Tested Through Time," on its 46th anniversary. SPGG has gone through a lot since its formative years. This book captures the key milestones in its history, recognising its leaders and all those involved in its journey.

Singapore Polytechnic, our nation's first Poly, has to date, almost 200,000 graduates. As SP positions itself as a "Poly for All Ages," and catering to the continuing education and training of working adults to support lifelong learning needs, SPGG will play an even more important role as a platform to connect and engage with our graduates and to support their wide ranging needs and interests. A good connection with our vast graduate alumni is key to making SP more vibrant and relevant to the fast changing industry.

I would like to thank SPGG for the partnership with Singapore Polytechnic and wish her many more good years to come.

Bill Chang

Chair, SP Board of Governors, 2012-current





My warmest congratulations to the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild on its 46th anniversary and the publication of the SPGG History Book – “Tested Through Time”.

The book title speaks volumes of the steadfast leadership and the alumni community. During the years when I was serving as Chairman of the SP Board of Governors, I have always found this to be so. The title of the book is, quite rightly, an authentic and inspired choice.

SPGG offers its members a wonderful social platform and much more. It offers a gateway into industry, business and society at large. This is because the alumni network is extensive and rich with immense experience.

Many of its members would have spent precious moments as students in Singapore Polytechnic. I would like to encourage SPGG to find ways for its members to pursue lifelong learning. Graduating from SP should not be graduating from learning but entering into the beginning of a lifelong learning journey. I believe this will offer significant benefits to SPGG and its members.

Once again, my warmest wishes and may the best years lie ahead.

Tan Kay Yong
Chair, SP Board of Governors, 2000-2012





A happy and fulfilling experience in the Singapore Polytechnic and the desire to share such experiences with each other can encourage some to start an association or a guild. This is probably why SPGG was started. There must also be close rapport between the Singapore Polytechnic and its graduates as otherwise the proposal for a guild cannot materialize.

I am happy to contribute this message. It is good to see how the Guild has grown, despite a difficult start, to become a responsible organisation, working closely with the Polytechnic to help graduates as well as students, to share and inculcate the values of the Polytechnic.

Personal integrity, care and concern and openness are some of these key values. I hope a good governance structure will enable the Guild to continue to attract leaders to carry on the good work of the current leadership at the Guild.

Lim Yong Wah
Chair, SP Board of Governors, 1995-2000





The stature of an institution is reflected in part in the strength of its alumni. On this count, Singapore Polytechnic does have much to boast about. Our 200,000th alumnus is graduating next year. There are not many institutions that can come even close to this. Among our alumni are many captains of industry who helped power Singapore's growth and journey from colonial times till the present day. To top this, we have a thriving guild with a great clubhouse. And now, to this list we can add the rich history of the SP Graduates Guild as captured in this book. Impressive indeed!

I want to congratulate Mr Jimmy Lim and the SPGG Ex-co for putting together such a fine collection of anecdotes, photographs and other archival materials tracing the history of the Guild. The story of the Guild mirrors the life stories of so many SP alumni, in its ups and downs, how it overcame adversities, its steadfastness and commitment to a vision and its growth and success. This book is not just a treasure to SPGG and SP, but is also valuable for the history of the country. It is a remarkable achievement for the team to have collected the various materials and share them in such an interesting and absorbing manner.

May this book be merely another milestone along the road in the never ending journey of SP, our alumni and the Guild. May there be new stories of success in the years to come, of the alumni and their contributions to the Guild, their alma mater and the country. Let us continue to write new and glorious chapters in the history of SP.

Soh Wai Wah
SP Principal and CEO





In my stint as SP Principal and CEO, I saw SPGG reaching out to students, to attract them to use facilities like the bowling alley and the pool, or just to study and chill out with friends at SPGG. The Guild supplements SP to provide more recreation options for students. Similarly, graduates find the Guild house conducive for meeting old classmates and attending talks and social events or just sharing market news over coffee, while invoking the nostalgia of returning to the beloved SP Dover Road Campus. The Guild, in play, connects students and alumni, leading to opportunities in professional links and business collaboration. This supports SP's mission of 'A future-ready institution that prepares our learners to be life-ready, work-ready and world-ready.'

May the Guild grow from strength to strength and continue its good work of supporting the alumni, students and our alma mater."

Tan Choon Shian
Chief Executive, Workforce Singapore
SP Principal & CEO, 2013-2016





The history of SPGG is also the story about the indomitable spirit and the can-do attitude of the SP alumni. These hallmarks of the SP graduates have brought SPGG to where it is today after overcoming many insurmountable challenges in forming the Guild and building the clubhouse. They have shown an example to future SP graduates and laid the foundation for them to build on and bring SPGG to further heights.

Indeed, our graduates are our pride.

Tan Hang Cheong
SP Principal, 2007-2012





I feel honoured to be invited to write this message for “Tested Through Time – The Journey of the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates’ Guild”.

“Tested Through Time” has candidly captured the chequered history of the development of the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates’ Guild (SPGG) over the past 46 years. I see the publication serving the following useful purposes: first it provides a good documentation of significant events that took place in the development of SPGG, while giving appreciation to those who contributed to it. More importantly, it captures with great openness both the stories of success as well as failure in its development. The publication should serve as a source of good reference and learning material for future SPGG leaders.

I would like to congratulate President Jimmy Lim and his Ex-co for the successful publication of this book. May SPGG succeed in realizing its vision of developing itself into a Club of Distinction for all Singapore Polytechnic graduates.

Low Wong Fook
Honorary Member
SP Principal, 1996-2007





I wish to address my message to all SP graduates.

SPGG was formed by future-thinking graduates. Thanks to the leadership of its presidents, we now have a clubhouse complete with facilities like a bowling alley, a gymnasium, food and beverage outlets, and a roof-top BBQ garden. We even have conducive incubation offices for below-market rental. You can enjoy these amenities for a reasonable entrance fee and monthly subscription fees.

Best of all, SP students can now apply for the SPGG Endowment Fund bursary, made possible by the efforts of the current president, Mr Jimmy Lim and former SP principal, Mr Tan Hang Cheong. If you have any inclination to help less fortunate SP students, you can do so by joining as a member. Better still, become a committee member and ensure its continuance and successful growth. Donate to the Endowment Fund; no sum is too small. Little drops of water do make a mighty ocean.

I urge you to join as a means of staying in touch with your SP classmates and lecturers, and to keep the SP CORE values in your heart – Self-discipline, Personal Integrity, Care and concern, Openness, Responsibility and Excellence.

Lim Chin Aik

Honorary Member

Ex-co, 1993-2006

Chair, Clubhouse Building Committee

First registered SP Student





The Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild (SPGG) and the National University of Singapore Society (NUSS) have enjoyed a very warm and close friendship over the years. Our two organisations share a common mission of fostering a lifelong relationship with our respective alma mater.

I would like to congratulate SPGG on the launch of its history book which chronicles, in words and pictures, the many achievements and phases of growth of SPGG since its inception in 1971.

Today SPGG continues to provide a wide range of activities and platforms for its members to exchange fresh perspectives and form lasting friendships. Through its connection with a wide network of business leaders and leading corporations it has been able to create numerous professional and business development opportunities for both the Singapore Polytechnic alumni and the graduates of other tertiary institutions. Such initiatives have helped to elevate SPGG's standing within the alumni community.

I wish SPGG many more years of success in furthering the interest of its alma mater and strengthening its already cohesive community of diverse alumni.

Eddie Lee
President, NUSS



Preface

This book – six years in the making – deserves to be published. Why?

Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild (SPGG) is forty-six years old this year. The conception of SPGG started in 1969 when the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's founding father pointedly asked the Polytechnic's student union leaders: "Why don't you have a guild of graduates?" The rest, as they say, "is history".

SPGG was the first alumni organization among institutes of higher learning to have successfully raised her own funds and designed, built and managed the clubhouse all on her own. This book is a record of this process. But, it had not been a bed of roses.

In keeping the Guild alive and kicking in those four and a half decades, successive Executive Committee (Ex-co) members have had to deal with unexpected challenges, including economic downturns and impossible situations like the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak. The Guild was near insolvency at one point.

The Ex-co members, who are volunteers with limited time on any given day, were struggling to keep their jobs while working hard to keep the Guild afloat during those trying times. But the SP spirit of "never say die" prevails. Not only have we survived, but we have thrived and have become stronger after every difficult period. We learned our lessons, became wiser and more resilient.

Time does not stand still. Demographics change; new challenges loom. We may lose our relevance to a new generation of members – SP students and graduates brought up on the ever changing, ever evolving interconnected world of today. Brick and mortar clubhouses may no longer be as important to this new generation as they had been for past generations. New affiliations and friendship can easily be found and formed by a click on the computer or a tap on the smartphone. And, for this generation, instant gratification is valued more than the virtue of patience.

Indeed, there are many lessons in this book; I hope they would be useful for future Executive Committees. The current Ex-co has drawn the lessons and has charted a strategic course to keep SPGG relevant to the SP community and to make her "A Club of Distinction".

Jimmy Lim Hock Seng
President
Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild



The Journey of the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild

Chapter One

The Birth of a Guild

(1966 - 1979)

Out from the Student Union was a graduates' guild born. The Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union (SPSU) was formed in 1959, five years after Singapore Polytechnic (SP) was officially opened. At a Union meeting in 1961, the idea for a guild was first mooted as Union leaders felt the lingering need to maintain their ties with their alma mater and keep their bonds with their friends. Thus the first three presidents (including the interim chairman) were Union leaders.



The first Gala Dinner organised by the first Ex-co on 8 April 1972, had to have the Prime Minister as guest-of-honour. From left, David Tan, Tan Cheng Siong, Peter Mui, Mrs Yim Teck Lim, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Yim Teck Lim, Wee Chwee Heng, Bob Fang Swee Peng, Loke Pak Chee and Wan Soon Yong. Source of photograph: Bob Fang Swee Peng.



The 1960s were indeed exciting times of nation-building and hot debates on manpower training. Between 1963 and 1968, a few government-related committees were formed in quick succession to explore how to give avenues to Polytechnic graduates to proceed to either a Faculty of Engineering in the University of Singapore, or, even a University of Technology. The ensuing committee reports afforded hope to the graduates, many of whom were very bright and articulate, from schools like Raffles Institution and the Anglo-Chinese School. Indeed, the Professional Diplomas in Accountancy, Engineering, and Architecture were given professional status on par with other degrees at the University. However, in 1968, to the consternation of the early SP students, the SP Board of Governors made the final decision of transferring the three courses permanently to the University and decreeing that the Polytechnic would concentrate on technician courses.

Pioneers of the Guild

Amidst this scenario came forth the early Guild members, many of whom were from SPSU – people with seemingly rebellious streaks, but actually sharing a bond of the underdog, being thought of as second class tertiary students, and separate from the University of Singapore. Doubtless, the government carefully planned their place in Singapore's economy to be plugged in as the backbone of skilled trade, industry and commerce. But they were painfully aware that the “backbone” did not have the luxury of continuing their education at the local university.

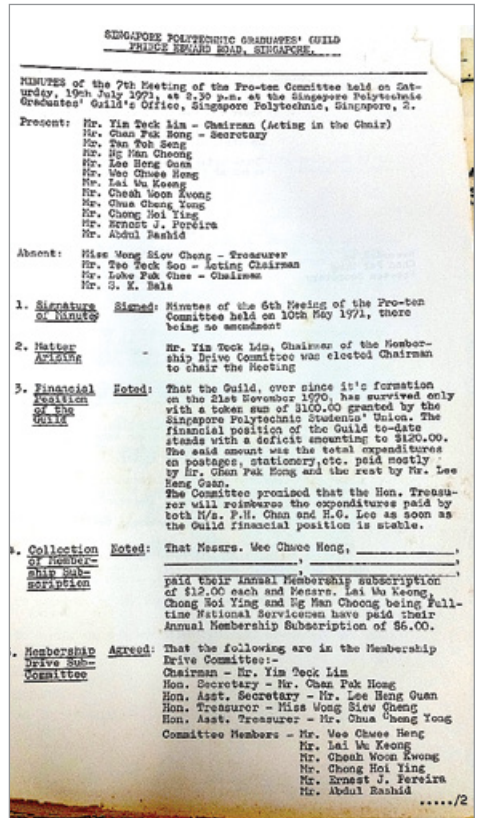
*There was a lot of enthusiasm in forming a guild.
Those interested finally met on 21 November 1970
and resolved to form a guild of graduates.*

The first efforts to start a Guild

In 1969, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew came to address the student body at Prince Edward Campus (PEC). He asked the Union office bearers, “Why don’t you have a guild of graduates?” S K Balakrishnan, Henry Chua Whye Lin and Lee Heng Guan – final year students and 9th Union Council leaders – felt compelled to bring this up at their Union meetings, in case they were questioned again by the PM. They then argued their case before the Union Council for a seed fund of \$200, which was a significant sum in those days. After a few appeals, the Union Council approved the token sum of \$100 in 1970.

By then, there were at least about 3,000 graduates. There was a lot of enthusiasm in forming a guild. Those interested finally met on 21 November 1970 and resolved to form a guild of graduates.

A three-week recruitment campaign netted 140 members, with the carrot that they did not need to pay the \$5 entrance fee. National Servicemen had their subscription fee halved. A pro-tem committee was soon formed when Loke Pak Chee, the SPSU chair for Photography, took on the gauntlet



Minutes of the Pro-tem Committee meeting on 17 July, 1971. Item Three in the minutes recorded that since the group decided to set up a guild on 21 November 1970, the only fund they had was the \$100 from the Students' Union.

Source: Chan Pak Hong.

as pro-tem chairman; Chan Pak Hong as secretary and Wong Siew Cheng (Ms) as treasurer. The other members were Tan Toh Seng, Lim Kheng Hong, S K Balakrishnan, Lee Heng Guan, Yim Teck Lim, Teo Teck Soo, and Ng Man Choong.

The first Guild Constitution

Pro-tem Chairman Loke Pak Chee buckled down to give shape to a guild that could gather all alumni. He also drafted the first Constitution to be submitted in their application to the Registrar of Societies.

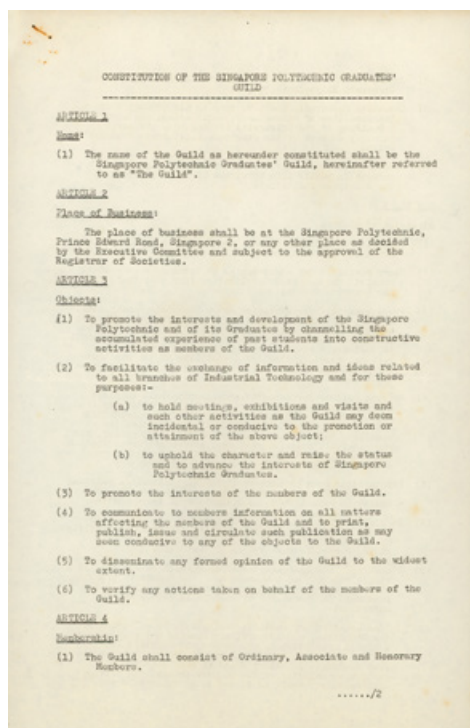
The Constitution spelt out the three categories of memberships: Ordinary, Associate, and Honorary. Entrance and subscription fees were as follows – Ordinary: \$5+\$12, Associate:

\$10+\$10, National Servicemen: \$5+\$6. Associate members were to comprise of graduates from the Professional Diplomas who had been transferred to the University of Singapore. ‘Honorary’ would be conferred on “distinguished persons in public life by virtue of their services to SP”.

There was moral support from the SP management. The 6th meeting of the Pro-tem Committee on 10 May 1971 recorded a vote of thanks “...to Acting Principal Captain A.A. Milne for his kind courtesy on a Public Holiday in attending the meeting.”

The Pro-tem Committee resolved to launch a membership campaign to recruit graduates who held positions in SPSU and other student societies. They would also try to get alumni who were now “influential persons or prominent figures in the employment and business circles to be invited to serve in the Committee”. Yim Teck Lim was co-opted and given the responsibility of setting up the membership drive sub-committee. The secretary was tasked to approach the Registrar Of Societies (ROS) for the names of all former executive committee members in SPSU and other societies who could be persuaded to join.

An official letter was duly sent to the Poly Administration to request for a place that could serve as the SPGG (Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild) office, and for permission to use the campus for recruitment and “collection of subscriptions on a Saturday afternoon”.



A draft of the first Guild Constitution, page one.

Message from Mr A. Robert Edis, Past Principal 1963 to 1973



I am honoured to receive an invitation to send a message for the inaugural issue of the new Journal POLYTECHNIQUES '84 in celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Singapore Polytechnic.

The Graduates' Guild was formed in 1970 when I was Principal of the Polytechnic. The Polytechnic has since then continued its development to the benefit of Singapore and the present Principal keeps me well informed of its progress.

I am most impressed by the more recent progress in the new techniques that have followed the opening by Mr Lee Kuan Yew of the new campus in 1979. Nothing could assist the progress into the technological age of the Polytechnic and of Singapore itself more than these developments.

The earnest wish by the student body to acquire useful knowledge together with a well-qualified and motivated staff will assure future progress.

The Graduates' Guild can contribute much from the fund of practical experience gathered after graduation and it is to be hoped that some graduates will continue to take on the arduous task of teaching in the institution to pass on their skills to the students. By the example of their enthusiasm and dedication they can inspire students to the self-discipline and hard work that have made Singapore a leader in the ASEAN region, and indeed in the world of technological progress.

Mrs Edis and I remember with pleasure our 10 years in Singapore during what are now seen to have been the important formative years and our best wishes go to the new POLYTECHNIQUES '84 for the future.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "A. Robert Edis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

A. ROBERT EDIS

*Mr Robert Edis,
SP Principal,
1963-1973.
He paid a few
dollars to Guild
members to man
the Polytechnic
telephone at night.
In 1984, he flew
over from Australia
to attend SP's
30th Anniversary
celebrations and
wrote a message
in the Guild's
Polytechniques '84.*

13

For an office, they were allowed to use a little room in the topmost floor of the main building at the Prince Edward Campus, previously occupied by the Estate Officer. Despite the \$100 grant from SPSU, and Principal Robert Edis paying them a few dollars a night to man

the Polytechnic phone line, money often ran out. Still, it was a small but very significant start.

On 9 June 1971, they were formally added to the rolls of the Registry of Societies and their Constitution was accepted.

The First Annual General Meeting

They could now get down to the nuts and bolts of operating their own society. In June 1971, the 7th Pro-tem Committee reviewed their finances. There was a deficit of \$120, expended for postage, stationery and paid mostly by Secretary Chan Pak Hong and Lee Heng Guan. The Committee promised to reimburse the two gentlemen as soon as the Guild was in a stable financial position. Members' subscriptions started trickling in. Once elected, the first president, Wee Chwee Heng, paid his annual subscription of \$12, and full-time National Servicemen Ng Man Choong, Lai Wu Keong, Chong Hoi Ying paid their \$6 annual subscription.

Formally registered, the Guild held their inaugural annual general meeting on 30 July 1971 at the Main Lecture Theatre. An impressive number of 163 members attended. The first Executive Committee (Ex-co) was duly elected: President Wee Chwee Heng, Honorary General Secretary Bob S P Fang, Assistant General Secretary Chan Pak Hong and Treasurer Peter Mui Fan Cheang. Due to work commitments, Pro-tem Chairman Loke Pak Chee was content to be just a committee member.

...the Guild held their inaugural annual general meeting on 30 July 1971 at the Main Lecture Theatre. An impressive number of 163 members attended.

Contact details of the first Executive Committee.
Source: Chan Pak Hong

No.	NAME	POSTAL ADDRESS	TEL. NO.
1	<u>President</u>		
2	MR. WEE CHWEI HENG	Kempalan Mekar, 22-B, Seak Canal	83 (1) 11
3	<u>Vice President</u>		
4	MR. YAN TUCK LOON	12-A, Tan. Ave., Singapore 15	22722
5	<u>Gen. Sec.</u>		
6	MR. BOB S.P. FANG	27, PUEBIN STREET, SINGAPORE 7	22721
7	MR. CHAN PAK HONG		22723
8	MR. P. H. CHAN	47, Singapore Polytechnic	
9	<u>Treasurer</u>		
10	<u>Committee Member</u>		
11	MR. PETER MUI FAN CHEANG	240, Jalan Besar, Singapore 8	22725
12	<u>Committee Member</u>		
13	MR. C. S. TAN YONG LING	314-L, River Valley Road (4)	77339
14	MR. 321/322 "Shirley House" (6)		22726
15	MR. CHONG TONG FOO	5, Walmer drive, Singapore	22727
16	<u>Committee Member</u>		
17	MR. TAN TUCK BOO	17, Tanjong Pagar, Singapore 19	76281
18	<u>Committee Member</u>		
19	MR. NG MAN CHOONG	168, Eng Kong Garden Singapore (21)	22728
20	MR. LAKE PAK CHEE	YC 004819-D, Alton, SAF Base, 40, Gales (2)	22729
21	<u>Committee Member</u>		
22	MR. DAVID TAN	26, Lynwood Grove, Spore 13	22730
23	<u>Committee Member</u>		
24	<u>Committee Member</u>		
25	<u>Committee Member</u>		
26	<u>Committee Member</u>		
27	<u>Committee Member</u>		
28	<u>Committee Member</u>		
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31	<u>Committee Member</u>		
32	<u>Committee Member</u>		
33	<u>Committee Member</u>		
34	<u>Committee Member</u>		
35	<u>Committee Member</u>		

FIRST EX. CO.

The Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild

Prince Edward Road
Singapore 8.

14th June 1971

Loke Pak Chee - Chairman
Geo Teck Sio - Ag. Chairman
Wong Sui Chong - (Miss) Treasurer
Tan Teh Seng
Lim Kheng Hong
S.K. Bala
Lee Hong Guan
Yim Teck Lim.

Dear Sir.

1. On behalf of the Chairman & the Treasurer, I take great pleasure in informing you that the constitution of the Guild has been approved by the Registrar of Societies and that the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild was officially registered under the Laws of the Societies Acts of the Government of Singapore on the 9th June 1971.
2. The 7th Meeting of the Pro-tem Committee will be held on Saturday 19th June 1971 at 2.30 pm at the Polytechnic SPGG's Office (5th Floor)

Agenda: a) The chairman to initiate the formation of the membership drive sub. committee
b) The chairman to report to the committee the registration of the Guild.
c) To discuss the Policy Matters of the Guild
d) Discussion on preparation of Annual General Meeting, Formal Inauguration of the Guild.
e) Any Other Business

Chan.
CHAN PAK HONG
Pro-tem Secretary

Pro-tem
Secretary
Chan Pak
Hong's letter
to members
proposing
an agenda
for their first
annual general
meeting



The first ever clubroom was on the top floor, Prince Edward Road campus building. Source: Singapore Polytechnic.

The First Year of Existence

Its 1971/72 Annual Report narrates what that first year of existence was like. Members were allowed the use of a “modest” room on the top floor of the Prince Edward Campus, with a telephone line, and they hoped that they could soon hire a regular staff to attend to members’ queries. SP’s Development Unit subsequently indicated that the Guild would be given a more suitable accommodation in the proposed Staff Centre in the Master Plan of the new Polytechnic complex in Dover Road to be completed in 1975.

At the few gatherings organised, only a handful of enthusiasts attended. This was not sufficient to organise fund-raising and social events like carnivals. The Ex-co therefore started exploring Life

Membership, at \$100 each, which would provide a more regular membership and financial support, enough to set up secretariat services. But this would need a change in the Constitution.

A membership recruitment campaign and tea party in September 1972 held at Hotel Equatorial became a forum to air grievances and the needs of members. Two issues were felt to be of top priority:

1. Getting recognition for Poly qualifications so that graduates could be exempted from certain examinations when they applied for further studies or for institutional/professional memberships.
2. Getting recognition for the status of graduates in the Army and other government/statutory departments to be reflected in salary scales and bar increments.

The Guild even then, nursed the noble intention of offering two student fellowships amounting to \$1,000.00 each for the purpose of travel and research. Letters of appeal for donations were sent to various firms and individuals “who were likely to be generous supporters of the Guild”. The Annual Report recorded that the Ex-co was “optimistic of raising the target of \$10,000 for awards to be made in the next academic session.”

The balance sheet at the beginning of the first Ex-co’s term in 1971 showed the sum of \$252, from membership fees. To members’ query as to why there was no banking account, the chairman pointed out that the Pro-tem Committee

members namely Chan Pak Hong and Lee Heng Guan had been “financing and managing the Guild’s business with no real cash at hand”.

By the next annual general meeting on 31 July 1972, the Guild’s financial health had indeed improved. In the kitty were membership subscriptions to the tune of \$2,112. Their inaugural dinner on 8 April – at which Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was present – netted \$7,875. With advertisements in the dinner souvenir magazine, total income was \$11,787. After subtracting expenses for the dinner and other administrative sundries, the excess of \$1,937 was transferred to the Members’ Fund.

Inaugural Dinner with the Prime Minister in Attendance

BEING THE FIRST registered polytechnic alumni association in Singapore that was primed to help the nation build its fledgling industrial economy, carried some significance and prestige. That was how, on 8 April 1972, the first Prime Minister of Singapore strode into the Mandarin hotel as the guest of honour at the Guild’s first gala dinner to mark the inauguration of the Guild.

Mr Lee started his speech by declaring “Of our post-secondary educational institutions, the Polytechnic has been a most worthwhile investment.” True to the concerns of those days, Mr Lee Kuan Yew emphasised to the crowd of around 300 that the Polytechnic’s job was to produce a workforce equipped with professional and technical skills required for rapid industrialisation. Making reference to the fifteenth century Man of La Mancha, Don Quixote, he praised polytechnic students who “have little time or inclination to tilt at windmills”, while the university students of the 1960s “frittered their time away in mock heroic gestures on behalf of university autonomy and academic freedom.”

Profile:

The First of the Firsts: Loke Pak Chee, Pro-tem Committee Chairman – the man who drafted the first Constitution

IN 1970, Loke Pak Chee was at the crossroads of his life: he was going to receive a medal at the Graduation Ceremony as SP's Most Outstanding Graduate, and had secured a job as a Technical Assistant at the well-known firm of Langdon Avery & Seah Chartered Surveyors. Having served as vice president of SPSU's 9th Council, he was also receiving the SPSU Silver medal for All-Round Student. National Service was already beckoning, with the rank of Lieutenant. Yet, he allowed himself to be persuaded to be the pro-tem committee chairman of the Guild. He went on to draft the first SPGG Constitution and handed over the baton to Wee Chwee Heng. In his own words:

"The wish was there – at different times in the past, various people had expressed the desire to see a guild formed for SP graduates. I was tasked by some members of the 9th SPSU Council to work on the formation of the guild. When I managed to get some documents ready, with the help of the SP Administration, we called for a meeting to form the Pro-tem Committee.

"The formation of the Guild was the easy part simply because there was a general desire that SP graduates should have a guild of their own. But the objectives of the Guild were, I believe, not well thought out or defined. After the First Ex-co's term, the Guild ran into problems. Members of the Ex-co were too busy running their own businesses. In some ways they were the "pioneering entrepreneurs" of their days. Busy with their own business development, they had little time for the Guild.

"After the first term, Ong Teong Pin was elected President of the 2nd Ex-co. By the time we came to the 3rd Ex-Co we had problems. Though there was an AGM, the election of the Ex-co members was not properly conducted. Basically, people were reluctant to commit time to develop the Guild. From then on the Guild slipped into dormancy. I remember I was holding a certain position in the 3rd Ex-co. At the end of each "financial year" we had to submit returns to the ROS (Registry of Societies). Together with another Ex-co member, I was literally running around trying to fulfil that

The Unfortunate Loss of Steam



submission requirement by the ROS. After that, we just ran out of steam.

“We were relying on successful Poly professionals to run the Guild on account of their success and position. On hindsight, we should have mobilised those members who were working in the Government agencies. Generally, they would have had more time to spare. It took some eight years for them to rise up to the occasion.”

After that burst of enthusiasm from the first elected Ex-co, the Guild unfortunately, went quiet. No proper documents exist today on what really happened to the Guild from 1972 to 1980. Wee Chwee Heng, Loke Pak Chee and Bob Fang remember that in July 1972, a caretaker Ex-co took over, and its president was Mr Ong Teong Pin. In 1975, membership had dwindled from over 160 to 69 only.

There was also a record of an Extra-Ordinary General Meeting held on Saturday, 25 Feb 1978, at 2.30pm, at the Main Lecture Theatre, Prince Edward Campus. Sub-committees were formed. The Membership campaign was to be spearheaded by Loke Pak Chee, Projects by Lim Eng Wang, Library Facilities by Ng Boon Piou, Hong Hin Choon, and S K Balakrishnan. Loke and other co-opted members would look into the restructuring of the Constitution. Those efforts fizzled out too.

Fortunately, the Registrar of Societies in those early days of nationhood was forgiving and did not summarily strike off the Guild!

In 1975, the membership had dwindled from over 160 to 69 only.

Profile:

The other President Wee: a ball of energy and a firebrand

FIRST GUILD PRESIDENT, Wee Chwee Heng, was a firebrand. As an SP Union Council member he needed no prompting to jump up and address crowds of students on their big responsibility to “fight for justice and freedom”. As one of the only five who passed and graduated from SP’s first Architecture batch, he unreservedly gave his opinions at symposiums on the lack of identity in local architecture and exhibited his drawings that exposed the seediness in old neighbourhoods. Yellowed media clippings chronicled all this and more.

After graduating in 1963 from SP, Mr Wee went on to get his Masters degree in Urban Planning at the University of Singapore, and in quick succession, formed his own firm, Kumpulan Akitek in 1965. In 1970, he was nominated by the Singapore Institute of Architects to sit in SP’s Board of Governors, which he served for four years. He had such a presence that the Guild Pro-tem Committee invited him to be the first president in 1971.

Mr Wee remembers the Poly students’ big bugbear: although many of them were from good schools

like Anglo-Chinese School and Raffles’ Institution and possessed “A” level results, they were denied the opportunity to study in the University of Singapore.

He now recalls: “When I was on the Board of Governors, I tried to lobby the Ministry of Education to turn SP into a university”.

Mr Wee tried to run the Guild like a Rotary Club - a central committee representing chapters catering to members from the different departments. But sadly, this just could not happen.

He laments: “We soon realised the problem – that graduates needed to establish their respective careers for the first few years before they could take any interest in a common objective. There were not enough members from every department and it was so hard to sustain everybody’s interest. It was impossible to track people and update addresses without full time staff and determined dedication.”

Professional work and public duties soon took its toll and Wee found he could not accept another term in office as the Guild president.



Mr Wee had to serve a bigger cause: the nation of Singapore. His curriculum vitae shows a long list of service on many Boards, Councils and Committees of museums and organisations like Jurong Town Corporation, Singapore Tourism

Board, Land Transport Authority, Singapore Institute of Architects and the Construction Industry Joint Committee.

Today, Mr Wee is an avid supporter of the SPGG Endowment Fund.

Profile:

Bob Fang Swee Peng: SP in my Heart

BEING IN THE FIRST graduation cohort of the Diploma in Electrical Engineering in 1961, Bob Fang Swee Peng wanted to continue his studies at the local university but found that the door was closed to all Polytechnic graduates. He went to London, attained chartered engineer qualifications and trained at the General Electric Company (GEC), Birmingham. He came back to Singapore, worked in the GEC here and in Malaysia and started his partnership, Design and Management Services Consulting Engineers. Old friends like Wee Chwee Heng soon drew him into the formation of the SP Graduates' Guild.

Having been SPSU's Sports Secretary and Football Captain in 1960, Bob Fang was part of the group of the early Union Council members who wanted the esprit de corps of SP to live on in a graduates' club. At least half of the Guild's first Ex-co members were Union Council members from the early 1960s. They recognised the networking opportunities that having a guild could give them, although eventually they found themselves

torn between serving the Guild and keeping up with their own fast-developing careers.

He remembers working behind the scenes to whip up the Gala Dinner in 1972 which former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had consented to attend. There was no Guild secretariat staff or public relations personnel from the alma mater to help them. Mr Lee rattled off figures to show that the new tertiary education policy of producing workers with professional and technical skills for rapid industrialisation would produce nearly 10,000 within six years. Everybody was so awed that nobody dared to approach him for photographs, except for the wife of the Guild's vice president, Yim Teck Lim.

So strong have been Mr Fang's feelings for Singapore Polytechnic that he encouraged his twin sons to further their studies there. Like their father, Jeff and Jim Fang excelled in sports, in swimming and badminton respectively. Both represented the Polytechnic and the national youth teams.

Today, he regrets that the Guild went quiet and his own membership lapsed without him receiving any notification. When the Guild was revived in 1980, and even after that he opined that: "...no Ex-co after us thought of inviting any of us as pioneer members to serve again. I do feel a bit disappointed with that.

Nevertheless the various committees after us have done a very good job for SPGG. Congratulations to them."

When the new Guild House was opened in 2001, Bob again proposed to the then Ex-co to start a Limited Term membership for older SP graduates. But this was not taken up.



Chapter Two

Reviving the Guild (1980 - 1986)



Taking off like a shooting star in 1971, properly registered as a society and with a dinner guest like Singapore's first prime minister, the Guild went through a roller-coaster period as they laboured to sustain the club, support their alma mater and work towards getting their very own clubhouse.



VIPs on stage at SP's 30th Anniversary reunion dinner. Second from left: Ang Poh Soon, Guild President; Chua Chor Teck, Chairman of the SP Board of Governors; Dr Tay Eng Soon, Minister of State for Education; Principal Khoo Kay Chai and Lim Meng Tong.

After 1971, Guild activities slowed down. From 1972 to 1980, SPGG was largely in a dormant phase although there were spurts of enthusiasm from “caretaker committees”. It was clear that a revival of the Guild was needed but it was not the younger new members who came to the rescue. Instead two stalwarts from the Pro-tem Ex-co, S K Balakrishnan and Chan Pak Hong came forward once again as president and vice-president respectively.

They called for a proper annual general meeting on 26 January 1980, eight years after the 1st Ex-co’s term ended in 1972. By then SP had moved to Dover Road – the former Princess Mary Barracks for the British Armed Forces – and the Guild was assigned a room on the first floor of the Staff Centre, an old building on the hill.

At this second general meeting in 1980, the president of the 1st Ex-co, Wee Chwee Heng admitted that Guild activities had come to a standstill, “not due to the lack of interest among the graduates but because of pressure of time on the officials of the various Ex-co members who had rallied many a time to make attempts to revive the Guild.” Wee stressed to younger members, “The Guild must continue to function and realise its tremendous potential as a unifying body.”

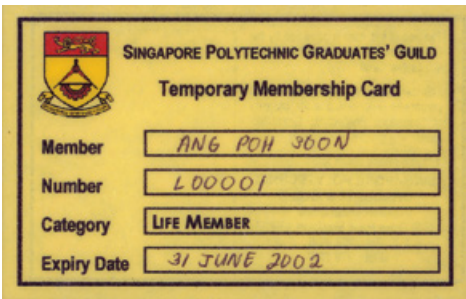
Membership Drive Again and Again

1. Life Membership

As membership recruitment was vital, the Ex-co explored once again the idea of Life membership. In March 1981, for the first time in the Guild’s history, the Registrar of Societies approved the amendment to the Constitution to offer Life Membership at a give-away entrance fee of \$100. Honorary Treasurer Ang Poh Soon became the first Life Member, beating President S K Balakrishnan who was the second.

2. Appeals, talks and tea

A membership drive began in earnest. This included talks to graduands and appeals at the graduation ceremony and the graduation ball. There were talks at army camps and even a tea party, though recruitment at the dinner and dance held in conjunction with the graduation ball was more successful.



Date: _____

The Bursar
Singapore Polytechnic
Dover Road
Singapore 0513

Dear Sir

LETTER OF AUTHORISATION FOR THE COLLECTION
OF CAUTION MONEY

I, the undersigned, hereby authorise Mr. Ng Boon Piou, Treasurer of the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild Executive Committee, Identity Card No. 0224876/2 to collect my caution money (less whatever deduction that may be necessary) on my behalf.

The \$50 caution money will be used for 2 years membership and the balance for the participation of the Graduation Ball '82.

Ng Boon Piou

.....
Signature

.....
Signature of Witness

Name: Name:
IC No: IC No:
Adm. No:
Course:

P. S.
The above Authorisation shall only be Valid when the Participant Graduates from the Singapore Polytechnic.

Authorisation letter to use graduands' caution money to pay for membership fees.

graduands to apply for the refund of their caution money and to allow Guild Treasurer Ng Boon Piou to collect the refund from SP. The \$50 caution money refund was enough for the National Servicemen to pay for the two years of annual club

subscription and the balance for their Graduation Ball '82 ticket.

3. Caution money in lieu of Membership Entrance Fee

To help the Guild in their membership drive, the SP principal, Mr Khoo Kay Chai threw in the idea of a painless way for new graduates to join the Guild: the entrance fee could be paid for by their "caution money". This money, collected to pay off any eventual fines for not returning admission cards, library tickets, and bus passes to the SP Administration, belonged to SP if graduates did not claim it after six years. This idea was great because it was seamless. Graduating students were sent invitation cards to the SPGG dinner and dance in August 1982. The card had an authorisation letter for

A letter dated 20 July 1984 shows that Vice President Hong Hin Choon wrote to Head of Finance Mrs Cheng Cheng Lin, confirming that the Guild had handed over 75 authorisation forms from graduands who had agreed to have their caution money of \$17 (\$5 entrance fee plus two years' of subscription) to be deducted and paid to SPGG in lieu of two years' membership and entrance fee dues. SP duly transferred \$1,275 to the Guild. The scheme continued for a few years until 1985 when it was stopped as the Polytechnic decided to look into the legality of channelling students' caution money towards Guild membership.

Getting Support from the Alma Mater and the Principal

It was yet again clear that there was a growing pool of graduating students to tap for membership and such opportunities should not be lost. The Guild was fortunate to get the full support of Principal Khoo Kay Chai. The Graduation Ball '82 and the caution money refund were great examples of such support. Graduation Ball '85 was very significant in that Guild members actually heard the news that they would get their very own clubhouse on the hill!

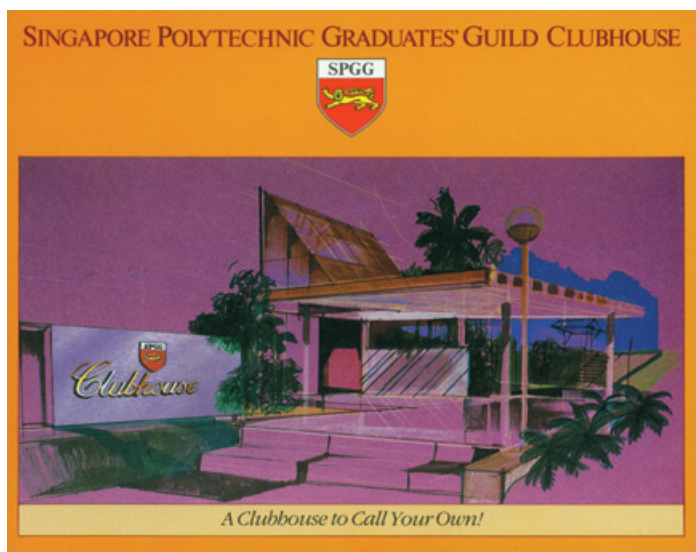
1. Support in membership recruitment

In March 1984, Singapore Polytechnic's advisor to the Guild, Teh Yap Cheng netted 25 Ordinary members and five Life members for the Guild, lifting the total to 92 members. In another instance, SP gave the names and addresses of 6,000 SP alumni. A letter sent by Ang Poh Soon on 3 May 1985 thanked Deputy Principal Cheng Huang Leng for providing 3,600 names of alumni.

Membership application forms were printed and sent together with an appeal letter from Ang Poh Soon. This exercise netted 140 new members.

But it was only with the promise of a clubhouse in 1985 in new brochures

designed by media consultant Al-Marh Ad, and with a lot of goodwill from the Polytechnic, that membership ballooned to 1,300 by November 1985. This was despite the increase in entrance fees to \$500 effective from 22 June 1985, valid for the first 2,000 new members. Monthly subscription would remain at \$10, as the clubhouse was not ready yet.



First marketing brochure to mention a clubhouse.

2. Support for facilities, activities and further education

The Library was soon opened to all graduates and borrowing was allowed under certain terms. SP sports facilities followed in 1985. When interest in further education became popular, SP Registrar Teh Yap Cheng organised a meeting for Strathclyde University Alumni with Ang Poh Soon, Hong Hin Choon and Steven Lake. The discussion was on coordinating admissions for alumni who wished to study at Strathclyde. The plus points would be reduced tuition fees and speedier processing for admission. Teh volunteered to consult the Ministry of Education.

Mr Teh also promised to look into the possibility of SP's Continuing Education Department providing courses at concession rates for Guild members. When SP secured \$8.5 million from government funds to expand sports facilities, Mr Teh offered to book facilities for members. They were also invited to participate in functions to meet students and the SP Board of Governors at annual dinner-and-dances.

Principal Khoo had assigned Registrar Teh Yap Cheng to help the Guild grow. Mr Teh sat in Ex-co meetings, offered counsel and liaised the communications between SP's departments and the Guild.

In 1983, Mr Teh, newly-appointed as Head, Student Affairs, became the first honorary advisor of the Guild. He assisted the Guild in running meetings, charting their directions



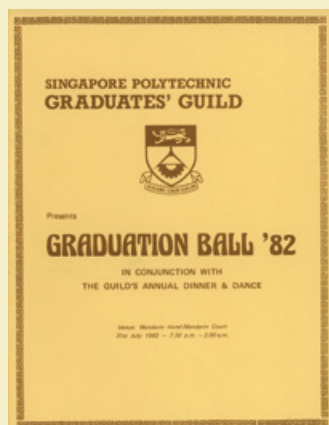
to grow membership and working towards a physical clubhouse that would rally alumni to buy membership. He played an important part in the Guild's proposals to SP, for a clubhouse.

Principal Khoo himself invited Guild members – together with the top five percent of graduates – to a cocktail held at the Staff Quarters. He briefed the party on the new Technician Diplomat scholarship scheme in which successful candidates could join SP as teaching assistants for a year and be offered scholarships for approved courses at local or overseas universities.

Exciting Graduation Balls

Graduation Ball –1982

THE GALA DINNER on 8 August 1982 saw 40 tables at the Mandarin Hotel Ballroom. Tickets of \$25 were snapped up by members and graduating students, while earlier graduates paid \$35. SP helped to secure the National Servicemen's release from their camps on that day to attend the dinner and dance. A fashion show put up by Elsa Yeo Modelling Agency cost the Guild \$300 but the glamour it brought was priceless. The compere Mr Naidu was paid \$200 and the McCoys Band provided live music for \$800. Joining in were SP's heads of departments who donated some prizes, and a table of Ngee Ann Polytechnic Alumni members.



Graduation Ball 1985: Clubhouse at Last!

The Clubhouse Annual Ball on 28 July 1985 at the Mandarin Hotel just after the graduation ceremony was jointly organised with SP. It was here that Mr Chua Chor Teck, the chairman of the SP Board of Governors, announced that the Guild would finally get the funding of \$500,000 for renovating the clubhouse.

Addressing the revellers, Mr Chua said: "In order to ensure its successful development, I am happy to announce that the Singapore Polytechnic will be contributing a sum of half a million dollars to renovate an existing building for use as the clubhouse. In addition, the Polytechnic will be handing over to the Graduates' Guild tonight, a cheque for the sum of \$10,132. This was the surplus money contributed by graduates towards the Polytechnic's 30th Anniversary Reunion Dinner held last year. I hope this additional sum of money will be a valuable initial contribution towards the success of the project."





POLY GUILD NEWS

SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC GRADUATES' GUILD

M.C. (P) No.: 75/4/85 May Issue

The Symbol of Success ... with our Alma Mater

For 3 decades, the graduates of the Singapore Polytechnic have given their skills in various fields of expertise. These are the pride of the Graduates' Guild, and in their honour, a Shield has been designed to symbolize their success.

The entire Shield takes its stand on a white background. White has always been associated with peace and purity and it emphasises the



Guild's firm basis on friendship, self-mastery and integrity. The red of the inner Shield, the colour of our life-blood, aptly conveys the sense of energy and fortitude that is an integral part of the Guild itself.

Taking its stand, at the very core of the Shield, is the yellow lion, which is also the symbol of Singapore, the Lion-city. It depicts the strength and vigilance which has gained the Guild

its regal reputation. The yellow hue of the lion, reminding us of light and the warmth of the sun, signifies the intellect and intuition of the graduates themselves, who are after all the living symbols of success. The lion, also bound in the Shield for Singapore Polytechnic, shows the Guild's support and allegiance to their Alma Mater.

Gathering of the Guild

An Evening to Savour

December 29, 1984 was an evening to savour when the Graduates' Guild held a barbecue at Jalan Loyang Besar.

It was a warmly informal gathering at a well-furnished Holiday Resort. Some Guild members brought their families along, and the presence of young children brightened the occasion.

In high spirits, the crowd mingled with. Everyone enjoyed their fill of the well-flavoured food and the barbecue fire were kept burning away into the night.

Getting to know you

The barbecue was a delightful getting-to-know-you session. It presented the Guild with an excellent

Continued on page 2

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Guest officials and members enjoying a most enjoyable afternoon at the barbecue.



A gathering time for the Guild, with Mr Ang Peh Soon (President) and Mr Tay Chew Joon, President Elect.

The trip to a fishing village in Johor was recorded in the first ever SPGG newsletter, The Poly Guild News, May, 1985.

3. Ambitious plans

The 4th Ex-co (1982-1983) brainstormed ideas like setting up business joint ventures, running a creche or kindergarten, starting a computer club, setting up their own library and organising lifestyle classes like yoga. Their long-term dream was to build a new guild house with facilities like a music room, a swimming pool, a golf driving range, and a supermarket. They also planned for a newsletter, Poly Guild News, to reach out to about

5,000 graduates who had graduated five years and earlier, to inform them on Guild activities and useful continuing education courses.

Riding on such ambitious plans, the Fifth Ex-co swung into action, working hard to keep the Guild alive and well. They organised a barbecue on 29 December 1984 at the Jalan Loyang Besar government holiday resort and a weekend at a fishing village in Kong Kong, Johor. These were reported in its newsletter Poly Guild News in 1985.

• 26

The graduates' guild

THE idea of a graduates' guild was conceived about 18 years ago, in 1900, by members of the executive committee of the students' union.

This led to the formation of a protein committee in 1988, and subsequently to the election of the first executive committee in the following year.

Today, the guild is represented by a full executive committee which is headed by Mr Ang Poh Soon, a senior

The guild's latest projects include the setting up of a clubhouse and the publication of a professional journal — *Polys-techniques 94* — to commemorate the 9th anniversary of her alma mater.

- **PROMOTE** the interests and development of the Singapore Polytechnic and its graduates by channeling the accumulated experience of past students into constructive activities as members of the guild.

- **FACILITATE** the exchange of information and ideas related to all branches of industrial technology and for these purposes

(a) Hold meetings, exhibits, tours, visits and such other activities as the guild may deem incidental or conducive to the promotion or attainment of the

(b) Uphold the character and raise the status and to advance the interests of Singapore Polytechnic graduates.

- **PROMOTE** the interests of the members of the guild.
- **COMMUNICATE** to members information on all matters of

fecting the members of the guild and to print, publish, issue and circulate such publication as may seem conducive to any of the objects to the

- **DISSEMINATE** any former opinion of the guild to the widest extent.
- **VERIFY** any actions on be

The aims and strategies of the guild are further categorised

The immediate plans include providing a place for graduates to receive information.

The guild also sees a need to provide a useful avenue for members to keep in close contact with her alma mater.

The future plans of the guild will be concentrated on

A massive membership exercise will be launched to recruit members from its 30,000 graduates.

The guild also hopes to assist members to keep up with latest developments in their fields by organising short courses, technical talks and by publishing technical journals.

The guild is taking active participation in the Polynuch.

It is cosponsoring the seminar on Education and Training for Higher Technology on Sept. 14 at the Whitehouse.

The guild will take part in the carnival, which is part of the celebrations, on Sept 13 and 14.

It is also helping to publicize and encourage graduates to attend a reunion dinner at the Polytechnic Dover Road Campus on Sept 26.

A membership and recruit meet exercise will be carried out during the function where about 1,000 graduates are expected.

The guild's publication committee is also publishing, for the first time, an inaugural issue of *Polytechniques*, a tech-

Polytechnique '84 will contain messages from the Ministry of State (Education). In the past, the Ministry has published similar messages in the *Journal de la Polytechnique*.

It is an interesting journal with a host of useful articles pertaining to the major sectors of the Singapore economy and

The journal will be presented



Some overseas tertiary institutions which accept Poly grads for degree courses

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SP's 30th anniversary provided the Guild the opportunity to talk about its plans to get their own clubhouse. Source:

The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited.

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Singapore Polytechnic-Guild: A Symbiotic relationship

1. The Guild helps SP with academic matters

Areas for the Guild to be involved in were mapped out: the Guild would help SP by providing feedback on courses, giving talks on career development to students and participating in campus activities. It would be involved in surveys to find out

graduates' aspirations; collation of a directory of overseas institutions that admitted SP graduates; and organising post-graduate courses like Robotics, Microprocessors and Computer programming. The Guild could also organise educational tours or visits to local industries and provide practical orientation for students going on various attachments at local industries.

Thus in March 1985, the Guild obligingly forked out \$1,600 to SP's Continuing Education Department to print survey forms to find out the needs of graduates and their aspirations to further their knowledge and skills.

2. The Guild helps with publicity of SP Courses

Principal Khoo invited the Guild Ex-co to a luncheon whereby several issues were resolved - for example, the distribution of Poly Guild News, SP's Poly News, and the Polytechniques Journal; a time-table for the Guild's use of sports facilities; the Guild to help sell the Continuing Education Department's booklets at 25 cents each; and SP to encourage lecturers to help recruit students and graduates to join and participate in Guild activities.

3. The Guild helps with the 30th Anniversary Celebrations

The Guild assisted in organising the 30th Anniversary Graduates' Reunion Dinner. It helped that the organising committee chairman of the reunion dinner, Lim Meng Tong, was also concurrently a senior lecturer in SP's Civil and Building Department and the vice president in the Guild's Fifth Ex-co. In addition, the Guild also set up and ran stalls at the 30th Anniversary Carnival.

SPGG's close involvement in SP's 30th Anniversary celebrations was something that SP was happy to help the Guild publicise. A media briefing was held and the Straits Times obliged with a detailed article on 7 September 1984 about the Guild's objectives, its active participation in the anniversary celebrations – carnival, reunion dinner and seminar – and its plan to secure a clubhouse which would encourage undergraduates to join. There would be two phases of development for the clubhouse. This announcement was a year before they received official approval from SP's Board of Governors.

...the Guild would help SP by providing feedback on courses, giving talks on career development to students and participating in campus activities.

Celebrating SP's 30th Anniversary

THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY threw up opportunities for the Guild to show that it could cooperate and even help the Polytechnic organise main events.

The 30th Anniversary Graduates' Reunion Dinner

Having a strong bond with SP, the Guild was invited to help organise the 30th Anniversary Graduates' Reunion Dinner held on 29 September 1984. The Organising Committee Chairman Lim Meng Tong – cornering his fellow lecturers to pull in ex-students – managed to draw some 3,300 graduates and friends to the dinner at the Administration Block car park. Guest-of-honour Dr Tay Eng Soon, Minister of State for Education and Minister-in-Charge of the polytechnics, spoke on the merits of meritocracy in an open society and the rationale of the graduate mothers' scheme. The Guild presented plaques of appreciation to Principal Khoo and Honorary Advisor Teh.



1984 SP 30th Anniversary Graduates' Reunion Dinner: Dr Tay Eng Soon, centre, and other VIP guests.



VIP party touring the carnival. From left: Teh Yap Cheng, Principal Khoo with his head turned, and in the forefront, Major Abbas, Member of Parliament for Pasir Panjang.



The 30th Anniversary Carnival

The Ex-co set up two stalls at the SP 30th Anniversary Carnival on 15 and 16 September at the Administration car park. Major Abbas Abu Amin, Member of Parliament for Pasir Panjang opened the carnival. Ex-co member S K Balakrishnan adopted the theme “Vanishing Foods” and sold thosai, putu mayam, vaadai and local desserts like bubur hitam and pulut trigu. A member had earlier suggested setting up a game where players would pay \$1 for three balls to take aim at photos of heads of departments in SP. The Ex-co wisely turned it down, approved “Ditching Bunnies” instead, and put Syed Albar in charge.

The Ex-co had also volunteered to sponsor the Polytechnique Seminar '84 held in conjunction with SP's 30th Anniversary celebrations. It ambitiously set the target of \$15,000 but later roped in the SIET (Singapore Institute of Engineering Technicians) to help. Headlined “Education and Training Towards Higher Technology”, the seminar was held on 14 and 15 September at SP and opened by Dr Wong Kwei Cheong, concurrently the Minister of State for Trade & Industry and Chair, National Productivity Council. It boasted of an international panel of speakers, which included Mr Sachio Kitamura and Dr David Reyes-Guerra from the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, USA.



Polytechnique Seminar '84

4. The Guild donates book prizes

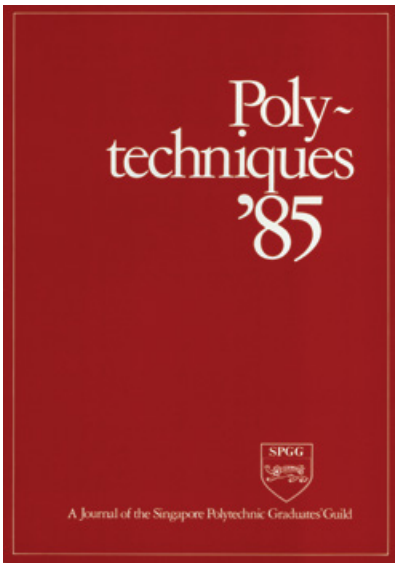
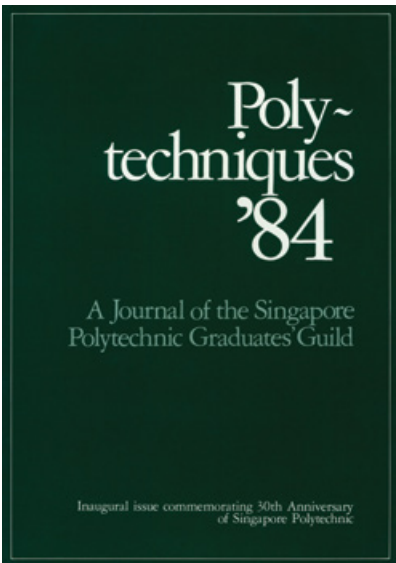
One noteworthy item of contribution in 1982 was the donation by a Guild member, Koh Kong Fatt of \$300 towards SP's Graduation Book Prizes. Another donation of \$200 came in from Varet Pte Ltd, through an alumnus who worked there. There would be four SPGG prizes for outstanding graduates and each would receive a book prize of \$200.

In his presidential address in 1983, President Ang Poh Soon reported that two book prizes of \$100 each would be presented to top students of the Certificate in Industrial Management (Ng Ban Seng) and Maritime Studies course (Leong Peng Tuck). The Guild has continued with this tradition of giving graduation prizes today.

The Guild Gets Published

1. Engaging media consultant – Al Marh Ad

In 1984, knowing that the Ex-co needed a helping hand to produce their first newsletter, their advisor Teh Yap Cheng introduced media consultancy Al Marh Ad. The need for the services of a media consultant became all the more urgent as the Guild needed to raise funds for the SP 30th Anniversary Seminar. Knowing full well that funding could be sourced from advertisements, the Ex-co engaged Al-Marh Ad for their first ever Graduates' Guild journal (Technocrat) and subsequently, their newsletter.



On 4 June 1984, Ang Poh Soon signed a Letter of Undertaking to authorize Al-Marh Ad as SPGG's official agent to canvas for advertisements. Al-Marh Ad guaranteed a return of \$5,000 to the Guild, which would still retain editorial control. This inaugural technical journal was renamed Polytechniques '84 as the previous name "Technocrat" had been used for a Student Union newsletter. Polytechniques '84 saw the light of day in December 1984, after the anniversary dinner. Print run was 5,000 copies and the articles were adapted from presentations by the international speakers at the 30th Anniversary Seminar. Appointed to the Editorial Board were Lee Kheng Hock (chair/editor), Hong Hin Choon, Ang Poh Soon, S K Balakrishnan, Miss Ng Kim Lian, and Miss Tham Pui Seong.



Dr Toh Chin Chye, Former Chairman, SP Board of Governors; Former Deputy Prime Minister; Member of Parliament for Rochore, 1984. Source: Polytechniques '84.

The inaugural issue had a foreword from the late Dr Tay Eng Soon, who was then the Minister of State for Education and Minister-in-charge of the Polytechnics. Six other messages from past and present chairmen of SP's Board, and past and present principals followed. Thus there were messages from Dr Toh Chin Chye, former deputy prime minister, in his capacity as the past chairman of SP's Board of Governors; and SP's past principals Mr Robert A. Edis (1963-1973) and Mr Vernon Ager (1973-1976). The chairman of the Singapore Manufacturers' Association, Tay Kwang Seng, also weighed in.

The need for the services of a media consultant became all the more urgent as the Guild needed to raise funds for the SP 30th Anniversary Seminar.

2. Logo and warm reception to the Guild's early journals

The Guild's first ever technical journal *Polytechniques '84* did not have a logo. The first meeting of the 5th Ex-co unanimously accepted Al Marh-Ad's design of letterhead and logo although some members felt that the logo was too close in resemblance to SP's and the design cost of \$1000 was too costly.

After the warm reception to its first technical journal *Polytechniques '84*, Ang Poh Soon started planning for the next issue. In a letter dated 18 June 1985, he invited Dr Wan Soon Bee, Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office, and Deputy Secretary-General, NTUC, to write the foreword to *Polytechniques '85*. Dr Wan emphasized the crucial role in industry of SP graduates as middle and senior managers who "give the technical and managerial thrust", and the urgency to keep up with the pace of scientific and technical development.



SP Board Chairman Dr Chua Chor Teck's message reminded members: "The acid test of a Singapore Polytechnic graduate is his or her ability to keep on learning and upgrading in a world of rapidly advancing technology. This is where the Graduates' Guild and the Polytechnics provide an invaluable resource which can contribute to the productivity of graduates and, in turn, towards the economic growth of Singapore."

There was also a message from Mr C. N. Watson, the chairman of the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce.

The 21 articles in the journal dealt with energy management, recycling of water, multi-layer PCB and surface mounting technologies, the advancement of CAD/CAM technology and the effect of information technology on office automation.

The Ex-co was happy to let Al-Marh Ad design and print the first and second issues of the *Poly Guild News*, and the design of membership cards and 10,000 recruitment brochures. Such brochures, together with the promise of a clubhouse, helped membership to balloon to 1,300 by 31 November 1985. Subsequently, as "honorary consultant", Al-Marh Ad was also entrusted with the job of drafting proposals for a clubhouse.

The Guild Speaks Up for Graduates

IN THE 1980s, the prevailing government policy was that top ‘O’ levels scorers should be admitted into junior colleges and thence to the National University of Singapore (NUS) to pursue research-oriented engineering. However, some of these well-endowed students – with ten points and below – chose the polytechnics instead, before proceeding to NUS and to National Technological Institute (NTI) to pursue practice-oriented engineering. In 1985, the first batch of the latter was graduating and some 150 of them reportedly performed better than many in the NTI. In fact some of them were considered for First Class Honours.

The Straits Times of 10 April 1985 quoted NTI President Dr Cham Tao Soon who was commenting on polytechnic graduates: “They shouldn’t have gone to the polytechnics. I looked at their scores; they would get First Class Honours.” He lamented that they might regret it when they were “past the age of 40 and holding high echelon posts in management.”

SPGG President Ang felt behooved to write to the Editor, explaining that many good students, especially those from low-income families, opted to go to the polytechnics simply because they would be able to find employment after just three years of study.

While sharing the government’s concern that these bright students would be depriving the others on the lower end of the scale from obtaining a polytechnic education, Ang wrote that they had their reasons for going through the polytechnic route and “they should not be frowned upon... nor be looked upon as inferior engineers simply because they missed out on junior college.”

Another issue concerned the Polytechnic Diploma and the Polytechnic Certificate. In the Forum Page of the Straits Times on 7 May 1985 and signed off by “Poly Grad” was the heading “Is Poly Dip equivalent to Cert?” It appeared that workers – not polytechnic graduates – were upgrading themselves with the Full Technological Certificate offered by City & Guilds of the United Kingdom and were receiving the same salaries as polytechnic graduates. President Ang wrote in to agree with the writer that the certificate should not be the equivalent of the Polytechnic diploma course, which was taught in more depth and for a longer period of time.



*Third SPGG President
Ang Poh Soon in 1985.*

Monetary Woes

1. An unsettled bill with the alma mater

During the dormant years, the bank account stood at \$3,056, left over by the caretaker committees. Another sum of \$519.50 was collected in 1979 from subscription fees of a 100-strong membership. As of 26 January 1980, the cash in the bank was \$3653.50. By 30 September 1985 cash in the bank stood at \$4,322.

There was an incident that involved a sum of \$3,192. It appeared that the Guild had agreed to sponsor an advertisement in SP's Open House in the Straits Times on 7 December 1985. This sum was supposedly to be deducted from the Clubhouse Funds kept by SP. But the Poly's Finance Department had no clue on this Fund. Exchanges of letters and invoices followed and the issue dragged on over the terms of two more Ex-cos. At a meeting of the 7th Ex-co in 1987 it was recorded that this bill could not be settled, as it was not recorded in the accounts of 1986 when the 5th Ex-Co stepped down.

2. A legal tussle with Al Marh Ad

Another incident involved Al -Marh Ad, the Guild's first media consultant. Over two years, it helped to produce the first two issues of the Poytechniques journal, the first two editions of Poly Guild News, and marketing collaterals based on profit and cost sharing. It even helped to draft proposals to request SP for a clubhouse building. It soon performed secretariat services for the Guild, operating from its own office in Tan Boon Liat Building in Tiong Baru and was paid \$6,000 for such services in the accounts of 1984/1985.

However the relationship took on a sour note in December 1985 and the Guild then demanded to see the accounts and asked for all missing copies of publications to be sent to members. Secretariat services were stopped and all designs, mailing lists, documents and articles, cheques received in the Guild's name, and the \$12,000 balance of monies from the advertisements in Polytechniques were asked to be returned to the Guild by 15 January 1986. Al Marh-Ad instead countered months later in September 1986 that the Guild owed it a sum of \$31,436.48, mainly for the new clubhouse recruitment brochure. SPGG then asked



Al-Marh Ads' rate card.

Al-Marh Ad to substantiate its claims with evidence of authorized contracts and delivery orders signed by no less than the president of SPGG.

Al Marh Ad demanded the immediate settlement of money owed and the matter went to the Subordinate Courts in November 1987. The Guild's legal advisor, Manjit Darshan & partners, made a counterclaim of \$12,000 being the sum due to be paid to SPGG after the printing of Polytechniques '85. It submitted that Al-Marh Ad should have been aware that all Ex-co members

past and present could only approve expenditures of \$500 only and all bills had to be countersigned by the president. Despite this, Al-Marh Ad had continued to incur expenses by certain members and still would not give an account and explanation of the incurrence of debt nor return all funds, books, documents wrongly held by them. The matter was finally settled at a court hearing five years later in August 1992. The Guild agreed to make an out-of-court settlement of \$25,000, excluding legal fees of \$9,200. The whole saga had cost the Guild a hefty sum of \$34,200.

New Era, New Ex-co under Jeffrey Lee

The Fifth Ex-co worked hard, calling for 12 meetings from the annual general meeting in October 1984 till Jeffrey Lee took over in May 1986. Feeling rather tired, they did not even organise an annual general meeting in 1985 and often voiced their hope that a new team could take over.

1. Advisor Teh scouts for a new Ex-co team

To scout around for a new Ex-co, advisor Teh Yap Cheng organised two lunch meetings on 2 March 1986 at Cafe Vanda, Paramount Hotel and later at the Staff Centre, SP Sports Complex. Two groups were encouraged to stand for elections at the next annual general meeting. Among them were Jeffrey Lee Chin Hee, S Mohan, Johnny T M Boey, Albert Lim, Tan Lai Beng, Captain Liew Chin Chye, David T W Ngiam, Steven Woon, Syed Mohd Albar, Ahmad Ariff, Martin Ong Yeaw Seng, Tiong Cherh Teck, Kenneth C G Koh, Vincent S C Yuen, and George Wong who went on to form SPIMA (SP Industrial Management Alumni).

2. Passing over from Fifth Ex-co to Sixth

Teh secured the Fifth Ex-co's acquiescence to hand over the reins to Jeffrey Lee and his friends - Martin Ong, Dr Aaron Loh, and Dr Lim Boh Soon. At the Sixth Annual General Meeting on 10 May 1986, outgoing president Ang Poh Soon pointed out that with the \$500,000 promised by SP and the healthy membership roll of 1,300 members, "a new team of dedicated members is needed to relieve the old guards who had kept the Guild afloat for several years." He called on the members to participate actively in the forthcoming clubhouse as "even though communications had been through our Annual Journal and Poly Guild News, the Clubhouse atmosphere will be the solution to a closer rapport among the members eventually."

On the accounts, Ang explained that there was actually no income from the 30th Anniversary dinner as subsidies were accorded to new members who attended it. The accounts for 1984 showed a net deficit incurred for the

services of advertising consultant Al-Marh Ad. As the accounts could not be settled, the 84/85 Ex-co had to “overstay their term of office”. He assured the new president that the outgoing treasurer would be accountable for the interim accounts for the period of overstay.

3. The Sixth Ex-co takes over

The Sixth Ex-co was elected, albeit a year late, with Jeffrey Lee as honorary president, Martin Ong Yeaw Seng as the vice, Dr Aaron Loh as the secretary and Roy Liew Chin Chye as treasurer. Among the committee members were Dr Siew Wah Hoon, Dr Lim Boh Soon, Somasundhram Mohan and Syed Mohamad Albar. They had the luxury of one full-time staff, Cindy Chong.

With characteristic gusto, Jeffrey Lee started his first Ex-co meeting by declaring that their meetings would be hitherto styled as to-the-point “committee discussions” rather than lengthy “talk-shop” meetings. Fortnightly meetings became a feature. Starting with basics, he aligned the crest on the club’s logo to that of SP’s. There had just been a lion below “SPGG”, while SP’s crest had a lion on top and a lighted bulb below. Jeffrey instructed the Ex-co to recruit “SPGG volunteers” to get more ideas and organize informal dialogue sessions.

Jeffrey also wanted new plastic membership cards but funds were meagre. The Ex-co reviewed the subscription rate of \$10 per month as set by the previous committee. Most members had not paid for a length of time and constitutionally, their membership would have lapsed. A re-registration exercise was planned for those who were still interested to be part of the Guild. Entrance fees would be waived and they only needed to pay the subscription of \$10 from the month of July 1986.

For the first time, membership records were computerised. At the third meeting of the Ex-co on 6 July 1986, a member, Dr See Peng San was thanked for helping to do this. Continuing the tradition set by past executive committees, a seminar on Opportunity & Career Development for Technologists was organised, followed by a Graduates’ Reunion Dinner on 21 November 1986.

As there was no annual general meeting in 1984/85, the meeting that elected the new team of Jeffrey Lee in May 1986 became the Sixth Annual General Meeting and the elected Ex-co was the sixth. Five months later on 18 October 1986, Jeffrey held the Seventh Annual General Meeting.

It would take till October 1988 before the Guild’s new Clubhouse on the hilltop became a reality.

Alumni Chapters in the Guild

ALUMNI CHAPTERS never quite took root in the Guild, as it was never seriously planned for. The first move was initiated by SP's then Chemical Process Technology (CPT) Department which was so keen to be affiliated as a chapter in the Guild that it formed its own sub-committee in 1984. The Guild's Constitution did not provide for the formation of chapters and it would need to be amended to cater for such offshoots. The Chair of the CPT Alumni, Mrs Leong Kim Yen, was co-opted into the Ex-co. The other members were Honorary Secretary Nee Pai How and Treasurer Tay Chin How, all lecturers of the department.

At its 12th meeting on 12 May 1984, the Ex-co expressed the hope that other chapters would take root in a similar fashion, grouped under Civil Engineering alumni, SP-Nanyang Technological Institute Alumni, SP-Vocational Industrial and Trade Board, and SP-National Productivity Board. However, no step was taken to amend the Constitution.

Years down the road, opportunities for other possible chapters arose and despite Principal Khoo's preference for having all groupings under the umbrella of SPGG, the Ex-co did not pursue this. Thus two other groups registered themselves independently – the SP

Entrepreneurs' Club (SPEC) and the SP Industrial Management Alumni (SPIMA). Only one grouping was absorbed: alumni from the Japan-Singapore Institute of Systems and Technology (JSIST), which was transferred to SP from the Economic Development Board (EDB) in 1987. In this case, it was due to Ms Anne Chiang,

the officer tasked to work closely with the Guild, who gave several reminders to the long-standing president, Jeffrey Lee to include JSIST alumni for SP's image and to boost the Guild's strength. JSIST alumni were actually planning to register their own body. An extraordinary general meeting and subsequent approval from the Registrar of Societies in 1989 finally allowed the Guild to take in JSIST graduates, but not as a chapter.

The Guild's Constitution did not provide for the formation of chapters and it would need to be amended to cater for such offshoots.

Profile:

S K Balakrishnan: A Reviver from the Start

Not many people may realise that the second Guild president elected in 1980, Mr S K Balakrishnan (Bala), was also in the Pro-tem Committee in 1970 with Loke Pak Chee. Both of them were in their final year at SP, and had seats in the SP Student Council. When the Guild was formally registered in 1971 and a new Executive Committee elected, Bala was happy to leave the hot seat to higher-profile alumni like Wee Chwee Heng and Bob Fang. However the Guild tanked and was far from breathing fire after 1972... until Bala stepped in again.

WHAT SPARKED the revival in 1980? Could it have been that Ngee Ann Polytechnic was about to launch their guild too? Principal Khoo called up Wee Chwee Heng and Bala to initiate a revival. The latter responded, intending to put it in order and passing it on to a suitable aspirant for whom he would continue to help.

He says: “I took over, not to aspire to do great, but to keep it afloat. With limited resources we had only our passion to soldier on. Being with the Guild from day one, I could not let it die off. If it had, the momentum would have been lost and starting all over again would be very difficult. Moreover, all the concerted efforts put in by so many would have come to naught.”

Those years during the dormant period from 1972 to 1980 are still fresh in Bala’s mind. Everybody seemed to have “abandoned” the Guild. Accounts



The vigilant S K Balakrishnan giving his take at an annual general meeting, 2003.

were in a mess as there had not been any treasurer for years. He was left carrying the baby, that is, the Guild’s files. With no office, SP would redirect all



S K Balakrishnan today.

Guild correspondences to his home address. Being the lone caretaker, he had to placate officers from the Inland Revenue and Statistics Department for non-compliance and deal with Singtel's warning letters demanding settlement for outstanding telephone bills, which he paid out of his own pocket. He had to soothe annoyed members and prospective ones who sent money for membership.

After taking over in 1980 as the second president, he knew there was a rocky road ahead with so much work to do but no members. To recruit new members, Bala and his team trudged to army camps, government offices and graduation ceremonies. The Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) and the Land Transport Authority allowed them to give talks. It was tough: out of 50 attendees, only one would sign up.

To raise funds, he "twisted" the arms of his contractors and Public Utilities Board (PUB) colleagues – who were also alumni – for \$100 donations. This kept them going in financing their activities. He pursued the launch of Life Membership and secured the approval of the Registrar of Societies to approve changes in the Constitution. With the modest entrance fee of \$100, it was a sure-

fire way of getting members into the fold in the quickest time possible.

Meanwhile he searched for someone to take over. He had to plead with graduates to be Ex-co members. Fortunately many of his peers in the PUB who were active in their company's Union responded and came to his rescue including Ang Poh Soon who would later be the third President. As promised, Bala stayed on in the Ex-co to help Ang Poh Soon run the Guild. But they were quite tired. Advisor Teh soon started looking around for fresh blood, and managed to arouse the interest of Jeffrey Lee who became the fourth president in 1986.

Ang Poh Soon, Bala and the rest of the team were more than happy to hand over the reins as they felt they had done their part and hoped that others would come in to do more for the Guild. Today, Bala still comes and uses the facilities of the current guild house. He says, "Never in our minds could we imagine such a nice clubhouse. We have come a very long way."

While being involved with setting up the Guild in the early days, Bala was also representing the SP Students' Union in the Anson Community Centre of Tanjung Pagar district. He later moved on at various times to serve several grassroots centres.

Profile:
Third President Ang Poh Soon: Never Say Die

When Third President Ang Poh Soon took over in 1981, he knew that his priority was to grow a stable membership. With new members herded into National Service or flying overseas for further studies, the numbers were dismal. He was painfully aware that without a physical club, it was like the Greek hero Sisyphus trying to roll a boulder up a mountain. To get a physical club, membership had to be much more robust.



Ang Poh Soon today.

HIS CALL TO his members was:
“Find alumni, interact and build rapport with them. Reach out to SP alumni staff also and get information

on former students and feedback from them.”

The perennial thorn was always the discouraging attendance at

meetings and in one year, even the annual Dinner and Dance had to be cancelled. Still, Poh Soon and his band of brothers persevered, forming a guild house project building subcommittee to push for a physical clubhouse on the hilltop building EB7 (Extension Block 7). However, an unimpressive count of members and scarce funds led to the SP Board of Governors rejecting their first proposal.

Undeterred, they next proposed a restaurant in EB7, as a meeting and dining place for members, their guests, and SP staff. The SP Management was then trying to decide what should be done to EB7. In November 1984, the Guild was allocated the upper floor with the lower floor set aside for the childcare centre for children of SP staff. The realisation of this new hilltop clubhouse was not Poh Soon's to savour. By the time it was ready in 1988, Jeffrey Lee had taken over as president.

The other highlight in Poh Soon's term was the alma mater's 30th Anniversary in 1984. The Ex-co participated in the gala anniversary dinner and carnival, and helped to organise the technology seminar. With two SP staff in the committee - Lim Meng Tong and Leong Kim Yen - they fanned out to draw in the revellers for the dinner. For the subsidised price of \$36 for a dinner ticket, new members would not have

to pay the entrance fee. Even Principal Khoo Kay Chai felt compelled to visit his former office in the Public Works Department to get alumni to buy dinner tickets. A lot of Life Members joined at this time.

Poh Soon served as president for three terms over four years until 1986. There was no annual general meeting for 1985/1986. He juggled and struggled to fulfill his duties as president, as a senior technical officer and staff union leader at the Public Utilities Board and as a member of the estate where he lived – the Neptune Court Owners' Association.

He remembers attending meetings with Guild secretariat Al-Marh Ad that lasted past midnight. He could hardly help his children in their schoolwork. On one of those wee hours of the morning, he saw his daughter's note: "Dad, you can help other people, why can't you help me? I had to call up my friend to find out how to work out my Math problems!"

What had always motivated Poh Soon was his unwavering sense of duty. He says: "I put in a lot of effort, time and even my 'youth' trying to get the Guild going. I actually wanted to have four children but since I was too busy, I gave up that dream. My wife used to scold me 'Aiyah, the Guild will go on even after you are gone.'"

His hope for SPGG is that it should thrive and have continuity in the leadership. "Or else all my efforts would go to waste."

Chapter Three

The Hike to the Hilltop Clubhouse (1983 - 1988)

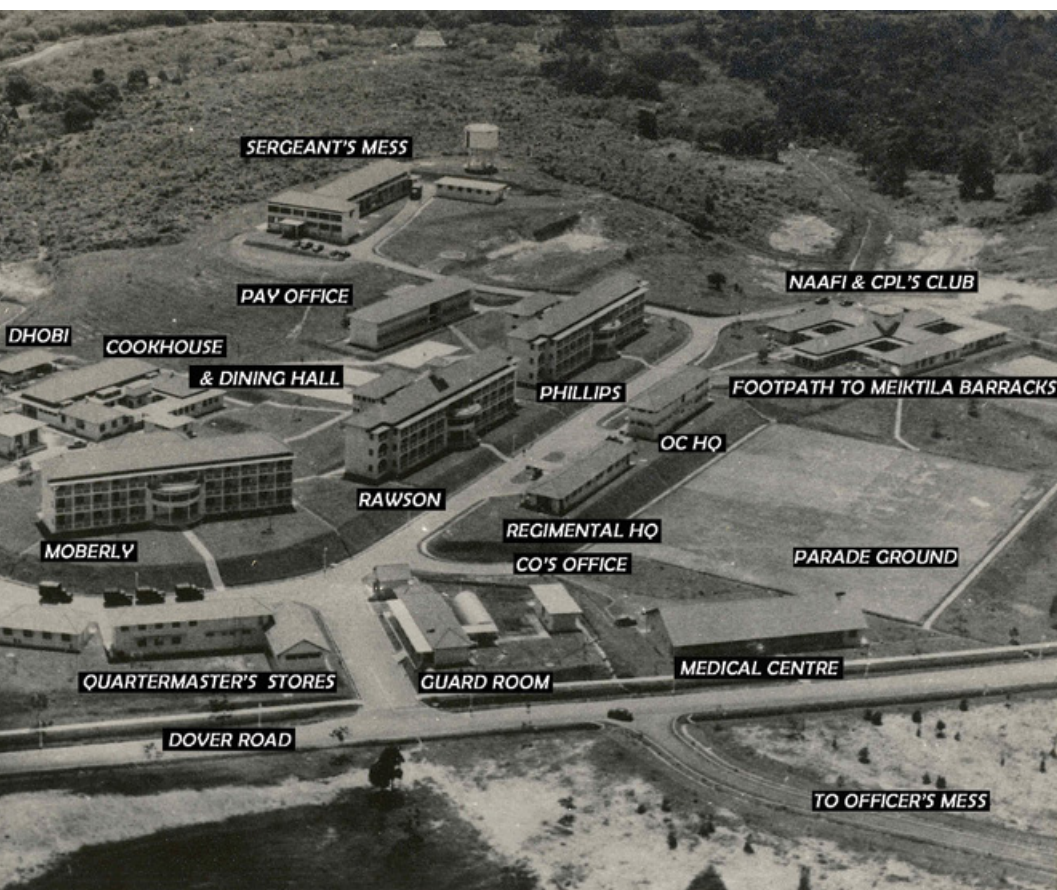
Without a clubhouse, no club could hope to survive. The vision for a clubhouse first came on the radar of the Guild as early as the Third Annual General Meeting on 4 June 1983 when Ang Poh Soon was returned as president of the Fourth Executive Committee. But which building in the campus could they hope to use?



The original occupants of the Dover Road campus were the British Army's 18th Signal Regiment.

The original Sergeants' Mess on top of the hill next to the water tank eventually became the only accessible building for the first clubhouse.

Source: Singapore Polytechnic.



The Clubhouse Possibility: Ambitious Plans

When the Polytechnic campus moved to the former Princess Mary Barracks in Dover Road, the Clubhouse started humbly with a room on the first floor of the Staff Centre, which was situated on a hill. It was later re-assigned to a bigger room on the ground floor. SPGG's honorary advisor, Teh Yap Cheng, then Head of Student Affairs, encouraged the members to work towards the establishment of a clubhouse. The Guild soon formed a Guild house Building sub-committee in 1983 and started drawing up concrete and ambitious plans for building a clubhouse to present to the SP Management.

Media consultancy Al Marh-Ad was approached to prepare the proposal to realise the "SPGG House". On 10 September 1983, Al Marh-Ad submitted a report on the legal and other requirements for setting up a bar and the costing for all the facilities. Total estimated cost was \$115,200. The SPGG House would provide members with a "conducive environment to get together with clients, friends or colleagues." Al Marh-Ad's follow-up proposal contained recommendations for a new membership entrance fee of \$1,000 each for 1,000 new members upon the opening of the new clubhouse, and categories of associate membership and honorary membership to SP staff and others who had rendered services. The \$1 million generated would be used to provide more facilities like sauna and gymnasium. The Guild would continue to provide scholarships and bursaries to students. Monthly subscription would be raised to \$20 from \$12, and the monthly budget would be \$20,000.

The SPGG House would provide members with a "conducive environment to get together with clients, friends or colleagues."

The First Building Sub-Committee Gets Real

THE FIRST MEETING of the Building sub-committee saw only four members attending: S K Balakrishnan, Sidharthan, Lim Eng Seng and Johnny Lim. Held at the SPASA Lounge, Block EB7, on 30 August 1983, they agreed that the most likely building that SP would allow them to use was EB7 (Extension Block 7) where they were currently operating from. After that first meeting, more Guild members threw in their support.

Members of the Guild house Project sub-committee:

Chairman:

- Alfred S H Wong of Noel Gifts & Hampers

Secretary:

- Mr Sidharthan of Singapore Petroleum Company

Assistant Secretary:

- Mr Michael S K Wong of Hitchins (Far East)

Other members:

- Ang Poh Soon from Public Utilities Board
- Ahmad Arif from Minican Shipping & Trading Enterprises
- S K Balakrishnan of Public Utilities Board
- Chan Tiong Gim of Chan, Loh & Partners
- SP Registrar Teh Yap Cheng

Over several meetings after their day jobs, they huddled together and agreed on detailed plans to convert EB 7 so that they would be ready as soon as the SP Management gave its approval. The conversion would be in three phases:

Phase 1 A

Ground Floor: to construct a road leading to the building and improve the building interior with a reception counter, a bar and a lounge; and fruit machines and video games in the Games Room. The existing parquet lounge and porch would be converted to an exclusive type of sit-and-dine

where “well-established caterers could cater Muslim and Chinese food.”

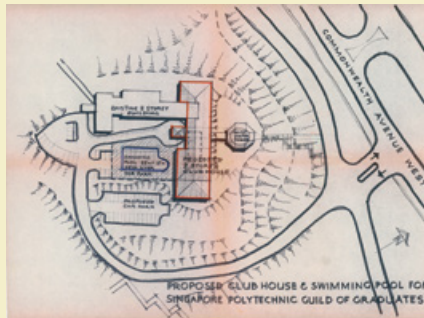
Phase 1 B

Top Floor: multi-purpose room, billiards room, Ex-co meeting room, staff office, conference room, video/television room, indoor games

room, gymnastic room, store rooms, a mini library cum reading room.

Phase 2

Focus on the surroundings: a 25-metre swimming pool and a baby wading pool, one tennis court on the levelled slope, squash courts at where old sheds stood, a playground or hilltop park where the water tank was situated.



*Original plan for Hilltop Clubhouse,
with Phases 1 and 2*

Rejection of First Clubhouse Proposal

The above proposal was tabled at the 277th Meeting of the SP Board of Governors (BOG) on 30 November 1983. In essence it sought three resolutions: permission to lease EB7 for ten years, to lease a piece of land to build a clubhouse, or to just continue with the use of the nine square metre room in EB7 as a meeting place.

The first request was rejected, as the BOG doubted whether with its small membership – the previous 360 members had whittled down to 36 paid-up members – the Guild could raise the funds needed to refurbish and operate a clubhouse. The second request to lease a piece of land was rejected as the Guild's financial position was weak and its membership strength was poor. It looked like the Guild could only carry on as before – the use of its meeting room and the lounge in EB7. It also appeared that without an aggressive membership drive, the promise of a clubhouse would remain just that: a promise.

Never Say Die – Second Proposal

Failure to secure approval for a clubhouse did not dampen the spirit of the Ex-co. Plans were set to get more members. Various members were tasked to approach different groups for marketing: Ng Man Choong to work on SP staff alumni; Teh Yap Cheng to focus on alumni who were staff of the Vocational Industrial and Trade Board; Lim Eng Seng on the Strathclyde alumni; and Dennis Tan on the Singapore Institute of Engineering Technicians (SIET) staff alumni. Ideas to make the Guild attractive were plenty: screening films on technical subjects or current affairs, inviting prominent speakers to talk on popular subjects; and organising get-togethers for academic departments to share their expertise, tours for graduates and members to local and overseas industries, and outings for members and families. There would also be short courses by the United Kingdom's City & Guild, and the Society of Engineers. They continued with preparations for their usual round of activities and events: Dinner and Dance '84, publication of technical journal *Polytechniques* '84, and working with SP on its 30th Anniversary celebrations.

While the above membership drive was under way, the Ex-co started exploring the idea of operating a restaurant in the Staff Centre in EB7. They had news that the SP Administration intended to put the old building to other uses so Ang Poh Soon, the fourth president, proposed the idea of setting up a restaurant which would “provide good budget meals in pleasant relaxed surroundings with piped music, opened all week.” Located right behind the new library, EB7 had an empty lounge, which led out to a terrace that could seat 250 people.

It should be noted that the restaurant idea was well thought-out. The Ex-co had met and discussed the idea in detail. They also instructed Al-Marh Ad to launch a survey in September 1984 among SP staff to find out their preferences for dining options, dress

code, air conditioning, music, decor, type of preferred cuisine, cost of meals, other facilities like tombola, sports, indoor games and a childcare centre. For good measure, a questionnaire on other activities and tours was also included in the survey.

(258)

Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Please tick one of the 2 options below:-

☐ I am willing to pledge \$1,000 as entrance fee for membership to the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild Clubhouse. This will also give me membership to the Guild.

However, I understand that if I am not satisfied with the club membership, I reserve the right to revoke my application (provided it is within 6 months of my application), and receive a refund of the entrance fee.

I understand that the \$1,000 is payable upon completion of the Clubhouse facilities.

☐ I am keen to be part of the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild. Count me in as a supporter and member of the Guild (please tick one of the 3 boxes below):

Membership	Annual Subscription	Entrance Fee
<input type="checkbox"/> F/T National Servicemen	\$ 6.00	\$5.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ordinary	\$12.00	\$5.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Associate	\$10.00	\$10.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Life		\$100.00

Name: MARTIN LOH KIN ANI

Year Graduated: 1984 Course: TAD

Age: 26 Sex: MALE Admission No: 50747

Home Address: AP5 BLK 17 NORFOLK ESTATE #03-82
SINGAPORE 0821

Tel: 2521383

Office Address: 45, MAXWELL ROAD, SINGAPORE 1

Occupation: TECHNICIAN NRIC No: 1328319/6

Marital Status: SINGLE SAF No. (If applicable): N. A.

Please charge \$ _____ to my American Express Card

A/C No:

Date: 26/6/85 Signature: Shan

A filled membership form, 1985.

Second Rejection

But the second proposal was again rejected. Nevertheless it prompted the SP Management to finally allow the Guild to have its own clubhouse. At that time SP was at the point of deciding what to do with EB7. A stakeholder meeting to discuss SP's properties was chaired by Principal Khoo on 28 September 1984 to which Ang Poh Soon and S K Balakrishnan were invited. The other attendees were Teh Yap Cheng (Head of Student Affairs and Honorary Advisor to SPGG), Ms Caroline Hu (Head, Personnel), Mr Mok Tuck Yee (Project Director of SP) and Mr Benjamin Masillamoney (Personnel officer). The meeting discussed SPGG's proposal to use EB7, the SP Personnel's request for a childcare centre for the children of staff, and the Polytechnic's desire to create more staff apartments.

The Guild was allowed to occupy the second floor of EB7 for their first clubhouse, sharing the building with the staff childcare centre.

Fifth Ex-co Secures the Promise of a Clubhouse

So it was as a likely result of the September 1984 meeting that SPGG was offered an area of 409 square meters on the top floor of EB7. It was gratefully accepted. The ground floor would be developed as a childcare centre for staff. The SP Academic Staff Association (SPASA) and the Amalgamated Union of Public Employees (AUPE) offices would remain there.

Honorary General Secretary S K Balakrishnan wrote to the principal on 20 November 1984 to accept the kind offer of the space. Having the promise of a clubhouse in their hands, the Guild started in earnest to recruit new members, using the brochure designed by their consultant and secretariat Al-Marh Ad. At the same time, meetings began



between the Ex-co, and the Principal and his staff to discuss the conversion of the second floor of EB7 and the sharing of space with a childcare centre. The building design would be integrated and the Guild be given a separate entrance.

On 6 May 1985, the Guild informed the SP BOG that it would form a Clubhouse Management Committee to manage and maintain the facilities, and to coordinate events organised by the other sub-committees – Sports and Recreation, Social and Entertainment, Education and Training, and Food and Beverage.

Striking while the iron was hot, Teh Yap Cheng, the SP Guild advisor initiated the next proposal to focus on how the building of the Guild could be financed from fund-raising, what the costing was likely to be and how the lease should be managed. After consultations with SP Management, the proposal was accepted and the following were confirmed at an Ex-co meeting in June 1985:

1. SP would meet the estimated cost of \$519,200 for the external works and landscaping, and the refurbishment of the building for the use of SPGG, the childcare centre and the Business Administration's seminar rooms.
2. The Guild would take an interest-free loan of \$80,000 from SP to

purchase the movable fixtures, furniture and interior furnishings. The loan would be repaid within five years, at \$16,000 a year.

3. The Guild would raise membership entrance fees to \$500 and recruit at least 100 new members within a year. Also, the monthly subscription would be raised from \$1 to \$10.
4. The Guild could pay a nominal rental charge of \$300 per month for the first five years and \$400 monthly thereafter.
5. The lease would be five years, with the option of extending every year, given that the building could be demolished in future for other developments.
6. Five staff would be recruited to operate the clubhouse – a general manager, a food and beverage manager, a maintenance/facilities officer, and two clerical officers.

The basic concept was to integrate the Guild house design into the whole building and its surroundings. The proposal also included how they would run the clubhouse, and step up membership recruitment through a new quarterly newsletter, Poly Guild News, to reach the 30,000 graduates of the Polytechnic.

Approval At Last

The above proposal was approved by the SP Development Committee, but not without the reminder to the Ex-co that the project could only begin with “a concrete commitment” in terms of growth of membership and sound financials. The final stamp of agreement came at the Clubhouse Annual Ball on 2 July 1985 when Mr Chua Chor Teck, the chairman of the SP Board of Governors, announced that the Guild would finally get the funding of \$500,000 for renovating the clubhouse.

He also announced that the Polytechnic was handing over to the Graduates' Guild, a cheque for the sum of \$10,132, which had been raised at the Polytechnic's 30th Anniversary Reunion Dinner the previous year. This sum was to be used for the new clubhouse project.



Mr Chua Chor Teck, Chairman, SP Board of Governors (1980-1986).

The final stamp of agreement came at the Clubhouse Annual Ball on 2 July 1985 when Mr Chua Chor Teck, the chairman of the SP Board of Governors, announced that the Guild would finally get the funding of \$500,000 for renovating the clubhouse.

New Leadership

Ang Poh Soon, president of the 5th Ex-co and his team had secured SP's \$500,000 promise to fund the renovations of the Guild. They were more than happy to pass the job over to a new committee to realize the dream of their own clubhouse. Jeffrey Lee and his friends – Martin Ong, Dr Aaron Loh, and Dr Lim Boh Soon – were elected at the 6th annual general meeting on 10 May 1986. As time would tell, Jeffrey Lee and his close associates did more than just realising the dream of a clubhouse – they moved the clubhouse to a new and choice piece of land.

Alternative Site to EB7 for Clubhouse: Top floor of Foodcourt 5

Even as Jeffrey Lee took over the 6th Ex-co when the hilltop clubhouse was already in the Ex-co's hands, he could not help but feel that the clubhouse on the hill was cut off and isolated from the main action. He felt compelled to explore alternative sites like the hill slope overlooking the swimming pool (where the current Block 19 is situated) or on the top floor of the current Foodcourt 5. The Ex-co finally decided on the latter. Another proposal was submitted to the SP Management.

The proposal was submitted on 12 August 1986.



*The top floor of the Food Court 5:
an alternative site for the clubhouse?*

Location for clubhouse: The flat rooftop of Canteen 5. The location would be more central on the campus and have a view of the SP swimming pool, boosting the image of the Guild.

Phase 1: Building of indoor facilities: Funds from SP's allocation of \$500,000.

Completion date: October 1987

Sustainability: A new entrance fee was outlined – the first 500 members to pay \$300 each. Upon completion of Phase 1, the first 1000 new members would pay \$500. Upon completion of Phase 2, the next 2,000 members would pay \$1,000 each.

Phase 2: to be submitted at later date.

The above proposal was rejected by the SP Development Committee, reasons being: "The proximity of the Guild House to the Sports Complex would add pressure on the existing facilities which were primarily meant for students.

It would be very difficult for the management to impose physical control over the use of the facilities by members of the Guild. The management of the Poly Guild might use the existing sports facilities within the vicinity as a marketing tool to attract more members and that would ultimately aggravate the pressures on the facilities". The earlier proposal of locating the Guild house at the EB Block 7 on the hilltop should remain and "be revitalised".



Back to the Hilltop

It was back to EB7. But renovations could not include the whole of the second floor of EB7, as there was a condition set by the SP Management. Only when the Guild membership hit 800 would they be given the lease of the whole of the second floor. Until then, they had to give up two rooms to SP's Business Department to conduct the latter's evening seminar courses. This was a Catch 22 situation: time was needed for membership to reach 800 and it would not be easy to reach 800 unless there was a concrete clubhouse to show for it. Nevertheless, the chairman of the SP Development committee decided that

renovation work should proceed. When membership grew to beyond 800 and when SP's new buildings were ready, the Poly would abide by its earlier decision to lease the whole floor to the Guild.

Meetings on clubhouse renovations began in August 1987. To be sure, moments of tension were bound to arise between the Guild members anxious to get a clubhouse they had dreamed of, and the Polytechnic which was footing the cost of half a million dollars (though part of it went to the childcare centre). Thus while members wanted to have their say on the construction details, the Polytechnic's Estate office found it 'unproductive' to answer to comments from so many people and insisted on only one Guild representative to sit in at meetings to give feedback and make requests.

Rising Renovation Costs

There was also the issue of the rising cost of renovation. The original estimate of \$515,000 was inadequate due to the condition of the thirty-year-old building. The roofing needed restoration and extra electrical load was also necessary. The Development Committee (DC) reported in January 1988 that the actual cost now amounted to \$614,000. Guild membership by then had also risen from 528 to 1,250 in the last six months, which was a very encouraging sign. Still, the Guild had to reconfirm its financial

ability to successfully support the long-term use of the facilities after renovations. This the Guild did at a DC meeting in April 1988. On the assumption that there would be 500 new members for each of the next three years, they predicted that the membership would touch 2,700 Ordinary members and 2,870 Life members. Income from subscriptions and fruit machines by 1990 would reach \$284,000 over an expenditure of \$172,000.

At the same meeting, the Ex-co were given assurances that SP's two seminar rooms on the same floor would be at the Guild's disposal after office hours. In return the Guild agreed to increase their annual contributions from \$500 to \$800 for the Graduation Merit Awards.

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Historic Opening of SPGG's First Clubhouse

The official opening of the first SPGG Clubhouse was slated to be on 27 October 1988. To optimize publicity and get members in, the Prince Edward lounge was opened first, on 15 September 1988. With the assistance of a new honorary advisor, Ms Anne Chiang who was also the new Registrar from SP, the Ex-co moved swiftly to plan the grand opening. They looked into public liability insurance, medical insurance for staff, discounts and sponsorships for members, and they also streamlined financial procedures.

Three re-conditioned jackpot machines would be bought, costing about \$2,000 to \$5,000 each and a deposit of \$5,000 for each machine had to be made with the Inland Revenue Department. Video machines would also be purchased for members' entertainment. Very mindful that the limited space was inadequate for so many members, Jeffrey decided that a preliminary study on constructing extra facilities on the hilltop should be drafted and forwarded to SP as soon as possible.



Principal Khoo welcoming guests to the opening of the hilltop clubhouse outside the SP Auditorium.

"I Accept!"

DR TAY ENG SOON, THE SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION ACCEPTS THE GUILD'S INVITATION TO BE ITS PATRON!!!

Dr Tay Eng Soon has graciously accepted the Guild's invitation to be the Patron of our society as of June 13 1991.

The Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild is indeed privileged to have Dr Tay Eng Soon's Patronage! In fact, members would know that Dr Tay Eng Soon has been very supportive of the Guild and its activities.



Dr Tay Eng Soon, Mr Jeffrey Lee & Madam Patsy Tay at our Opening Ceremony

Dr Tay Eng Soon was last seen at our Fund Raising Golf Tournament held at the Singapore Island Country Club's Old Course as our Patron then. In going as far back as the late 1980's, Dr Tay opened the Guild at Block EB7 at the Singapore Polytechnic campus. Dr Tay has also graced our annual dinner and dances over the years.

We and members alike would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Tay Eng Soon for his kind acceptance as Patron of the Guild and are sure that members and supporters of the Guild will look forward to working with Dr Tay Eng Soon to build a strong graduates' guild and the development of a guild house for the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates.



• MCI(P) NO: 191/10/90 •
A BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER BY
THE SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC
GRADUATES' GUILD
• SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1991 •

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Dr Tay Eng Soon

Newspaper headlines:

Dr Tay Eng Soon became the first patron of the Guild in June 1991.

The historic day arrived; historic because it was the first polytechnic graduates' guild in Singapore to have its own purpose-built clubhouse. Dr Tay Eng Soon, Senior Minister of State for Education officiated at the opening ceremony at SP's Auditorium and launched the Singapore Polytechnic Graduate Endowment Fund. The Guild pledged \$15,000 to this Fund. Guests then walked under festive red lanterns lighted up all the way from the Auditorium to the gleaming clubhouse on the water tank hill. The Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild finally had a proper home.

The plaque commemorating the opening by Dr Tay.



First Guild Patron Dr Tay Eng Soon, signing the guest book at the clubhouse opening. Looking on are Jeffrey Lee, centre, and SP Principal Khoo Kay Chai, behind Dr Tay.

Jeffrey Lee, third from right, at the Official Opening of the hilltop Guild House cum 17th Anniversary of SPGG, held at SP's auditorium, 1988.



Help support needy students, Dr Tay tells Poly grads



Dr Tay with some club members in the Prince Edward Lounge of the clubhouse last night. On his right is Mr Khoo.

SINGAPORE Polytechnic graduates have been asked to help support and contribute towards the needs of financially-strapped students now studying there.

Senior Minister of State (Education) Tay Eng Soon said this at the launching of an endowment fund yesterday where he also spelt out its other broad aims.

He said although the polytechnic has scholarship and bursary schemes for needy students — which are funded from grants and donations by firms and well-wishers — the endowment fund was “a worthy area” past graduates could contribute towards.

The fund, which is starting with a sum of \$800,000, will not only help needy students but at the same time recognise the achievements of outstanding students through prizes and awards.

It also aims to advance the institution's goal of being a centre of excellence in education and

training.

The fund, which was started in April, could be used to promote teaching excellence among academic staff as well.

Dr Tay said the fund should be built up over the years to reach about \$5 million, and the interest from this sum could be used to achieve its aims.

Dr Tay, who also opened a clubhouse for the graduates, noted that the polytechnic has produced about 45,000 graduates — about 3.8 per cent of Singapore's total workforce of 1.2 million.

He said the guild not only brought graduates together and helped them maintain ties but it could also “harness their goodwill and support for their alma mater”.

“Support from past graduates is important. They can provide valuable feedback to the polytechnic on their work experience and the usefulness of their courses at the

polytechnic,” he said, adding that they could also provide moral and financial support to the institution.

The graduates' guild has already pledged \$15,000 to the endowment fund.

Polytechnic principal Khoo Kay Chai, in his speech earlier, said the clubhouse, sited within the polytechnic's Dover Road premises, formed part of the institution's efforts to work towards an integrated system of education.

He said the polytechnic, among other things, had to forge close links with its graduates so it could “derive nourishment and input for its continued growth and development”. Other links kept open by the institution are with industry and employers, the school system and overseas institutions.

The Singapore Symphony Orchestra Ensemble performed at yesterday's function, which was attended by about 500 guests.

In his speech at the opening of the hilltop clubhouse, Patron Dr Tay Eng Soon, also announced a new SP Endowment Fund to which he urged Guild members to contribute. Twenty-seven years later, the Guild launched its own SPGG Endowment Fund to benefit SP students too. Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission.

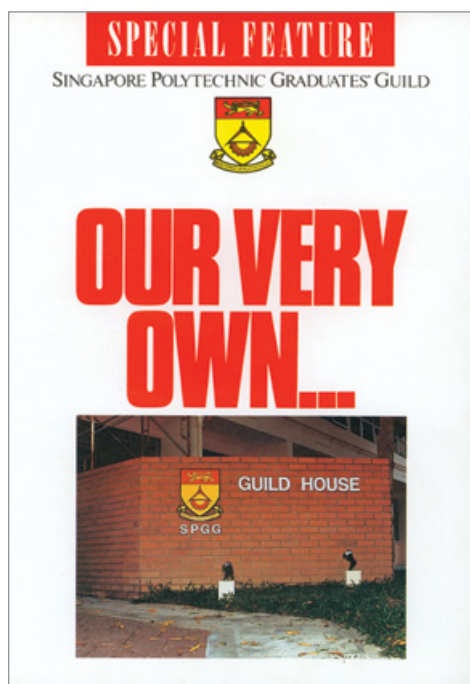
Marching Forward...

In response to Dr Tay Eng Soon's request for the profile of members at the clubhouse opening, Jeffrey Lee gave membership numbers. From 69 members in 1975, it grew to 150 members in 1985, and expanded to 1138 members in 1988.

He attributed the difficulties in the early years to a lack of funds and means to contact earlier batches. The hike in the last two years was due to mass recruitment campaigns. He

wrote, "Our biggest problem now is to generate enough activities and build sufficient facilities to sustain the current membership." Subsequently, Anne Chiang, SP's Head of Public Affairs and Alumni printed address labels of the 1983 to 1988 cohorts for the Guild to reach out to graduates by mail.

The first marketing brochure to feature the new clubhouse.



Post-opening, the Ex-co met with Principal Khoo and Anne Chiang on 1 December 1988 to discuss the sharing of sports facilities, the use of seminar rooms in EB7, the use of the Guild's facilities by SP staff, and a piece of land for a new guild house. SP's student population was growing speedily, affecting the booking of sports facilities by the Guild. The Guild hoped for a permanent place close by, with proper facilities. Principal Khoo informed

them that the land beyond SP's sports stadium at Dover Road belonged to the Ministry of Education or the Land Bank. Promising to think of the best approach to submit a paper for a development plan, he commented that it would be useful to find out how the National University of Singapore Society (NUSS) obtained the land for its own guild house. Jeffrey Lee wasted no time in the push for another bigger clubhouse. Thus began another journey.



Christmas party, at the new clubhouse, 1988.

Dr Tay Eng Soon, second from left, chatting with the Ex-co after the opening of the hilltop clubhouse, 1988.



Dr Tay and Mrs Tay, right, at the prize presentation dinner of the First Fund-raising Golf Tournament dinner 1991, having a discussion with SP Board Chairman Professor George Fong (extreme left) and Jeffrey Lee.

A Tribute to Dr Tay Eng Soon, First Guild Patron, Senior Minister of State, Education, and Minister in charge of polytechnics

THE NEWS OF Dr Tay Eng Soon's death when it reached the Guild with a phone call at 4 pm on 5 August 1993, felt like a thunderbolt. Being the Guild's first ever patron – a role he happily accepted on 13 June, 1991 – he was personally interested in the development of the Guild, often checking on its progress and quietly helping them behind the scenes. To the Guild Ex-co and members, he was like a father figure, someone who checked them with penetrating questions to get them back on the right path, and someone who ungrudgingly stood in as a guest-of-honour when no other VIP was available.

Dr Tay Eng Soon received his appointment as Senior Minister of State (Education) on 13 September 1988 after entering politics in 1980 and serving as Minister of State for Education, and Minister of State for Information and the Arts. With the new appointment came the added responsibility as Minister in charge of the Polytechnics. He is still recognised for contributing greatly to the development of

technical and polytechnic education in Singapore. He took the lead in the Gifted Education Programme in 1981, the setting up of the fourth polytechnic, Nanyang Polytechnic, and the establishment of the Singapore Open University Degree Programme.

An Anglo-Chinese School alumnus, he graduated from the University of Bristol, United Kingdom, with first Class Honours in Electrical Engineering in 1963 and a Ph.D. in Microwave Engineering, University College, London in 1966. On his return to Singapore, he taught at the University of Singapore until 1978 when he headed the Defence Science Organisation.

The Guild still values Dr Tay as a caring patron who helped the Guild acquire their land lease (for the Dover Road clubhouse) from the government authorities in 1991 before his untimely death from cancer. Without his stamp of support, their journey to their permanent clubhouse at 1010 Dover Road could easily have gone awry.

Chapter Four

Getting a New Clubhouse in Order (1989 - 1998)



With a new 409-square meter clubhouse on the hill lording over the Dover Road campus, the Guild recruited members at such a speed that it soon felt like bursting at its seams. Diverse fun and recreational activities abounded but some members, disappointed at the limited facilities started to bolt. The push for a more spacious and permanent home immediately started out of a palpable sense of urgency and desperation.



Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Mrs Lee supported SPGG's first fundraising dinner for a bigger clubhouse on 26 October 1991. In attendance were Minister in charge of Polytechnics Dr Tay Eng Soon (left) and Guild President Jeffrey Lee.

Settling in with a Bang – Activities Galore

The bar at the hilltop clubhouse.



1. Workshops, talks and seminars

Activities at the new hilltop clubhouse commenced with a vengeance in 1989 with the help of the new operations executive Juliana Ang. A seminar on “How to Start your Own Business” by SP lecturer Lim Boon Tong at the clubhouse, netted 50 members and 32 guests. Next was a talk on Export Marketing Programme, presented by the Trade Development Board.

There were body slimming and treatment workshops, golf coaching lessons at Warren Driving Range and a talk by Ex-



A talk on export marketing, 1989.

Members learning about “Games people play” from SP counsellor Jessica Leong, 1993.



co member Koh Wee Keng on “Getting Ready for that Interview”. SP’s student counsellor Jessica Leong – a Transactional Analysis trainer – was called upon to conduct a workshop, “Games People Play”.

Some activities were held out of the clubhouse premises. Members attended a course, “Enhance your Public Speaking” from speech therapist Juliet McCully at the Speech Training Centre. The skincare workshop for men and ladies by Nutrimerics International was held at Midlink Plaza, Middle Rd, in the evening. Tennis and badminton tournaments were held at SP and the bowling tournament at Victor’s Superbowl.



Seminar on how to start a small business, 1993.



*A food and fanfare
for SP students at the
hilltop clubhouse.*



*Members and students
learning how to rock at
a social dance course,
1989.*

2. Contests, dances and visits

Every Wednesday afternoon, students were invited to the SPGG Open House to slug it out in video game contests. Banners and pamphlets appeared at many points, especially outside lecture theatres and classrooms normally occupied by final



*Battle-weary
but happy
student winners
of video game
contests.*

*1990 Christmas Party in
full swing...and swig*



year students. Valentine Nights and social dance courses for members and students saw them gyrating to the strains of cha-cha-cha, rock and roll, disco-rock and of course, the waltz.

The Guild maintained the buzz with activities galore. There were farm visits, flower arrangement classes, wine tasting classes, fashion shows, factory tours, trips to Kukup and a fishery and of course, Christmas parties.



*Friendly golf
game at the
Kluang Golf
Club, 1990.*



*Members attending a talk on
Golf Basics, 1990.*



*Wine-tasting class,
1994.*



In true Guild style, the re-opening of the Prince Edward Lounge on 18 April 1993 was celebrated with a fashion show with models from Cannes Modelling Agency.

A youthful convert to hydroponic vegetables at a farm visit, 1993.

Swimsuit parade at the Lounge re-opening, on 6 August 1994. Each time a new lounge operator took over or when the lounge was repaired and renovated, there would be a “re-opening”, a time for members to let down their hair.



Orchard Farm visit, 1994.



Local farm and “otah” factory tour, 1994.



Dairy Farm visit, 1994.



Car rally 1997: racing to a landmark along the route, to get answers to a quiz.

Car Rally 2000 flag-off.



3. Fun fairs and car rallies

A food and fun fair held at the car park outside the Guild ran for three days, in July 1995. With an entry fee of \$1, SP students could eat all they wanted. Budgeted at \$10,000, it was a great way to get students to tour the hilltop clubhouse and to market membership. The conditions that SP imposed – no public address systems so as not to disturb the Childcare Centre, Library and nearby classes, and only licensed food stall operators – were not a problem.

There was also the first ever car rally held on Sunday, 23 June 1996 that saw 43 participants in 13 cars on a madcap dash through the Central and Western districts to answer quiz questions and collect mementos like a menu sheet from a food stall outside Botanic Gardens. It was so successful that another car rally was organised the next year, on 27 July 1997, and again in 2000. Usual sponsors were petrol suppliers like Esso Singapore and food and beverage companies like Asia Pacific Breweries.

Operational Blues

Yet running so many activities was not without pitfalls. The fact that the alma mater is the landlord and the Guild is the tenant did not always help to make things easier.

1. Problems over the physical environment

Over this period there were many memos and correspondences between the Guild and the Polytechnic, mainly between the Polytechnic's Estates Office and the Student Affairs Department. The Guild's administration officer Wong Tuck Yong made requests for the road humps outside the clubhouse to be reduced as members' car undercarriages were hit. He requested for lights to be installed at the steps leading to the entrance of the guild house.

“Unfortunately, during such incidents, the Guild house is affected most as it is the first to have its water supply cut off and the last to have it on...”

2. Disruptions to utilities

There were power failures at the clubhouse and disruptions to the water supply, which meant that the Guild's activities had to be cancelled, leading to a loss of revenue and frustration of members. In a letter dated 8 January 1996, SP's Estates Manager Lim Lian Seng apologised and explained: “Unfortunately, during such incidents, the Guild house is affected most as it is the first to have its water supply cut off and the last to have it on after reinstatement in view of it being the closest facility to the water tank... Our new Building Automation System which is currently being installed would have this provision to alert staff in the event of failure pertaining to the provision of essential services on campus.” Such explanations while acceptable, did not do much to help ease the frustration. Often the leaking toilet flush in the Gents and having the key to the storeroom next to the Ladies were issues to be resolved.

3. Inconvenience of indirect mail service

There was also the inconvenience of not being able to receive mail directly from the postman, as the internal road names were not officially gazetted. A request to include SPGG into the Poly's

directional signboards was turned down. Up till 2001 when they finally moved into their second clubhouse along Dover Road and had their own official address, a Guild staff had to saunter to SP's despatch office daily to collect mail.

4. Conflict over the use of SP's sports facilities

One source of conflict was the booking of SP's sports facilities, which were done through the senior physical education officer Tan Chin Chye. Some Guild members did not heed the procedures, thus causing friction.

SPGG team and their worthy opponents, the "celebrity" team from Television Corporation of Singapore, 1998, at SP's Sports Complex.

Using the SP Sports Complex field at a nominal fee in the weekends sometimes kicked off a row with the alma mater. Soccer had been a perennial favourite for everybody. When the field was wet, it was not supposed to be used. But "these unauthorised players do not care whether the field is wet or not... they turned the field into a mud-pitch," complained a staff from the SP's Student Affairs Department. When it closed the main field on one weekend, the crowd got rowdy and the Neighbourhood Police were called in. SP had to fence up the gap between Gate 4 and the New Town school site for a while to allow the grass on the pitch to grow.





A member having a game.

5. Friction over the keeping of late hours

Another source of friction was the late hours kept by the clubhouse. The Principal of the Polytechnic had to step into the fray and allowed the Guild to open till 1am on Fridays, Saturdays, and the eve of public holidays. This would be reviewed at the end of one year. But just a day later, Guild Administrator Wong Tuck Yong requested for the main Dover gate and the Commonwealth Avenue gate to be open till 2am for their end-of-the-month disco function, and the outer tank area to be lighted up till 2am with one guard on duty from 8pm to 2am. A few days later, while the Estates head Lim Lian Seng agreed to their request, he closed his memorandum with this reminder: “As I have spoken to you, please, in future, confine your activities till 1am. This is our standing arrangement for Fridays, Saturdays, and eves of public holidays.”



Live action at the new bar.

6. Troubles over lounge operations and operators

After the initial euphoria of the opening of the clubhouse, business in the lounge declined as members had issues with the lounge operator. There was unhappiness over the dearth of activities and the unprofessional conduct of the operator (who spent his time playing darts or billiards). He, in turn attributed the drop in lounge business to the lack of facilities needed to organise in-house activities and the location of the clubhouse being in a quiet corner of the campus. Without activities, only those who wanted a quiet atmosphere patronised it. It was noted that there were more SP staff patronizing the Jackpot Room than there were members. In 1996 there was a lounge operator who went missing, entrusting the operations to a lady guest, who in turn brought in foreign Indian workers. The Ex-co decided then that lounge operators would now have to write in to endorse their staff. The operator soon had to leave.

Given the bigger issue of problems with operators, technical problems like water seepage at the bar counter – while less serious – nevertheless affected the efficiency of operations. In a letter dated 6 June 1991 SP's Estates Officer Chew Chok Chuen, was of the opinion that the source of the water seepage was the ice-making machine's drainpipe in the built-in cabinet!

A storm in a teacup: the SPGG Toastmasters saga

A GROUP OF members felt the need to launch the SPGG Toastmasters (TM) club. One of the group's leaders, Mr Shenton Sng set about to register the chapter with Toastmasters International and also the Registrar of Societies (ROS).

The ROS responded that as a registered body, the SPGG could not have another registered society as a constituent member. The Guild then applied for amendments to its own Constitution, but the ROS froze it. It was a technical issue and to the Ex-co, nothing more

could be done. Besides, the SPGG TM needed secretariat support from the Guild and racked up more expenses like food and mailing, than revenue. The Ex-co decided to dissolve it without consulting Mr Sng, who was aghast at this sudden decision.

He told the Ex-co in a strongly worded letter that had the TM club been consulted, its members could have negotiated and resolved all issues. Instead, they were not given any clue and the Guild president even

praised the TM club at a very recent event. They let him plan many activities not knowing that the club had already been axed. Mr Sng added that he would advise all his business contacts to refrain from joining SPGG.

Upon receipt of the letter, an angry SPGG president, Jeffery Lee, threatened to resign saying that it would be more meaningful to help the Handicapped Welfare Association and the Autistic Association. Subsequently at the EOGM on 20 January



Toastmasters in session.

1995, the Ex-co considered taking disciplinary action against Mr Sng for damaging the Guild's good name. They noted that Mr Sng was only the vice president for education in the TM club and therefore was not qualified to represent the views of all its members. The Guild president agreed to withdraw his resignation. In retrospect, the storm in the teacup could have been avoided with more understanding and face-to-face communication.

Other Guild Activities

1. Honouring outstanding graduates

The Guild and the alma mater jointly took out an advertisement on 29 August 1989 in both *The Straits Times* and the Chinese daily *Lianhe Zaobao* to congratulate all SP alumni who were graduating at the National University of Singapore (NUS) convocation. Out of the 12 First Class Honours awardees from Nanyang Technological Institute (NTI), nine were from SP. They were from the Electrical and Electronic Engineering, and Mechanical and Production Engineering courses. This boosted the Guild's image that a significant portion of first-class honours students was from SP. The Guild paid \$2,000 for the advertisement, while SP forked out the rest.

In the 1992/93 graduation cohort of Nanyang Technological University, 19 out of the 28 First Class Honours were from SP. All four winners of the Civil Engineering top awards and all three of the Mechanical

Engineering awards were from SP. Although the joint advertisements to congratulate SP alumni who went on to achieve first class honours in the local universities were discontinued, up till today, the Guild still donates graduation merit prizes to top SP graduands, of around \$1,000 annually.



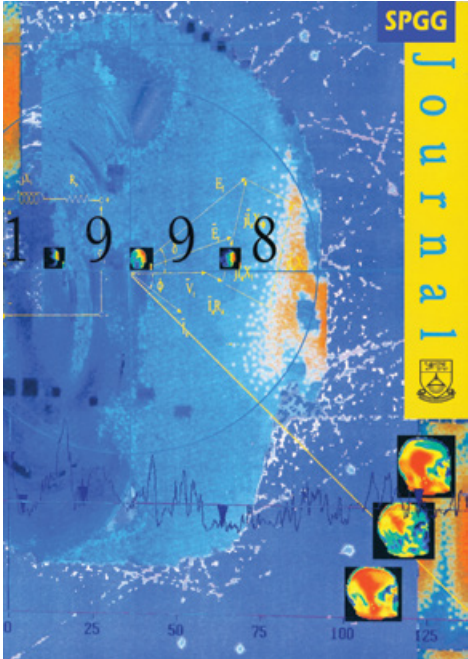
SPGG's congratulatory message in The Straits Times and Lianhe Zaobao named nine SP alumni who attained First Class Honours in engineering from NTI.



Journal 1994.

2. Running SPGG Journals

In keeping with its image as an education-related Guild, publishing journals was also an important activity. The SPGG Journal sought to educate and inform members and the Polytechnic fraternity of developments in various industries. Articles and research papers were collected from lecturers of the polytechnics and universities. Subjects were diverse, from microchip technology to legal topics and socio-cultural research. Contributors were paid honorariums ranging from \$500 for long and original articles, to \$75 for shorter reprints. The publication was not printed every year due to the difficulty

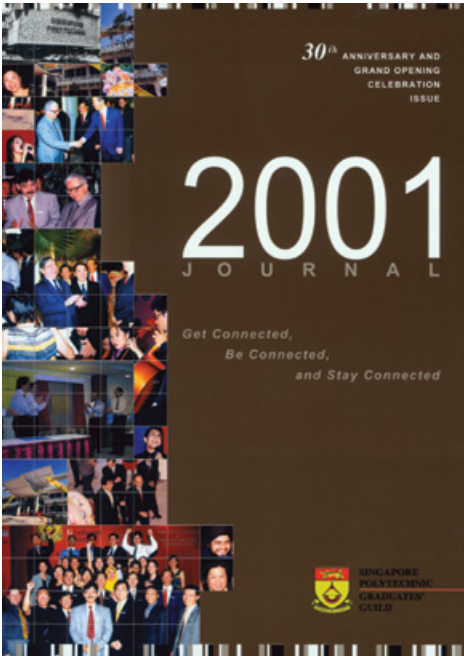


Journal 1998.

in obtaining articles and in getting advertisements to pay for the costs of the publication.

The inaugural edition was published in 1984, followed by Journal 1985. It was also printed in 1988, 1994, 1995, 1997 and 1998. After the opening of the Dover Road clubhouse, another two journals were printed in 2001 and 2004.

Journal 1994 had a congratulatory message from then minister for education, Mr Lee Yock Suan, besides the usual ones from the chairman of the SP Board, Professor (Adjunct) George Fong, Principal Khoo and Jeffrey Lee, the Guild president. Mr Peter Chen,



Journal 2001.



Journal 2004.

Articles and research papers were collected from lecturers of the polytechnics and universities. Subjects were diverse, from microchip technology to legal topics and socio-cultural research.

then Senior Minister of State for Education and Guild Patron penned the congratulatory message in the 1998 Journal. It was a bumper issue, with 17 articles.

Twenty years later from the first publication in 1984, it became increasingly apparent that it had outlived its usefulness. It was difficult to secure research papers and technical articles for content, although the Guild was offering fees to use them. The last issue in 2004 could only garner eight articles, mostly from SP staff. Besides, the electronic age had firmly arrived and readers could easily do Internet searches for the latest research papers.

Imposing the Goods and Services Tax

The Goods & Services Tax (GST) brought some anxiety to the Ex-co who anticipated members' displeasure. Absorbing it would cost about \$30,000 a year. The Guild's financial advisor, Boon Suan Lee & Company – whose principal, Mr Boon was a member of the SP Entrepreneurs' Club – advised the Guild to impose the three percent tax on all fees including the entrance fee. Their legal advisor Manjit & Partners' advice was to hold an extraordinary general meeting to amend the Constitution to include a clause on payments to the GST. Despite worries about the quorum, members came and approved the amendment to the Constitution. The GST was duly implemented on 1 April 1994.

Heady Days of Rising Membership and Guild Finances

The Ex-co had gone through a steep learning curve to run the clubhouse – from managing members' expectations, facilities, the efficiency of a small team of staff, finances, co-operation with the alma mater, and producing journals to raising funds for a bigger clubhouse. But membership recruitment was and always will be its top priority. In the early hilltop years, knowing full well that their brand new clubhouse was the best advertisement for membership, the Ex-co went on the offensive. With diverse fun and recreational activities aplenty, the Guild started recruiting members at breakneck speed. Admittedly, it was also a novelty in Singapore then to belong to an alumni clubhouse.



*Lee Kum Swee (extreme right),
Ex-co member, 1988-1994.*

Lee Kum Swee, chair of the Membership Committee in 1989/1990 prepared flyers and posters for final year students to join at 50 percent discount or \$100 payable in ten easy monthly GIRO payments. Letters and calls were made to companies and statutory boards to reach past graduates.

Thus in 1989, the Public Utilities Board sportingly provided 540 names, Singapore Airlines 342 names, Hitachi 26 names and Sony 20 names.

No doubt there were problems like obsolete addresses. In a mass mailing exercise to



*Membership recruitment,
SP graduation '94,
Kallang Theatre.*

1,000 names, only two alumni asked for more information. In another exercise, out of the 1990 graduation cohort of 4,500, only 25 responded. But with problems there were always solutions. Talks were organized for the Industrial Management classes attended by past graduates. A one-month promotion for Life Membership opened in October 1990. Entrance fee was \$600 and rose to \$1,200 for subsequent batches of 100 applicants on a first come first served basis. A new category, Term Membership, was launched, with an entrance fee of \$30 and a monthly subscription of another \$30.

By the end of 1990, membership had ballooned from 500 to 2,600. But it soon fell to 2,000 and members expressed disappointment that the facilities were insufficient. Warning letters were sent to 414 who had not paid their first subscription. There were also attempts to offer membership to SP staff, but the take-up rate was poor.

Despite this, the Guild continued its aggressive marketing. In August 1994 alone, 26 new Life members paid \$4000 each. Membership sales reached a total of \$117,500. To solve the problem of insufficient facilities, the Ex-co explored using facilities of other clubs or to open

a branch that had a lounge, mini-bar and jackpot facilities. It should be noted that activities were able to flourish especially after 1991 when SP handed over the two seminar rooms in the hilltop Extension Block 7 to the Guild.

Together with funds raised through dinners and golf, and income from the jackpot machines and video games, the Guild's reserves grew. In September 1994, the treasurer's report recorded cash in the bank to be a total of over \$1.2 million including some funds parked with SP. Fixed Deposits accounted for nearly \$610,000. By August 1997, the reserves had climbed to about \$1,750,000 and funds parked with SP were nearly \$428,000.

No doubt bad debts from the termination of memberships grew but not alarmingly so. In July 1994, the bad debt was \$15,250, contributing to a total bad debt of \$121,657. A committee report of 1996 mentioned that their lawyer from Lee & Lee sent out 400 letters of demand to errant members at a cost of \$15 per letter.

It was painfully clear to the Ex-co that a new and bigger clubhouse was needed quickly before more members – disappointed with the limited facilities – resigned.

Profile: A New Patron: Mr Peter Chen

AFTER SPGG's first patron Dr Tay Eng Soon, Senior Minister of State for Education, passed on in 1993, the Guild had no patron for a few years. That was not an ideal situation as the Guild, finally ready to start on the construction of their full-facility guild house in Dover Road, needed a patron who could advise them and be a symbol of their coming-of-age. It was a real blessing that on 20 May 1997, then Senior Minister of State for Education, Mr Peter Chen, accepted the invitation to be the second patron. Mr Chen proved to be a most willing and supportive patron especially at the groundbreaking ceremony and the subsequent grand opening of the Guild House.

Mr Chen remained as patron after Mr Chan Soo Sen, then Minister of State for education accepted SPGG's invitation to be another patron in May 2004. Mr Chen finally stepped down in 2009. Even up till today when he no longer is patron but an honorary member, Mr Chen still attends events like the lunar New Year lo- hei celebration.



Mr Peter Chen accepting a token of appreciation from Jimmy Lim when he stepped down as patron in 2009.



Mr Chen receiving a token from Jeffrey Lee for officiating at the Ground-breaking Ceremony of the Dover Road Clubhouse, May 2001.

Profile:
Khoo Kay Chai:
First Principal in SPGG's Heart

Being Singapore Polytechnic's first local principal in 1976 brought with it an onerous responsibility: to build Singapore's first polytechnic to serve a young nation's needs and transform it into a model skill-based technical institution. Khoo Kay Chai's vision had to be of great length and breadth – from third world to first; from students to alumni.



Principal Khoo showing off the new Dover Road campus model to Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Source: Singapore Polytechnic, 1979.

IT IS REALLY impossible to talk about the Guild in the early days without acknowledging the significant contributions of SP's first local principal, Dr Khoo Kay Chai who also holds the record of the longest-serving polytechnic principal.

Even before he was appointed principal in 1976 after twelve years as a civil engineering lecturer,

he was in the thick of campus expansion. Being in charge of the new Ayer Rajah campus, he was confronted head on by staff, unhappy over the move to the new campus. Students were dissatisfied at being placed in the new two-year Industrial Technician Certificate Course, seen as inferior to the diploma course. He went on to oversee the move



Khoo Kay Chai became the Guild's second Honorary Member, 2010.

to the present Dover Road campus, and subsequently, the three multi-million-dollar campus expansion. Courses and student numbers grew exponentially.

He provided facilities for student clubs, a restaurant and recreation centre for staff, a childcare facility for staff welfare, and he never forgot the needs of the graduates. The Continuing Education Department was launched as early as in 1979, offering courses to part-time students and advanced diploma courses to alumni. On his instructions, two registrars in succession – Mr Teh Yap Cheng and Ms Anne Chiang – were tasked to help the Graduates' Guild grow.

Many a time, he extended a helping hand to the Guild and made time to attend their events and construction site meetings, or simply to meet them for updates as he saw a symbiotic cord connecting the Institution to the Guild. Whenever he met graduates he would urge them to join the Guild. He gamely did his part in significant fund-raising events, swinging his golf club with the likes of the Singapore President, and helping to host dinner-and-dances like the 1991 dinner that was graced by former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. He would even deploy a few of his staff to help organize these events.

Very soon membership ballooned and again he worked behind the scenes to get approvals

for a parcel of land for a more permanent clubhouse, first from the Ministry of Education, and then the Singapore Land Office, the Ministry of Finance, and other government agencies. Having cut his teeth in the Public Works Department at the very start of his career, he could call on associates in several government authorities to plead the Guild's cause.

Out of genuine concern, he held discussions on the new clubhouse construction with Mr Lim Yong Wah, a member of the Board of Governors then and also an SP alumnus. Worried that the scale was too onerous for the Ex-co members, he approached two industry stalwarts



Dr Khoo Kay Chai relating the history of the Guild at the 22nd Annual General Meeting on 31 October, 2001.

who were already established in the property and building industry to head advisory committees – Mr Kong Mun Kwong and Mr Edmund Tie. Other carefully selected members were alumni, like Victor Ow of Clydesbuilt and Alfred Wong of Noel Gifts and Hampers. Only Dr Khoo

had such clout to get these men in.

Dr Khoo said, “Kong Mun Kwong and Edmund Tie were right in the forefront of the building industry, with stature, experience and influence.”

In 1995, just before his retirement, SPGG made him its first Senior Advisor and its second Honorary Member in 2010. The University of Strathclyde also saw it fit to confer an honorary doctorate on Dr Khoo in 1997, in addition to other similar awards from universities in Australia, Mongolia and the Philippines.

Even after retirement, he willingly stepped in whenever the Ex-co approached him for help. In 1997, the Ex-co wanted to increase the value of membership by introducing the Ordinary Transferable Membership and the Buy Back scheme. Behind the scenes, he helped to talk to the Registry of Societies to get its approval for these.

In an interview a few years ago, he lamented two regrets. In the 1980s, he had wanted the Guild to grow quickly and be strong and able to help the institution handle all alumni matters. He had also hoped that the Guild could spawn many chapters and be an umbrella to sub-groups like the SP Entrepreneurs' Club. He wanted a close-knit SP family.

When the Guild launched its SPGG Endowment Fund in 2013, several alumni willingly stepped forward to create two in his name: the Dr Khoo Kay Chai Bursary Award.

Dr Khoo died peacefully after a long illness on 16 September 2016.

Profile:

The Surprising Things About SP Student 001: Lim Chin Aik

THE MORE YOU TALK to Lim Chin Aik, the more new facts you uncover about this courteous and gentle man. He was the first registered SP Student 001, the first local Nestle manager, the Chair of SPGG's Development Committee that oversaw the clubhouse rise from ground up and the first Honorary Member of SPGG. He had also been a secretary of the Old Rafflesian Association, and the Singapore Badminton Association.

His family has some claim to fame. He is actually a great grandson of early local entrepreneur Lim

Tua Tow of Lim Tua Tow Road. One of his daughters Desiree Lim is in Singapore's hall of fame for swimming.

Lim Chin Aik still dreams of the day when more alumni would join the Guild, which would then justify the addition of two more floors to the clubhouse. "We made sure the foundation could take this", he says resolutely." But he concedes, "That can only happen if only more alumni are proud to be identified as SP graduates."

How Chin Aik came to be involved in SPGG's development was



not just fate but arose from a chance meeting with an equally passionate SP personality - former SP Principal Khoo Kay Chai. Chin Aik was already working as Nestle's Acting Advertising Manager when he registered for SP's first course in Advertising in 1957. He was soon flown off to various postings in Europe and Malaysia. Upon retirement from a 30-year career with Nestle, he became General Manager of the Seletar Country Club in 1980. Dr Khoo met him while golfing at Seletar and promptly persuaded him to join SPGG.

He started volunteering as a committee member in the 13th Ex-co in 1991, accepted the position of first vice president in 1998 and continued serving in the committee right until

the 22nd Ex-co in 2006. The clubhouse took years to plan and build and through it all, Chin Aik would drive over after work at 5.30pm to check on it. Gentleman that he is, he says he was impressed with the clockwork efficiency of the contractor, Kim Seng Heng Engineering.

Chin Aik stopped working at the ripe old age of 79, in 2003. Today, he commutes between his condo apartment in Johor Baru and Kuala Lumpur where his daughter Desiree lives. His other daughter, piano teacher Glory lives in Singapore. His wife Anne Lai is a copper-tooling artist who has over the years taken on big commissions from companies and has a faithful following of Japanese students.

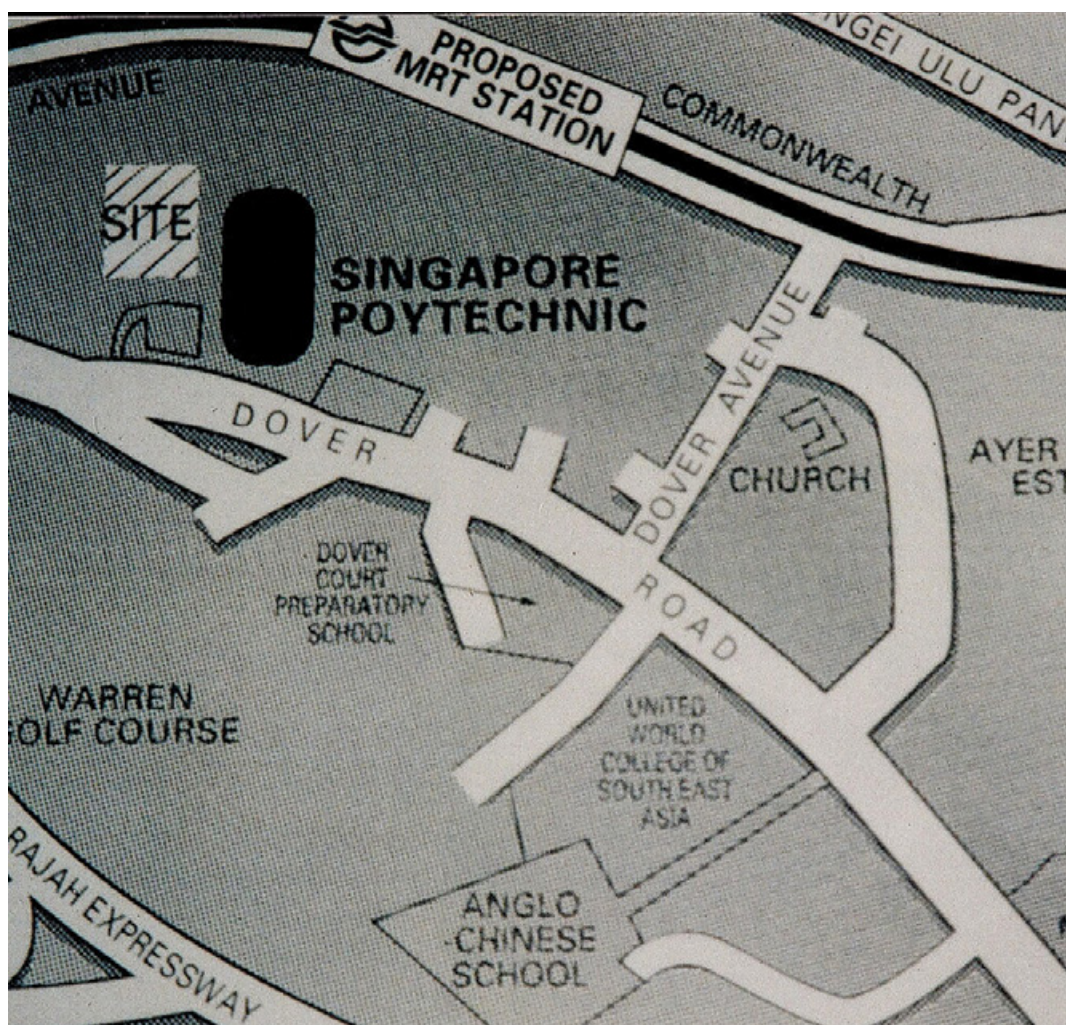
Despite his fragile health and living in Kuala Lumpur, Chin Aik still travels alone by public transport to big events and annual general meetings at the Guild house. At 92, and having survived cancer, he says quietly "Life is still good, can't complain. After 70, each year is a bonus."



Lim Chin Aik, addressing members at an annual general meeting

Chapter Five

No Land, No Permanent Home (1989 - 2000)



Final site of the new Guild clubhouse, next to Singapore Polytechnic's sports complex.



After the opening of the Hilltop clubhouse, it was clear that it was too small for the growing membership.

Refurbished from an old staff centre, the clubhouse could not boast of facilities like a swimming pool or a roomy restaurant. Members were resigning. A new location was needed. Yet getting a piece of State land is no piece of cake and complications arose from meeting the requirements of various government authorities to alienate the land, pay an expensive premium for it, and re-draw borders.

It was just a matter of a few months after the hilltop club opening in October 1988 that the Ex-co was faced with significant numbers of members resigning because of disappointment over inadequate facilities. Expansion of the Guild's premises became a matter of survival. At every Ex-co meeting, expansion of the Guild was always an item of urgency. The

sharing of the Guild premises with SP's two seminar rooms had always been a sore point with Guild President Jeffery Lee, especially when told in no uncertain terms that the Singapore Polytechnic would not be able to concede the two seminar rooms to the Guild as the polytechnic still needed them. That was when the Ex-co began looking further afield.



Entrance to the hilltop clubhouse.

Looking Beyond the Hilltop Clubhouse – identifying possible sites

For a start, the Ex-co tried putting in a bid for the vacant 10 Winchester Road house, a black and white pre-War colonial bungalow in Winchester Road but they did not submit their tender bid in time. By their 13th Ex-co meeting on 3rd September 1989, the Ex-co decided to launch a building fund. They also identified two sites, which the Guild could possibly use, and the following

day Jeffery Lee submitted a proposal to the chair of SP's Board of Governors, Professor George Fong.

The two sites identified were Site A which was at the corner of Dover Road and Clementi Road, opposite the former Warren Golf Club and Site B, which was near the SP Sports complex. There were reasons cited by Jeffery Lee on why

the current hilltop clubhouse was not ideal. Firstly the Singapore Polytechnic was in a phase of galloping student enrolment and the hilltop clubhouse planned for a capacity of 800 was not ideal. Secondly, the clubhouse was not very accessible to members due to the need for the polytechnic to impose rules to rein in problems of security and control. Its terrain was also rather constrained for future expansion and even if expansion was possible, the need to integrate the design of the childcare centre with a design for a clubhouse gave rise to a lot of constraints. Most important of all, some members, citing the lack of clubhouse facilities had started to default in their payments or to request for termination of their membership.



10 Winchester Road, Kent Ridge.

Interim solution: Expand the Hilltop clubhouse

However, requesting for a piece of land from the government was no small or simple matter and understandably the Polytechnic was not able to respond quickly. While the feeling of the Ex-co was: "...it will be a waste of time to continue our efforts unless a place can be found to make it possible for us to have facilities of our own," they realised that they needed a back-up plan – which was to expand the hilltop clubhouse while waiting for approval for a piece of land. It was then that Jeffery Lee wrote to Principal Khoo: "This large number of members who resigned is now a source of bad publicity for the Guild. I fear that I am seeing the beginning of a trend that if not tackled urgently at this stage will be difficult to control in future. I will have difficulty in keeping the organisation together instead of expanding it."

With the help of Anne Chiang, their new advisor from the Polytechnic, the Ex-co managed to get in-principle approval from Principal Khoo Kay Chai in May 1990, to expand the hilltop clubhouse (pending approval from the Board of Governors). With \$150,000 already saved up, the Guild would need another initial amount of \$250,000. However, the childcare centre would still remain there. The Board of Governors approved the expansion on 4 July 1990.



The expansion would accommodate a membership of 5,000, after which further development would be needed. The total built-up area under Phase I would be 1,000 square metres, and Phase II would add another 700 square metres.

The hilltop clubhouse atop the SP childcare centre.



Phase I would consist of infrastructure – grand entrance, secretariat office, conference room, car parks, a swimming pool, indoor squash courts, billiard/games rooms, lounge/disco, children's playroom, and a gymnasium. Phase II would comprise extending the existing lounge, a new restaurant, upgraded seminar rooms, once they were handed over to SPGG.

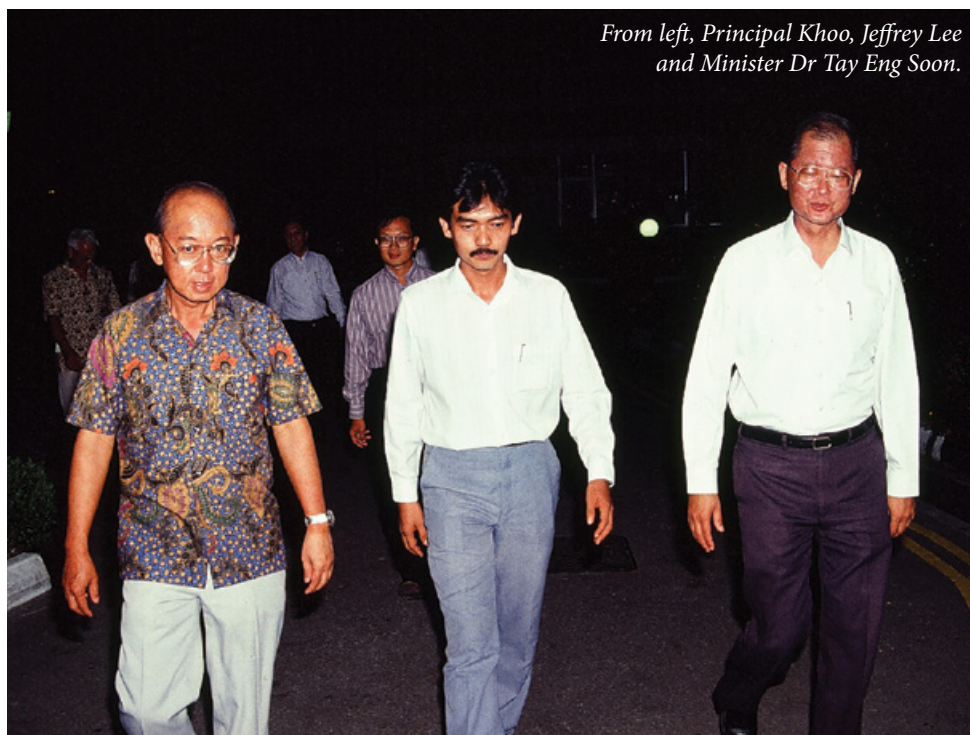
The expansion would accommodate a membership of 5,000, after which further development would be needed. The total built-up area under Phase I would be 1,000 square metres, and Phase II would add another 700 square metres. Construction could begin in 1992 and be completed in June 1993.

In return for the expansion, the Ex-co pledged to raise \$15,000 for the SP Endowment Fund; support various fundraising initiatives like the golf-driving range, a charity opera, a food and fun fair; and donate prizes for outstanding students annually. They would disseminate information to graduates on continuing education, act as spokesman on issues concerning polytechnic graduates and open Guild facilities to Polytechnic staff to use as meeting venues with past students. Although this contribution could not match the \$180,000 the NUS Society (NUSS) gave to their university, with more and better facilities, the Guild would mature and be able to contribute more.



The barbeque pit next to the water tank (outside the clubhouse) belonging to SP would have to go in the hilltop expansion.

Looking Beyond the Hilltop Clubhouse – getting the lease for a parcel of land



From left, Principal Khoo, Jeffrey Lee and Minister Dr Tay Eng Soon.

1. A pushy principal, a bigger plot

Upon identification by SPGG of the two new possible sites – Site A which was 0.35 hectares and Site B which was 0.75 hectares and near to Singapore Polytechnic's sports complex – Principal Khoo submitted SPGG's request to Dr Tay Eng Soon for his information and support of the allocation of land to SPGG. Principal Khoo followed up this

request with a paper, which proposed a 30-year lease similar to the NUS Society (NUSS), for Site B. In return, the Guild would contribute \$30,000 a year to the Endowment Fund after completion.

Principal Khoo's effort bore fruit. In September 1990 the Ministry of Education (MOE), through the Assistant Director for Schools (Physical Planning), agreed to allocate 0.3-0.4 hectare to SP

so that it could lease it to the Guild. But they would need to take the issue up to the Land Office and the Urban Renewal Authority (URA).

For Principal Khoo, 0.3 hectare was small especially when Anne Chiang found out that the NUSS clubhouse site was 0.95 hectares. Surely SP could request for a bigger parcel! He convened a meeting to discuss the issue and a few days later, wrote to the director of Administration Division, MOE, pointing out that 0.3 to 0.4 hectares was too small. Principal Khoo appealed for the original site of 0.7 hectares as requested earlier. This would be big enough for outdoor facilities, make for a neater boundary between Polytechnic land and the rest of the vacant land along Dover Road, and cater to the growing numbers of alumni. After all, NUSS had satellite sites at Adam Park and Amara Hotel.

2. A shock from the URA

Three weeks later, in October 1990, MOE agreed to the originally requested area of 0.7 hectares and would discuss it with the Land Office and the URA. On behalf of the Principal, Anne Chiang sent a set of three campus plans to the chief planner of the URA. But when Principal Khoo met with URA officials a few months later, he was taken aback. The URA requested the Polytechnic to look for alternative sites as the one that was already approved by MOE could well be used for other purposes. They suggested either the area behind Block 14, the area within the Staff Apartments at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Clementi Road, or an expanded hilltop clubhouse.

Understandably, it took SP several months to ponder and respond to the request from URA. Then on 30 May 1991, on the Principal's instructions, Anne wrote to the URA that the three alternatives suggested by URA were unsuitable. The area behind Block 14 was too small to build a clubhouse; so was the vicinity of the Staff Apartments. The hilltop had the water tower and childcare centre; and outdoor facilities would be very costly to build on the hilly terrain, besides the security issue of sharing access gates with the institution. The plot next to the Sports Complex was still the best as it was in the recreational area of the campus, had direct access to a road and the shape of the plot was suitable for a clubhouse.



URA suggested that a new clubhouse be built within the leafy compound of the SP Staff Quarters.

3. Approval at last

On 24 July 1991, the government's Master Planning Committee approved the use of the plot next to the Sports Complex. In September 1991, the Ministry of National Development, under which the Urban Redevelopment Authority operated, gave its formal approval. It had taken a year, from the time the Ministry of Education gave formal approval in October 1990, for the Guild to finally say that the land was firmly in their hands and they could move forward confidently.

The moment formal approval was secured, a confident Guild president, Jeffery Lee tabled a resolution to get members' consent to develop a new clubhouse at the annual general meeting on 31 October 1991.

He told the meeting that the site – along Dover Road adjacent to the SP Sports Complex was 7,900 square meters and that the clubhouse would be "...large enough to accommodate... the needs of the Guild for at least ten years and we will have our own entrance and exit. In total, the time frame was estimated to be 38 months: planning and design to take 12 months, construction 18 months, and contingencies another six months. Target completion date was early 1995. In the event of a good response to our membership recruitment programme, a development period of as short as 30 months is possible."

First press conference on the new Dover clubhouse, 30 April, 1992. From Left: Clubhouse Manager Juliana Ang, Guild Advisor Anne Chiang, Guild President Jeffrey Lee.

Mr Lim Meng Tong, chair of the clubhouse development sub-committee and Building lecturer, SP.



He estimated the whole construction to be at least \$6.5million, a sum that they would "borrow, by way of bank loans or overdrafts or a combination of both, such sums of money as the Committee thinks necessary but not exceeding \$3.5million from a bank to be determined by the committee to enable the clubhouse to be constructed as soon as possible." The entire



Ex-co would now concentrate on the most difficult job of fundraising and membership recruitment.

The Ex-co's chair for development, Mr Lim Meng Tong, a senior Building lecturer at SP, was appointed by Principal Khoo to be SP's Project Manager, in the Estates and Development Department. He would liaise between SPGG and SP,

especially in technical matters. Lim has been a Life member since 1983. He first served in 1984 as the vice president of the 5th Ex-co. Then in 1990, he again became the vice president in the 11th Ex-co. He served for the next two years as a committee member in the 12th and 13th Ex-co, and more importantly as the sub-committee chairman of the clubhouse development committee.

Alienation of Land: Paying a Massive Premium

However, approval of the lease of land was just the beginning of a series of challenges to be resolved. In June 1992, the Land office informed SP that it was recommending to the government to alienate State land Lot 2267 PT MK 3 to SP's Board of Governors, giving it the right to occupy the land. But there was a premium for alienation. Based on 7.9 hectares, chargeable premium was a hefty sum of \$2,407,920. Such a weighty matter called for a decision by SP's Board of Governors (BOG). Even before a decision could be made, it was found – after a topographical survey commissioned by the Guild – that the land area of the site was bigger than the original 7.9 hectares. It was 8,473.8 square metres and the premium fixed by the Land Office was now \$2,582,814 for the alienation.

Only after the premium was paid and the land alienated to SP, could the land be leased to SPGG. Until the land was alienated, SPGG was advised not to start work on the site, to avoid paying interest at the rate of nine percent from the time of entry into the site.

1. Paying \$2.5 million would “Kill the Guild”

Years before, SP paid only \$12 for the land on which the Sports Complex was built. Since then the policy had changed to one based on the premium of the full value of the land. Anne Chiang proposed that SP approach the MOE for an additional grant to pay the land premium. Her concern was that if SPGG were asked to raise funds for the land over and above raising funds for building their clubhouse, the additional burden would “kill the Guild”. The next day, Principal Khoo wrote to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, to seek an additional grant as the site area had grown to 8,473.8 square metres after a topographical survey.

...there was a premium for alienation. Based on 7.9 hectares, chargeable premium was a hefty sum of \$2,407,920.

2. Paying ten percent of \$2.5 million

Subsequently, the Land Office replied that it was prepared to recommend to the government, the alienation of the land to the BOG on a lease for the unexpired period of 30 years commencing from 14 June 1984 (same time as the Sports Complex). But it still had to pay the deposit of ten percent by 14 October 1992. The balance had to be paid within two weeks of the letter confirming the President's approval of the land.

The BOG would seek an additional grant from MOE to cover the cost of the

additional premium. To speed matters up, Principal Khoo then sent a paper to the Development Projects Committee of the MOF to request that it approve the sum of the ten percent deposit to be paid to the Land Office. To strengthen his appeal, Mr Khoo explained how the Guild had supported SP's fundraising efforts for students, how it took on the role of spokesperson on issues pertaining to Polytechnic graduates, and how it encouraged alumni to upgrade through continuing education courses. He said that a strong alumni body "would be a valuable resource to the institution". He mentioned the Guild's contribution to the Polytechnic's Endowment Fund,



The site, next to SP's Sports Complex.

its feedback on curricula, and how it enhanced SP's image by supporting the national policy of promoting polytechnic education. He emphasized that the nation needed more polytechnic graduates and helping such graduates to establish their own clubhouse would send a strong signal that their worth was recognised. He concluded his appeal saying: "...without the new clubhouse, the Guild cannot maintain its growth and will slowly die."

Despite such strong support that bordered on passion, Principal Khoo received a reply from MOE on 14 October 1992 that MOF had turned down the request, as no subsidy should be provided for the construction of the proposed guild clubhouse. The Principal then requested for a further extension of the payment of the tax on the Land Offer. The Land Office replied on 2 November 1992 that the extension could only be up to 27 November for the SP Board to finalise payment or else they would just close the matter. They pointed out that the BOG could re-apply with a fresh application. However, that would mean another long process and repeated paper work towards alienation of the land and the premium of \$2.5 million would not be reduced. Not one to give up easily, Principal Khoo met up with the Commissioner of Lands on 13 November 1992 to make an appeal. SP was allowed to extend the payment for the premium by a few weeks only, to 15 January 1993.

3. A last resort, a paternal patron's advice

It was time for the last resort, that is, to approach their patron Dr Tay Eng Soon to help them solve the land alienation issue and payment of premium. On 20 November 1992, a group comprising SPGG Ex-co members Lim Meng Tong, Jeffrey Lee, Seah Lam Kok, Dr Lim Boh Soon and Hoe Lye Soon; Mrs Cheng Cheng Lin (SP Finance Head) and Juliana Ang, met up with Dr Tay.



For a start Dr Tay was surprised as he thought the land was already alienated to the Guild. Dr Tay said there was no way out but to pay the premium, as the Land Office would not waive the premium under any circumstances. As SP was an institution, the cost of the land premium rate should be at an institutional rate. SP then could sub-lease it to the Guild. SP should pay the premium in instalments and recover the sum from the Guild when it was able to pay back, over the lease period of 21.5 years (same time as the Sports complex).

Since the Land Office had given SP two to three years to pay the rest of the money at nine percent interest, Dr Tay commented that SP “was big enough to absorb this over three years.” He said: “It is not a complete loss to SP and you can balance the sums up with the release of a sub-lease to the Guild. It will be leased on SP’s terms and conditions and it is an investment without loss or return. But in return SP gets the land. You acquire property.”



Dr Tay Eng Soon, trying out billiards at the hilltop clubhouse.

4. Alienation of land: So many stake holders

Since there were so many stakeholders of government land, conclusions and confirmations thus far by various parties and government departments were subject to changes. For example, a letter dated 18 December 1992 from the Senior Budget Officer for Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance (Budget) stated that since SP was receiving financial assistance from the government, it could not receive alienated land. Instead, it would be allowed to occupy land with a Temporary Occupation Licence (TOL) or a tenancy agreement for three years or less, with the assurance that the lease or TOL would continue to be renewed for a period of up to 30 years. He also said that the letter from the Land Office stating that the land could be alienated to SP was puzzling. However, the Permanent Secretary (Law) then weighed in on 11 January 1993 that it was confirmed that the land could be alienated to SP.

The MOE tried to help again. Its Assistant Director of Finance sent in an appeal to his counterpart in the Finance Ministry (MOF) on 18 January 1993 for a grant to pay the premium. He wrote: "SP is caught in a dilemma as it did not envisage this problem under the previous land policy." There was no alternative source of funding for this sizeable premium. Fund raising was going to be "difficult and unpredictable", and a loan would be a heavy burden on the Guild, as it already had to raise funds to construct the building with clubhouse facilities.

5. Finally, payment of the ten percent premium

In February 1993, a welcome assurance came from the office of the Commissioner of Lands to the Principal. It promised that once the Land Office received the ten percent deposit of the land premium, it would seek the President of Singapore's approval for the alienation. It had no objection to the sub-lease to SPGG. On 22 February 1993, Singapore Polytechnic sent the payment for the ten percent deposit to the Land Office. The approximate sum was around \$250,000.

Things moved much faster after that. On 7 April 1993, the Land Office informed SPGG that the government on 17 March 1993 had approved the alienation of State land to SP's BOG. The sum was \$2,399,835.60 inclusive of Stamp Duty, based on the land area of 8473.8 square metres, subject to survey. The annual rent was to be \$12. SP was now required to appoint a registered surveyor to carry out the title survey and subdivide the part of Lot 2267 Mukim 3 to be alienated to the BOG. The Chief Surveyor's services would be necessary for clearance once the survey results were finalized.

Finally in April 1993, with a grant from the Ministry of Education, SP paid for the land premium of nearly \$2.4 million for the SPGG site on a 30-year lease.

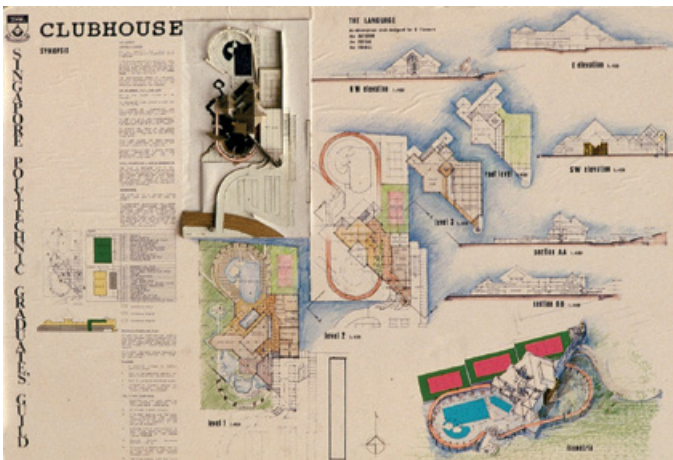
Serious Planning for Construction

1. Design competition for the clubhouse

After the annual general meeting on 31 October 1991 when members consented to develop a new clubhouse next to SP's Sports Complex, the Ex-co organised a design competition open to architecture firms, which employed SP alumni as draftsmen and architects. Ex-co Member Lim Meng Tong wrote a design brief for the proposed clubhouse and sent it out to these firms.

The winner turned out to be Mr Ronnie Ong Swee Huat, who graduated from the diploma course in architectural draughtsmanship in 1977. Hailing from a financially challenged family, Ronnie Ong took the course part-time in the evenings after work. With dogged determination, he enrolled into the architecture course at the National University of Singapore.

Dr Tay Eng Soon, centre, gave the prize cheque to Ronnie Ong, right, the winner of the clubhouse design competition at the First Fund-raising Dinner, 1991.



One of the entries for the design competition.

2. Surveying the boundaries for the plot

Even before construction could really begin, there were a lot of official and legal details to contend with. For a start, SP informed the Guild that the Lot Number 2267 PT had been changed to 2729 PT on the survey map to reflect the alienation of the land. A copy of the survey plan of Lot 2267 PT Mukim 3 was sent to SPGG. The Guild then engaged surveyors to re-plot the new proposed boundary into the existing topographical survey plan in August 1993.

Then on 1 March 1994, Wang Surveyors, employed by SPGG, sent a new set of the site plan to the Commissioner of Lands based on the amended boundaries. On 4 August 1994, the Ministry of National Development asked for information regarding the boundaries for the clubhouse. Wang Surveyors produced a survey plan indicating a proposed delineation of land of 8,473.87 square metres for SPGG. The new survey plan had to be re-submitted to the URA's Master Planning Committee (MPC).

Mrs Cheng Cheng Lin, extreme right, was involved in land and lease issues as SP's Head of Finance and SPGG's Honorary Advisor. In this picture she was part of the welcoming party for Mrs Wee Kim Wee (in red cheongsam), at the dinner of the Second SP Golf Tournament, 1993.

On 4 August 1994, the Ministry of National Development asked for information regarding the boundaries for the clubhouse. Wang Surveyors produced a survey plan indicating a proposed delineation of land of 8,473.87 square metres for SPGG



3. SP as landowner, SPGG as developer

Meetings among all three parties were arranged in quick succession namely SP, the Guild Ex-co and the architectural consultants. SP's designated Project Advisor Peter Lee, Head of Finance Cheng Cheng Lin and the P&T Architects met to discuss the resubmission of the plan to the government's Master Plan Committee (MPC). The Guild wanted to submit plans for a four-storey building set to

a plot density ratio of 1.1. The MPC would like to see SP's involvement as landowner and SPGG as the developer. Hence in the final Application Form for Proposals to the MPC, SP signed as applicant and SPGG signed as developer.

Another meeting discussed SP's involvement in the project. This involved Principal Khoo, Board member Mr Lim Yong Wah, P&T architects, Mrs Cheng Cheng Lin, Ms Anne Chiang, SPGG Ex-co members Seah Lam Kok and Bobby Chong, and clubhouse manager Juliana Ang. Estimated costs – as based on what the NUSS spent on their own clubhouse – would be \$14.5 million, and another \$3 million for the car park. SP wanted the Guild to start with soil tests and investigation works. Contracts with the quantity surveyor, the mechanical and engineering contractor, and the civil and engineering contractor were ready for SPGG to sign at the Guild's solicitors' office.

On 26 August 1994, the Survey Department requested that the title survey be conducted. SP's Head of Finance, Mrs Cheng Cheng Lin, helped to select the same vendor for the title survey – Wang Surveyors. Their fee was \$8,500 excluding the fees for the reports to government bodies. SPGG would be the contact point. Soil tests commenced on 9 September 1994. The quantity surveying agreement for signing with KPK Survey Consultants was ready.



Re-drawing Borders: A Complicated Plot

1. Change in plot size...again!

On 21 November 1994, the application to the Master Plan Committee was re-submitted by SPGG. The site area of 8,473.8 square metres would have a proposed plot ratio of 1.1 and a height of four storeys and two basements. Total gross floor area (GFA) was 9,321.2 square meters and the approximate site coverage would be 32 percent. The URA however objected to this increase in land area of 8,473.8 square meters, especially when it encroached into the land allotted to a new secondary school (the current New Town Secondary School). This was despite the fact that the land had been bought and paid for by SP. By 16 February 1995, the URA decided that SPGG would have to set its boundaries back to 7,200 square meters (subject to final survey) and the Land office would refund the excess premiums to SP. In return the URA would be agreeable to an increased plot ratio and building height.

2. Three plots instead of two

In June 1995, the Land Office informed SPGG that their Lot 2729 was to be subdivided into three plots. They now had to survey three plots instead of two, incurring the extra cost of \$2,400. SP, being the lessor of the land, paid up for the additional cost since it was a legal

There is a strip of land in between SPGG and New Town Secondary School as shown in the picture taken during construction. Could this be the third plot?



requirement, although it would explore ways to avoid incurring such costs. Wang Surveyors duly completed the survey on 8 December 1995 and submitted it to the Chief Surveyor who approved the survey plan on 26 December 1995. The survey included Lot 3049M to Lot 3050L Mk 3, Dover Rd, that is, from the SPGG site to the border with Clementi Rd.

The clubhouse development had reached another milestone. On 24 January 1996, Anne Chiang wrote to SP's

lawyers Rodyk & Davidson to begin the conveyance of the land to the Guild. Within a week on 29 January 1996, the Land Office sent the lease to SP for execution. Once returned, Land Office would send a copy to the Registry of Titles for the issuance of a Certificate of Title. In the meantime, on 17 January 1996, SP informed the Guild that it would waive property tax payments for the development site. Only when construction work began, and the lease was signed, would SPGG start paying property taxes.





3. Different plot size again

It took a few more years of going back and forth among stakeholders – before plot size, gross floor area, and building height could be straightened out. SPGG’s consultants – P&T Consultants

and Architects – received Grant of Written permission from the URA in September 1998. However, the written permission was based on previous plans that included a basement. As such P&T would have to “proceed to prepare and submit the amendment plans to the



Posing with the clubhouse building model on 30 April, 1998. From left: Chai Wee Thong, Principal Low, Bobby Chong, Hoe Lye Soon (slightly blocked), Jeffrey Lee, William Lee, Lim Chin Aik, Deputy Principal Yeow Kian Peng and Dr Aaron Loh.

URA for written permission based on the current proposal as discussed and advised earlier.”

P&T Consultants finally applied for approval to amend the gross plot ratio on 26 June 1999. Being a conscientious

kind-hearted person, then SP Principal Low Wong Fook separately wrote to the Commissioner of Lands about the difference in gross plot ratio, from 0.76 in the original Lease No. 22427, to 0.8503. The increase was 0.0903. He sought advice on whether a differential premium had to be paid and how much. He also appealed on SPGG’s behalf: “In considering whether any differential premium is payable, I would like to submit for your consideration the factors that SPGG is a non-profit alumni society for SP graduates and that the clubhouse is developed solely for the purpose of providing our graduates a place to meet and interact.”

URA replied that it was giving Grant of Provisional Permission to start construction on an increased gross plot ratio of 0.8503. The proposal had to be re-submitted in 2000, which was duly complied with.

4. Increased plot ratio, paying a higher premium

The Land Office gave its final Written Permission on 15 June 2000 for the erection of the clubhouse at an approved gross plot ratio of 0.8522 and Gross Floor Area of 6126.37 square meters. However, it noted that this was in breach of the original plot ratio of 0.76. The approval then was subjected to a payment of differential premium of \$114,337 and with GST and stamp duty, the total came up to \$118,966.11. Upon payment, the Land Office would prepare a Supplemental Lease reflecting the increase in gross plot ratio and substitute Special Condition (a) in Lease 22427 with “The Lessee shall develop the demised land for the purpose of SPGG only up to a Gross Plot Ratio of 0.8522”. The lease was to be paid within six weeks or an interest of 9 percent per annum would kick in. Mr Low forwarded the letter to Patrick Hogan, the new General Manager of the Guild.

There was no way to avoid paying this premium. On 19 October, SP paid for the differential premium on the Guild's behalf, provided that the Guild settled this by 2 February 2001 in a single payment, at 2.5 percent current fixed deposit rate. Subsequently on 8 February 2001, the Guild paid SP. On 15 December 2000, the Land Office sent the Guild the Indenture of Supplemental Lease for Lease no. 22427.



5. Utilities: Sewer lines, power grids and an aborted basement car park

With the land issue now safely out of the way, construction moved ahead full steam. But that did not mean that there would not be any more hiccups. The first one to appear was the building of a new electricity substation. The initial idea of tapping on SP's power station in Workshop 9 was dropped because of the costs of building a room to house a

The SP Sports Complex car park is now used by the Guild.



6.6-kilowatt switchgear and transformer. But when the Guild applied to build its own substation, they were only allowed to do so after an appeal to Power Grid. Connecting sewer lines to SP's manhole in Workshop 13 also required statutory clearance and declarations to make good any damage to SP's property and premises.

Another issue was the basement car park disappointment. The soil investigation showed that there was soft clayey soil under the proposed car park area, which

might even extend to the main building. Piling foundation would be needed, thus adding significant costs to the Ex-co's budget. The final decision was to abandon the plan for a basement car park and to squeeze in parking lots on surface space around the building. Principal Low subsequently allowed the Sports Complex car park to be used by the Guild.

SP granted SPGG a licence of 36 months with effect from February 1998 to complete the building.

Advisory Committees for the Clubhouse Development

In 1994, encouraged by Board member Lim Yong Wah and mindful of his own imminent retirement, Principal Khoo Kay Chai gave the Guild his final push. He formed two committees comprising experienced and successful alumni in the building and financial sectors to produce proposals for planning the development and marketing strategies. He also initiated meetings to discuss funding – a bugbear for any development project. When he retired in 1995, the next principal, Mr Low Wong Fook, continued discussions with the Guild on a possible loan from SP, which extended well into 1999, after the groundbreaking ceremony on 6 May 1998. Through it all, the Guild pushed on against all obstacles and finally got its gleaming multi-million dollar clubhouse.

1. Development Advisory Committee

BOG Chair Mr Lim Yong Wah carefully selected the members for this committee. Chaired by high-profile businessman and avid community volunteer, Mr Kong Mun Kwong, the members for this committee were industry leaders Mr Victor Ow and Mr Alfred Wong; and two managers from Keppel Bank who of course were alumni too. Two other Guild members were co-opted: Mr Michael Hogan and Mr Wu Sze Yang. Completing the team were SPGG

Ex-co members Bobby Chong, Jeffrey Lee and Lim Chin Aik.

Terms of reference were to review and re-propose the development costs of the project, the building schedule, the facilities, the fundraising including membership fees, and the best possible financial plan based on current and potential revenues and expenditure. Their final report, completed in April 1995 recommended the following:

- Facilities recommended were “distilled” from findings and surveys done at NUSS and other country clubs like Jurong, Raffles and Singapore Island and Seletar country clubs.
- Development was proposed to be in two stages. The first stage would comprise a swimming pool, cafe, eight-lane bowling alley, jackpot room, video games room, office space for staff, a reading room to accommodate ten people, and a Chinese restaurant to seat 200. Stage two would add a Post Office counter, a bank counter and automated teller machine, and a crèche for children.
- The whole study was based on eight scenarios and feasibility studies on membership structures with different recruitment outcomes, fees, and

construction costs based on \$16.3 million, \$15 million or \$14 million with consequent loan requirements, loan periods, and cash flow estimates. SPGG was advised to stop issuing Life Membership, as it would become a liability, as Life Members were not required to pay monthly subscriptions in the running of the clubhouse.

- The most feasible plan was Scenario 8, with higher entrance fees.

The committee had taken into consideration, the cost estimates by the development's consultants, KPK Quantity Surveyors and P&T Consultant PL (Architects). Their estimate was \$14,560,000.



Alfred S H Wong, of Noel Gifts & Hampers, was also in the first SPGG Building Sub-committee in 1983, tasked to get a clubhouse on SP campus.

2. Development Committee: A club for the elite or a club for all?

To follow up on the proposals of the Development Advisory Committee (DAC), Principal Khoo approached industry veteran and SP alumnus, Mr Edmund Tie, to head the Development Committee (DC). Mr Tie then had just launched his own consultancy, Edmund N S Tie and Company Private Limited. At their first meeting in July 1995 the DC's first decision was to halt all membership recruitment to avoid confusion until the final proposal membership structure and marketing strategies were resolved. At subsequent meetings, the DC committee gave their input: it would cost at least \$20 million to create an economically viable club; membership entrance fees should be set at \$8,000 to \$10,000. They advised the Guild to target certain groups of alumni only, as it would not be possible to cater to all.

Edmund Tie stressed the importance of the creation of a prestigious club that future SP graduates could aspire to and be inspired by, and he was confident of its viability. On the surface, the Ex-co appeared to welcome ideas from the Development Committee. In reality, the Ex-co was not comfortable and felt that the DC's concept to cater to the high-income elite would lead to poor patronage. At their Ex-co meeting on 30 September 1996, they recounted



Mr Edmund Tie, left, talking to one of the consultants at the Guild's soft opening in 2001.

that they had spent ten years “building recognition to promote the image of SPGG”, and “the constant suggestion of the creation of a Dover Club” rattled them.

The DC's proposal for an upmarket clubhouse also did not go down well with the Guild members at the annual general meeting in October 1995. They were not supportive of the idea of paying a development levy as proposed by the DC or any other fees to help the project. They expected a club to be built at no additional cost to them.



Deep in discussion: From left, Chai Wee Thong (Ex-co), Edmund Tie, Roger Toh (Ex-co), Alfred Wong and Principal Low.

At a DC meeting on 18 December 1995, the Ex-co expressed their plan to re-open Ordinary Membership to generate the much-needed income for the construction. At the end of the meeting, the Ex-co stated that while they were “extremely appreciative” of the proposed marketing plan and strategy to raise financing for the clubhouse development, they felt that costs had to be capped to make membership within the reach of all graduates.

The Ex-co decided to proceed with their own concept for the development of the

clubhouse based on their budget of \$6.5 million. Their resolutions were announced in the Fission newsletter. The Ex-co then met Principal Low on 15 August 1996. Mr Low realised that Edmund’s plans might not coincide with the overall aspirations and financial standing of all graduates. The parting of ways became inevitable when Edmund Tie was very surprised to read the announcements on the development in the Fission issues of November-December 1996 and March-April 1997. He requested to step down officially as chairman of the Development Advisory Committee.

Profile:

Extraordinary Honorary Advisor Anne Chiang

MS ANNE CHIANG, the new Head of Public and Alumni Affairs at SP replaced Teh Yap Cheng as the Honorary Advisor to the Guild in September 1988. This was the start of a long 25-year relationship that continued despite changes in Anne's portfolio – Registrar in 1995 and Head of International Relations in 2000. In April 2001, the Ex-co appointed her Senior Advisor and this continued even after she left the employ of SP in 2003. Officially, the position of SP intermediary fell to successive directors of the Student and Alumni Affairs Department but the Ex-co just found it hard to let Anne go. It was only at the end of 2013 that she was allowed to “retire” as the Guild honorary advisor.

In the early years of her tenure as advisor, Anne proved to be more than an able intermediary between SP Management and the Guild, working feverishly sometimes behind the scenes to get both parties to understand and compromise on the restrictions and limitations regarding SPGG's requests and SP's expectations. The clubhouse was in the campus and subjected to rules set by SP departments. SP is a government institution in the business of providing tertiary education to youths; SPGG is essentially a social recreation club for adult alumni. Issues ranged from unannounced power cuts and over-zealous security guards to more complex issues of land lease

and taxes, and requirements from government agencies.

She often met the Ex-co at night – as they were working in the daytime – and lent her expertise in major events, like the protocol for guests, and drafting speeches and press advisories. She sought opportunities for the Guild to promote membership in SP events and publications, and volunteered advice unreservedly, like the time in March 1991 when the Ex-co gave their printer Ad & Print, carte blanche authority to solicit for advertisements and pay only a fixed amount to SPGG. This might invite problems and bring disrepute to the Guild. She suggested that the Guild's administration staff should do the canvassing.

One of the most important tasks that Anne ever did for SPGG was to help them prepare proposals and papers for presentation to the Board of Governors (BOG). Thus on 22 June 1990, she submitted a paper to the BOG seeking approval for the expansion of the hilltop clubhouse which clearly had become too small for the membership of 2,600 of which some were already defaulting. Following her presentation, Principal Khoo approached the Minister-in-charge of Polytechnics, Dr Tay Eng Soon, to consider a piece of land along Dover Road and the rest was history.

Today, when asked about her passionate commitment to the Guild, she simply said, “I was just acting on the instructions of the Principal.”

*Advisor Anne Chiang in the early days,
giving a talk on dining etiquette.*



*Anne, centre, with members at a karaoke
event in the hilltop clubhouse, 1991.*



Profile:

Jeffrey Lee: the Longest-serving Guild President



The year 1986 was a momentous year for the Guild and the annual general meeting was quite tumultuous. The Ex-co changed drastically, from the one led by Ang Poh Soon and S K Balakrishnan to a younger and adrenalin-dripping group led by Jeffrey Lee and members like Dr Aaron Loh and Dr Lim Boh Soon. Jeffrey, invited earlier by SP Registrar Teh Yap Cheng, soon led the charge up the hilltop to acquire their first ever clubhouse. As soon as the hilltop clubhouse was opened in 1988, membership growth shot up. With foresight and verve, Jeffrey proceeded to clamour for a piece of land on which to build a more permanent clubhouse that could accommodate up to 8,000.

Not one to give up easily – and it was no piece of cake to acquire government land – Jeffrey managed to get the support of the SP Board and the successive Principals to get clearance for the lease of land at Dover Road, next to the SP Sports Complex. Deputy Prime Minister Dr Tony Tan officially opened the gleaming clubhouse in 2001. Throughout those exciting years, Jeffrey's name became synonymous with that of the Guild.

When he took over, he had to deal with missing membership records and some debts. He went all out to persuade his friends to

become members and would not let them leave his house until they signed up. He sent marketing letters, helped by his daughters who licked stamps for him. Getting the Guild all up, running and thriving became an all-consuming affair. He burnt all his free hours on Guild matters. Only after they acquired the hilltop clubhouse could the Ex-co employ a few full-time staff.

His years as president, besides the long journey to get the hilltop clubhouse and then the Dover Road clubhouse, were marked by iconic fund-raising events, like the 1991 dinner and dance graced by former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore's first international

got him to realise his vision of a classy but affordable clubhouse. In an interview with the Singapore Polytechnic Alumni Network's newsletter in March 2001, he conceded, "I admit I have a rebellious streak. I want to have the freedom to be different. My ego tells me to do things differently. That gives me independence."

After graduating from Singapore Polytechnic with a diploma in production management in 1977, he flew off to Glasgow to study mechanical engineering and graduated with first class honours. On his return, he worked with the Public Works Department and other government corporations for 12 years in estate management.



Annual General meeting 2003: Jeffrey (second from right) with (from left) Roland Tan, Director of Student and Alumni Affairs, Dr Lim Boh Soon and Jimmy Lim.

entertainer Anita Sarawak. Then for two consecutive years in 1992 and 1993, President Wee Kim Wee was the guest-of-honour for the golf fund-raisers.

Jeffrey's passionate commitment to the point of aggressiveness

Jeffrey's tenure as president lasted for 19 years. He had promised himself to take it easy and step down as soon as the Guild house was up. This he did after the groundbreaking ceremony on 6 May 1998. He was the first vice-president in the 21st and 22nd Ex-co of Dr Lim Boh

Soon's presidency until he became strategic advisor in 2002 and acting club manager in 2004. In 2006, due to some financial issues, he parted ways with the Guild: he not only quit serving in the Ex-co but also had his membership terminated.

Chapter Six

Loans and Construction (1993 - 2000)

It took the Guild ten years, from the official opening of the hilltop clubhouse on 27 October 1988 to reach the ground breaking ceremony for the 1010 Dover Road clubhouse on 6 May 1998. It took ten years, from the approval of the Ministry of Education for a piece of land in 1990 till the completion of the Dover Road clubhouse in 2000.

The Guild's supplement page in the Straits Times, 6 May, 1998. Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission.

Groundbreaking Ceremony SPGG Clubhouse *A Vision Realised* Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild

Message from Our Patron

Singapore Polytechnic (SP) has expanded over the years, offering many new courses for its students and for graduates of SP.

Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild (SPGG) has also progressed, keeping pace with its alma mater. The Guild is to be congratulated on the groundbreaking ceremony for its new clubhouse. This marks a significant milestone in its history: this is the first time a graduate body of a polytechnic is building a clubhouse for its members. It is also the first time that a society of a tertiary institution is allowed to offer transferable membership.

Through SPGG, graduate members can maintain ties and keep relations with their alma mater and keep abreast of developments in SP. SPGG members will benefit from the networking links they forge among themselves and with SP. They can also serve as inspirational models and for young SP graduates.

I send my best wishes to SPGG on this happy and auspicious occasion.

Peter Chen
Senior Minister of State for Education
Patron of SPGG

The 18th Executive Committee

Mr Jeffrey Lee Chin Hoe, President, Director, IT Management Pte Ltd.

Mr Lim Chin Aik, Vice President & Development Committee Chairman, Manager, Sze Bee Golf Course, First student enrolled at SP.

Mr Bobby Chang, Hon. Gen. Sec., Director, Ace Engineering Pte Ltd.

Dr Lim Bah Soon, Hon. Hon. Gen. Sec., Executive Director, UBS Investment Management Pte Ltd., Active Grassroots leader for more than 19 years.

Mr William Lee, Hon. Treasurer & Co-Chairman Development Committee, Vice President, Technical Services, Yoo Hap Seng Ltd., Technical Consultant, Yoo Hap Seng (M) Bhd.

Mr Hoe Lye Soon, Hon. Treasurer & Membership Chairman, Director, Concurrent Computer Far East Pte Ltd.

Mr Anyong Tack Khong, Committee Member, Contract Manager, Perkins Engines (Far East) Pte Ltd.

Mr Chai Wei Thang, Sports & Social Chairman, Fire & Safety Officer, Glass Willmore Manufacturing Pte Ltd.

Dr Aaron Loh Chuan Pong, Committee Member, Chairman, Lemong Technology, Chief Executive, Dr Aaron Loh & Associates.

Mr Richard Tan Hock Kuan, Facilities Chairman, Manager, Corporate Environment, Health & Safety, Asia, Thomson Multimedia-Sola Pte Ltd., Active Limbs Club Member.

Mr Roger Tan Chiew Chua, Committee Member, Director, TJ Interior Furnishing Supplies Pte Ltd.

SPGG thanks its Patron & Senior Minister of State for Education, Mr Peter Chen, for officiating SPGG's Groundbreaking Ceremony of its new clubhouse on Wednesday, 6 May 1998.

This momentous occasion marks the beginning of a new era for SPGG as it develops a club that becomes the focal meeting point for its graduates, offering business networking links, sports, social, recreational facilities and continuing education for its members. Registered with the Registry of Societies (ROS) on 9 June 1971, it



is now the largest single organised alumni body of SP with more than 3,000 graduates, with an aim to serve more than 100,000 graduates by the year 2000.

Our Location

Conveniently located along Doyi Road with easy MRT access, between Bonge Vista and Clementine stations, SPGG will be served by a proposed new MRT station to be located just outside SP. With a lot of industries located in the west of Singapore, SPGG is ideal for business meetings.



(Left to right) Lim Chin Aik, Lim Chan Lok, Edmund Tie, Victor Ooi, Alfred Wong

Helping to Turn Vision into Reality

The Clubhouse is now all set to be a reality. Thanks to the contributions of many people in so many ways, like raising funds and providing planning inputs. Of these, five SPGG members deserve special mention. All highly successful in their own demanding careers, these "Sons of SP" still found time to help the Guild.

Lim Chin Aik: First Son of SP

When Lim Chin Aik signed up for SP's Advertising diploma course in 1957, he walked into history as Singapore's first enrolled polytechnic student. Rising to Product Manager after 10 years with Neelke, he soon got hired and joined Selenia Country Club as Golf Manager.

Today, still holding this full-time job at 74, Mr Lim in 1981 as he is affectionately known as Guild members, has taken on new challenges as Vice-President of SPGG, spearheading the Clubhouse development project with youthful vigour and zeal.

Lim Chan Lok: Executive Chairman, Salcon Ltd

A Mechanical Engineering graduate of SP, Lim Chan Lok left his parent plant and went to work for Salcon Ltd to work the Enterprise 50 Award last year. After working in the shipping, power and pulp and paper industries, at 32 he started his own company that later became Salcon, a global company with offices and infrastructure projects in the region. His Philippine plant in fact supplies half the electricity needs of Cebu Island.

As the founding President of the Singapore Polytechnic Engineers' Club (SPPEC), Mr Lim continues to explore ways in which SPPEC can develop synergy with SPGG.

Edmund Tie: Executive Chairman & CEO, Edmund Tie & Company

After chalking up a string of successes in his illustrious career in real estate consultancy, Edmund Tie struck out on his own in 1995 to found Edmund Tie & Company with twelve others. The company has more than 300 staff, specialising in all key areas of real estate consultancy with offices and affiliates in South-east Asia and elsewhere with well known estate advisory groups in Hong Kong and the UK/China.

A Valuation Surveying graduate of SP, Mr Tie works just as hard to serve the community, helping organisations like the Salvation Army and Community Chest in their endeavours.

Victor Ooi: CEO, Cylisbuild Group

Property developer Victor Ooi graduated from SP in Civil Engineering and started his first business in 1982, at the age of 28. In 1985, he established the Cylisbuild Group which made the core of the property house. Today, the Group is kept busy providing multi-million-dollar consultancy services for selection and preselection plans.

Mr Ooi has helped SPGG in numerous ways. A keen golfer, he headed the organising of a golf tournament in 1995 to raise funds for the new SPGG Clubhouse.

Alfred Wong: Managing Director, Neal Gifts International Ltd

Over the years, Alfred Wong has contributed much time and money to help the SPGG's Clubhouse project. A Civil Engineering graduate of SP, he built his company like he led the Students Union years ago in SP. With perceptiveness and commitment, he has made Neal, established in 1983, an internationally-recognised gifts company. It has branch/offices in the region and was listed on SGX/DAQ in 1995. Mr Wong himself received the ENDECK Entrepreneur Award in 1991.



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Financing the Construction of the Clubhouse

1. Getting loans for the building fund

After all the efforts to get the land safely alienated to SP's Board of Governors (BOG) and the differential premium paid up in April 1993, SPGG's lawyers started drafting the interim document for Singapore Polytechnic (SP) to sublease the land to the Guild. It was time to move on to secure funds for the development of the clubhouse – which might cost up to \$10 million to build.

While the Ex-co had opened a “Building Fund” – a new fixed deposit account – it was apparent that they would need to borrow money to finance the construction of the clubhouse. In 1994, the SP BOG initially agreed in principle to loan \$1 million to SPGG – from revenue earned from its self-financing short courses. It was a good start, but nowhere near sufficient. With the Guild's savings of \$2 million, they would still need another \$7 million.



Artist's impression of the new clubhouse based on the architect's design.



2. No guarantor for loans

Hopes of securing a bank loan were dim because the banks wanted SP to guarantee the loan to SPGG. But as a government body, SP could not be a guarantor for any bank loan.

The road to securing a bank loan to build the clubhouse was fraught with suggestions, conditions, regulations, proposals and counter proposals. The final amount that Keppel Bank, which later became Keppel Tat Lee Finance (KTLF) agreed to lend was \$4 million. It took the Guild seven years from 1993 to 2000 when construction was more than halfway through, to secure this loan, and the eventual sum of \$2.5 million from SP.

Jimmy Lim, the current Guild president, today attributes former SP principal, Dr Khoo Kay Chai, and former SP Board chairman, Mr Lim Yong Wah as being instrumental to the Guild securing the big loan from KTLF. As early as July 1993, Principal Khoo had met up with senior officials of DBS to discuss a loan to the Guild. Mr Lim held senior positions in the Economic Development Board and the Development Bank of Singapore (DBS) and could point to the right people to talk to.

3. Land and lease law of seven years

Securing the construction loans was not the end of the long road to a grand clubhouse. There were also compliance and leasing issues among the three parties: the bank, the Polytechnic, and the alumni club.

On 5 August 1997, SP received the Principal (Head) Lease number 22427 in which the Lessor (President of Singapore and Successors-in-Office)

demised the land to the Lessee (SP's Board of Governors) for the term of 30 years from 14 June 1984. This Head Lease would lapse on 13 June 2014. That meant that the sub-lease awarded to SPGG in 1997 had only 17 years, although the chances of a renewal from the authorities were very high. However within those 17 years of lawful occupation were the land and lease laws of the Singapore government (Planning Act), which only allowed lease durations of seven years each, although it was renewable.



The approved plot for the new clubhouse.

Keppel Tat Lee Finance's Conditions



1. Loan condition 1: Subordination of SP's loan

In October 1997, KTFL had offered the proposed loan amount of \$5 million to be disbursed twice, at \$3.5 million and \$1.5 million, but on condition that SPGG repay the KTLF loan before repaying the SP loan. This was in contravention of the conditions of the head lease, licence and sub-licensor agreements between SP and SPGG. At a lunch meeting in March 1998, which Bobby Chong (honorary general secretary of SPGG) attended with Anne

Chiang and Deputy Principal Yeow Kian Peng, reservations were raised as to whether the Board of Governors would accede to KTFL's term.

Fortunately, Principal Low Wong Fook came up with the principle of "pari passu" or "side by side" – at the same rate or on an equal footing. Keppel was requested to amend the terms of their offer. Jeffrey was worried that if this were not resolved, the clubhouse development would stall. They had to work on it urgently so that the tender for the main contract works could still be called in May 1998.

2. Loan condition 2: Assigning of rights for security

Another condition in KTFL's loan offer was that SPGG had to assign its rights and interests to Keppel Finance by way of security, as required by the Finance Companies Act. They proposed that the SP Board give a letter of consent to this security interest. Principal Low wrote to the General Manager of Credit and Marketing of KTFL on 16 March 1999 that SP had no objection to SPGG assigning its interest to be issued in favour of KTFL for constructing their clubhouse with the provision that there should not be any change in the use of the land. It was also SP's intention to grant SPGG an option to renew the sublease upon expiry of the present term every seven years up to one day prior to the expiry of SP's Main Lease. The land would remain unencumbered except for the assignment of the sublease in KTFL's favour.

However, the Main Lessor was the Land Office and its consent would have to be sought. The matter was urgent as the Ground-breaking Ceremony on 6 May 1998 was imminent and Senior Minister of State and Guild Patron Peter Chen would be officiating. Principal Low quickly despatched a letter on 14 April 1998 to the Commissioner of Lands, referring to the consent by the Land Office on 30 April 1997 to grant a sublease of Lot 3049M of Mukim 3 to SPGG for their clubhouse. SPGG since then had signed a licence agreement with SP to build within three years from 9 February 1998 and a sub-

lease in escrow effective at Temporary Occupation Permit (TOP).

Behind the scenes, Anne Chiang passed the draft of this letter to Principal Low's predecessor Dr Khoo Kay Chai who volunteered to sound out his contact in the Land Office to get a feel of what the Land Office's response was most likely to be. Dr Khoo's initiative must have been viewed positively as on 20 April 1998, the Commissioner of Lands replied that the Land Office had no objections to SP assigning the lease to the Guild. SP only had to pay a processing fee of \$100.



3. Loan condition 3: A daunting repayment period of seven years

Yet another obstacle loomed. In 1997, Keppel Tat Lee Finance had offered a construction term loan of \$5 million. But in a letter dated 3 May 1999, Bobby Chong as the honorary general secretary informed Principal Low that the Keppel loan had stringent restrictions. The maximum loan repayment period was seven years, which was also the sublease renewal period granted by SP. They refused to agree to a repayment period of 14 years. In any

case, the land and lease laws of the Singapore government (Planning Act) only allowed durations of seven years each. SPGG would have to repay the hefty \$5 million loan over four periods starting from TOP within seven years, plus interest of \$632,500 at 5.75 per cent. This interest was on top of the subordination of SP's \$1 million loan to Keppel's loan of \$5 million; meaning that Keppel's loan was to be paid first. The Ex-co certainly felt that they were walking on thin ice, as they would soon be calling for tenders for the main construction work.

Cutting Down Costs

TO HIS CREDIT, Bobby Chong, the honorary general secretary, sought a way to bring down the costs. He secured concessions from the contractors and consultants to revise their fees downwards at the projected cost of \$9 million. The architectural fee came down from 6.39 to 6 per cent of the whole construction costs; the mechanical and engineering works from 1.25 to 1.20 per cent; the structural and civil engineering fee from 1.35 to 1.25 per cent; and KPK structural works fee from 0.9 to 0.85 per cent. The interior design and landscaping costs would be decided later.

Ex-co member Bobby Chong seen here singing at a karaoke competition, 30 October, 1993.

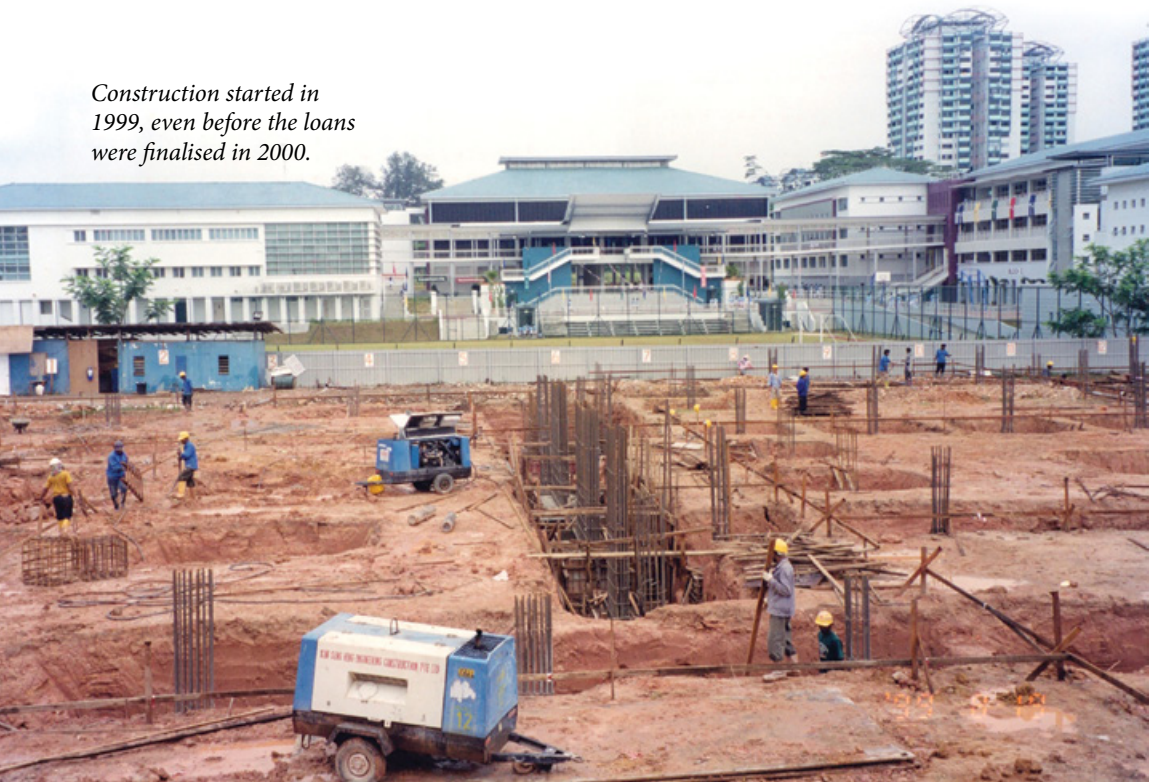
A Helping Hand from SP

1. Reducing the Keppel loan and increasing the SP loan

Cornered by the seven-year loan repayment to Keppel, SPGG explored the idea of SP increasing its loan to \$5 million so that they would not need such a huge sum from Keppel. Dr Lim Boh Soon, as assistant honorary general secretary met with Board chairman Lim Yong Wah. With the help of Mr Kong Mun Kwong, the Honorary Advisor of SPGG's Development Committee,

he deliberated on repayment schemes to pay back the \$5 million loan, if approved by SP. Being the alma mater, surely SP could allow for more flexible loan repayment periods by its biggest alumni body. Interest rates could be lower, between 2.0625 per cent (CPF rate) to 4.41 per cent (HDB rate). On 4 May 1999, clubhouse manager Juliana Ang sent a spreadsheet to Principal Low, showing how SPGG could save \$209,900 if SP extended the loan of \$5 million at 3.45 per cent interest.

Construction started in 1999, even before the loans were finalised in 2000.



2. Counter loan proposal from SP

Principal Low came up with his own compromise. His letter of 13 May 1999 addressed to Board Chairman Lim Yong Wah stated that SP was prepared to increase its loan to SPGG from \$1 million to \$2.5 million, thereby reducing the quantum of the Keppel loan. “Hopefully, the reduced risk exposure might help KTLF to relax a little in their demands on SPGG. At the same time, the smaller Keppel loan would reduce the repayment burden on SPGG within the seven-year term. It should be well within the Guild’s capability to redeem the loan within the period.”

He proposed the order of loan drawdown: SP’s loan of \$1 million, Keppel’s reduced loan of about \$2.3 million to \$3 million, and SP’s remaining loan of \$1.5 million.

The Board had earlier agreed that its loan of \$1 million could be repaid within 15 years – the number of years left in the main lease. Principal Low very kindly proposed that repayment of its second loan of another \$1.5 million also be stretched to the maximum, ending with the expiry of the Head Lease on 13 June 2014. “With the longer repayment period allowed by SP, the need to extend the Guild’s sub-lease beyond seven years would not then arise.” The Board deliberated on his proposal.

On the sidelines of the negotiations for the loan amount from SP, the Guild entered into a subordination deed with KTLF on 14 June 1999. Then on 16

August 1999, a Deed of Assignment was signed by SPGG and KTLF. SPGG assigned to KTLF all their rights, title, interest, benefits, advantages, permits, licences and remedies arising from the Licence Agreement and Sub-Lease Agreement as security for a loan of \$5 million.

3. An impassioned plea to SP to increase loan to \$2.5 million

When the tender exercise for the main construction works closed on 31 May 1999, the lowest quote was \$7.4 million only. KTLF agreed, albeit with restrictive terms and conditions to a reduced loan of \$4 million, or 55 per cent of the latest estimate of construction costs. The BOG had still not made a decision whether to award the loan amount of \$2.5 million as proposed by Principal Low. Guild President Jeffrey Lee formally wrote on 18 June 1999 to Board Chairman Lim Yong Wah to “humbly appeal” for a \$2.5 million loan and a repayment period of 15 years, as it would provide greater flexibility for SPGG. Construction was starting in early August and should be completed around September 2000. If SP agreed to loan out \$2.5 million, the Guild could take a reduced loan of \$2.5 million from Keppel. This would suffice as it already had its own surplus fund of \$3.5 million and could expect another \$2.5 million from membership sales over of 500 at \$5,500 each, over two years. This was an optimistic assessment, as memberships sales were not guaranteed.

The wavy swimming pool taking shape.



4. Plea accepted with conditions

Ten days later on 28 June 1999, Jeffrey Lee was invited to present his appeal for an increased loan of \$2.5 million to the Board's sub-committee, the Administration and Development Committee (ADC). After he left the meeting, the ADC agreed to extend the loan to \$2.5 million with certain achievable conditions, like the repayment period of ten years, the recruitment of 400 new members within two years of the first drawdown, the submission of regular progress reports and the appointment of a third advisor, a senior SP staff who had the requisite experience in project management. That staff was Mr Chee Sing Fong, SP's Project Manager and later, a deputy director of

the Built Environment department. The Board of Governors in the 357th Board meeting on 18 August 1999 ratified the ADC's decisions.

Principal Low followed up on the matter with a letter to Jeffrey dated 7 September 1999. He confirmed that SP would be increasing the loan quantum and legal papers would be sent soon. He also reminded Jeffrey that SP's additional advisor to the project - Chee Sing Fong, Project Manager of SP, would act as advisor on technical issues and help SP get information on the project namely contract documents, drawings, insurance policies, financial statements, programmes and schedules. He would also facilitate the use of SP's facilities in connection with the project.

Toilet cubicles from ground up.



5. Final loan agreement

On 19 February 2000, Principal Low sent the Letter of Offer for a term loan of \$2.5 million, with tenure of ten years to SPGG president, Dr Lim Boh Soon. The Guild decided to accept a final loan of \$4 million from Keppel Tat Lee Finance. Finally after protracted negotiations and re-drafting between SPGG and KTLF and their respective lawyers, the final Letter of Term Loan Offer was sent to the SPGG president on 3 April 2000. On 2 May 2000, Principal Low, SPGG President Dr Lim Boh Soon, Treasurer Roger Toh and Ex-co Member William Lee Khim Loo as a witness, signed the Loan Agreement between SP and SPGG. The loan amount was \$2.5million for the

On 2 May 2000, Principal Low, SPGG President Dr Lim Boh Soon, Treasurer Roger Toh and Ex-co Member William Lee Khim Loo as a witness, signed the Loan Agreement between SP and SPGG.

sole purpose of building the clubhouse. Within the availability period of 36 months, the loan would be disbursed in two portions of \$1million and \$1.5 million. The first portion would be subordinated to the loan from KTLF. The second portion would be paid concurrently with the KTLF loan.

Loan Interests and Legal Documents

1. Loan interest

The loan interest would be calculated from the average of the prime lending rate and the prevailing fixed deposit rate of DBS Bank over the last year. The interest should be paid first before the principal sum. Both were to be fully repaid within ten years from the date of the first drawdown. As the Borrower, the Guild should not change the building plans without prior written consent from the Lender and should also stick to the construction schedule as specified in the Licence Agreement.



Construction in May, 2000.

2. Signing legal documents

Legal documents include:

1. The Variation Deed between SP and KTLF which formalised the subordinated debt of SP's first \$1 million.
2. A Deed of Assignment signed as a form of security between SP and HSBC, as trustee of SPGG.
3. The three-year Sub-Licence, which SP granted SPGG to build its clubhouse from 9 February 1998, would end once the building was completed. The Guild would then be granted a Sub-Lease and pay the rent of \$12 annually payable on the 1st of January for the renewable term of seven years.

3. The first drawdown

After the signing in May 2000, SPGG promptly requested for the first drawdown of \$1million to pay for progress payments number 8, 9, and 10. The KTLF drawdown was scheduled to be on 1 August 2000. The Guild had some funds of its own, sourced from golf tournaments, dinners, membership recruitment, donations and other activities. A total of nearly half a million dollars was from its golf tournaments. The 21st annual general meeting in October 2000 recorded that a sum of \$877,000 was kept on their behalf by SP and would be released.

The Guild's Legal Advisors

IN 1997, the Guild decided to use the services of giant legal firm Lee and Lee. A small delegation comprising Bobby Chong, Lim Chin Aik and William Lee were tasked to meet with Mrs Goh Chwee Leng of legal firm Lee & Lee to discuss the land lease between SP and the Land Office, and the sub-licensor agreement between SP and SPGG. The licence and lease agreements were not the only legal documents and neither were Lee & Lee the only legal advisors. There was a trust deed deposited with HSBC Trust Limited. A fee of \$4,000 to \$6,000 was paid to M/S Abraham Low & Partners for vetting the proposed trust deed, the licence agreement and the sub-licensor agreement. Another \$5,000 was paid to Tan Peng Chin & Partners for drafting the trust deed.

Mrs Goh Chwee Leng of Lee & Lee was actually the spouse of Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong. There was talk to approach her to be the Guild's patron for fundraising. Before that could happen, the retainer service by Lee & Lee was terminated and allowed to lapse in December 1997 as their representative appeared unwilling to take on more Guild matters. M/S Tan Peng Chin was henceforth the only legal advisor.

Flip through old issues of Fission newsletters of the 1990s and one cannot help but notice the many legal articles contributed by



Law lecturer Ms Catherine Tay Swee Kian, a frequent contributor to Fission and honorary legal advisor.

law lecturer Ms Catherine Tay Swee Kian, from the National University Singapore. Ms Tay was sometimes even roped in to be the honorary in-house legal advisor, voluntarily vetting legal documents and if any re-working needed to be done, to discuss it with the retained legal firm. In 1997, she was also invited to act as co-chairman of the Membership Sales Committee to assist Bobby Chong, the honorary general secretary.

Another volunteer honorary lawyer was a building construction legal specialist, Alvin Yeo, from Wong Partnership, who was willing to check through construction legal documents although there was no obligation to use Wong Partnership. Later, in 1998, two other lawyers, Daniel Koh and Alvin Wong of M/s Wong Partnership also served for free on the contract for the proposed interior design by Design Pin.

Getting down to Specifics

With approvals from government agencies and loans already approved in principle, the Ex-co got down to specific work.

1. Organising the ground-breaking ceremony for the clubhouse development. Target date: 6 May 1998. But there were still lots of social, legal, monetary and administrative work to handle.
2. Organising a thank-you lunch for the Development Advisory Committee members Kong Mun Kwong and Edmund Tie for their assistance in the feasibility studies, and to update them on the development.
3. Submitting a valuation of the site's market rental for stamp duty purposes to Edmund Tie who kindly volunteered to do the valuation for free. Stamp duty on the lease came up to \$1,174.
4. Paying the property tax of \$7,740, through SP in January 1998.
5. Submission of building plans to the Public Works Department, which cost \$7,000. The plans were duly approved by the Building Control Division and were tagged "Ref: PWD BCD BP-00101 1998". On 11



Fengshui Master Mr Chong Swan Lek, centre, helping Ex-co members Bobby Chong (left) and Dr Lim Boh Soon to get the right energy flow for the new site. Years later, Master Chong was the fengshui consultant for the prestigious Marina Bay Sands project.

August 1999, the Registrar of Titles issued the Certificate of Title to Lot Number Mukim 3-3049M, with an area of 7,188.5 square metres, to the SP Board of Governors.

6. The tender exercise for piling works was called and attracted 24 quotes. It was finally awarded to BBR Geotechnic (S) PL for being the cheapest and recommended by both architectural and quantity surveying consultants. Their quote of \$310,000 and the promise of completion within eight weeks were happily accepted. The boss was also an SP alumnus.

The Bowling Alley that Got Moved

SPECIAL ATTENTION was paid to the proposed bowling alley, certainly a source of pride, as the Guild would be the only clubhouse to have one. The supplier, Brunswick invited the Ex-co to check out their bowling alleys in Johor and Kuala Lumpur. Juliana Ang, Lim Chin Aik and William Lee made the trip to Kuala Lumpur.

However, in 1998, Jeffrey Lee expressed fears that the bowling alley

was too expensive to build and with the Keppel Loan still not secured, it might have to be abandoned.

Juliana argued that it would earn revenue, generate life for the club, and make it exceptional.

The bowling alley had long been debated since 1993 in the feasibility studies undertaken by two advisory committees for the clubhouse development. Jeffrey then instructed Juliana to do a project cost review with the quantity surveyors to see if there could be savings if the project were to be delayed by six months in view of the financial crisis that the nation was experiencing.

Jeffrey decided to call for an extraordinary general meeting on 1 June 1998 to re-look at the building design and do away with a basement floor and a first storey car park so as to save up to \$2 million on excavation costs and more. The original design

placed the bowling alley in the basement with a covered car park above it to house 25 lots as mandated by the authorities. PT Consultants offered the option of building lots on the ground or using a stacking system.

The meeting decided not to go ahead with the extra level of the basement but to relocate car park lots to surface lots around the perimeter

of the building. The savings of \$750,000 could be used to increase the floor areas of the two floors. More lots could be built if one of the two tennis courts were to be removed. However, most members felt that the two tennis



The bowling alley today.

courts as promised in marketing materials should remain. The bowling alley could be located on the first storey and expanded from ten lanes to 12, which was the minimum to meet competition standards. However, PT Consultants weighed in that the ceiling height would then need to be increased. The agreed solution was to lower the bowling centre slightly into the basement till it met required ceiling heights and this would not affect the road levels. This called for all piling works – which had just started in May 1998 – to stop until permission from the authorities was obtained.

Guild Patron Mr Peter Chen, feeding the hungry frisky lion.



A Really Ground-breaking Ceremony

To mark the ground breaking ceremony SP worked with SPGG to produce a two-page news supplement in the Straits Times. Financing was sourced from well-wishers, vendors and suppliers through letters of appeal on joint letterhead and signed by both the SP Principal and the Guild President.

The historic day arrived on 6 March 1998. As early as 9.30am, Guild members, fellow alumni and guests started streaming into the tented area

on the site. At 10.00am sharp, Mr Peter Chen, Senior Minister of State for Education cum Guild Patron arrived with SP Board Chairman Mr Lim Yong Wah, other Board members and Principal Low. After a speech by Mr Chen, SP's student lion dance troupe sprang into action. The big-headed frisky lion created a din, toying with the symbolic green vegetables to ensure the success of the clubhouse development. Piling started with Mr Chen switching on the boring machine.



Ground-breaking: From left, fourth SPGG president – Jeffrey Lee, fifth president – Dr Lim Boh Soon, BOG member Ms Fang Ai Lian, Senior Minister Peter Chen, Principal Low Wong Fook, BOG Chair Lim Yong Wah and third president – Ang Poh Soon.



The boring machine.



The Lion “blessing” the boring machine.

Construction: Collaborative Effort with SP



First Vice President Lim Chin Aik (centre), with the box of tender documents for the construction.

In July 1999 the tender for the main contract work was awarded to Kim Seng Heng Engineering Construction Private Limited. Clubhouse Manager Juliana Ang wrote to SP's Deputy Principal Yeow Kian Peng that the Ex-co had accepted its quote of \$7,404,956.10. The first site meeting at 4pm on 15 July 1999 saw SP's Estates Department briefing contractor Kim Seng Heng on the rules and procedures for work commencement, in the presence of a Guild staff. On 13 August, SPGG was granted clearance to put up the project signboard on the perimeter fence near Gate 4 and to set up a temporary

connection to SP's sewage system. The latter would be removed once the construction was completed and the original installations reinstated.

1. Technical advisor from SP appointed to oversee the construction

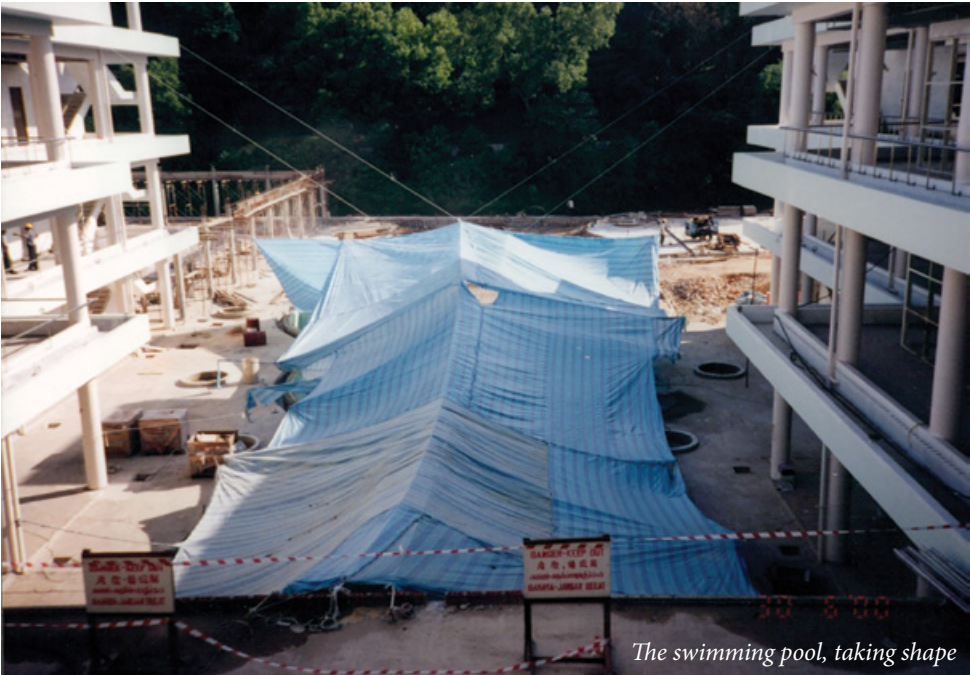
Between the construction phase of July 1999 to October 2000, SP's representative, Technical Advisor Chee Sing Fong who was made an honorary advisor to the SPGG Clubhouse Development Project, proved to be a most useful and knowledgeable



intermediary as many correspondences show. Sewers, drains and pipes, electricity and telecommunications services had to be laid through SP's land from Dover Road to SPGG after consultations with various government authorities. The conditions were that SPGG had to maintain all these services with minimum disruption to SP and to mark out clearly the "service corridors" around these piping and cabling. Construction entailed many requests to SP for space to fabricate installations like steelworks, site containers and the Teflon roof at the main entrance.

At times, SP obliged the Guild. For example, the planned vehicle drop-off

point and metal roof extension would go beyond the proposed site's boundary. The Land Transport Authority required a letter of consent from SP that it had no objection to SPGG using SP's land. In her letter of 5 September 1999 to Anne Chiang, Juliana wrote that she had earlier hoped that the plot boundary could be moved and extended. On 22 October, Chee Sing Fong – on behalf of the Principal – replied that SP had no authority to move the boundary under conditions of the lease. "However, we have no objection to allowing SPGG access and use of the land for the purpose of a drop-off point with the condition that SP reserves the reversionary right on the use of the land."



The swimming pool, taking shape

2. Disruptions during construction tolerated by SP

During the process of construction there were times when SP had to say “no” to requests from SPGG. For instance, SP could not accede to the gas line to run from the SP staff apartments compound to SPGG as the area was likely to be developed in future and diverting it would entail significant costs.” SP Estate Director’s advice was for SPGG to consider other options, like from Dover Road or New Town Secondary School,

or to use bottled gas. In March 2000, permission was granted to remove six trees between the SP staff apartments and the new clubhouse to facilitate the construction of the sewer line.

Construction also disrupted the operations of the Student and Alumni Affairs Department. Gate 4 leading to the Sports Complex was permanently opened until the end of the project, as workers needed to use the toilets at the grandstand of the Sports complex. Construction debris like aluminium

sheets were strewn around, and it was difficult to prevent outsiders from intruding into the compound and using the soccer pitch, multi-purpose courts, and car park. At annual events

like Family Day and Commex (students' final year project exhibition), the car park could not be used for the institution's guests. Fortunately the disruption was short term.

Status of Institution of Public Character?

THE GUILD IS A registered alumni body with the sole purpose of promoting the interests of the alma mater, its graduates and subscribed members. It was clearly not a profit-seeking business. Big-ticket expenditure – like the construction costs of its clubhouse – had to be raised from fund-raising events and donations. Some potential donors enquired about tax-exempt receipts for their donations and Ex-co member Lim Chin Aik raised this in 1997. As the advisor, Anne Chiang enquired with the Ministry of Education to allow SPGG to have the status of an institution of public character (IPC) so that donations could be tax-exempt. The Ex-co had already brought this up to the Patron's notice.

In May 1998, SPGG decided to go ahead and apply for IPC status.

Clubhouse Manager Juliana attached an annex containing a summary of its clubhouse development project. She avowed that the clubhouse would promote the interest and development of SP by creating a meeting place for past and present students, and facilitate the exchange of information and ideas on industry and technology. Cost of project was capped at \$11 million.

One of SP's head of departments, Mr Chew Cheah Boon had been seconded to the Ministry of Education. SP had hoped that Mr Chew could push the case for SPGG. However, in August 1998, news came that Mr Chew had fallen seriously ill. The response came from the Ministry that the application would be put on hold. SPGG has remained a not-for-profit organisation only.

Last Hurdles Before the Grand Opening

1. Making payments

Payments to the development contractor Kim Seng Heng, were already underway. As minutes of the 7th meeting of the 20th Ex-Co on 20 April 2000 show, the letter for the release of SP's loan of the first \$1million was signed by Guild president, Dr Lim Boh Soon and vice president Jeffrey Lee. This was to pay for Progress Payment number 8 amounting to a sum of \$407,106.50 to the contractor. Similarly, Interim Certificate #12 was paid on 15 September 2000. The sum of \$1,086,890.48 comprised \$50,000 from the Guild, \$493,445.24 from the loan provided by Keppel TatLee Finance Limited, and \$543,445.24 from SP's loan. It was the second drawdown. The next payment, a sum of \$837,078.59 was due on 18 October 2000. Interim Certificate # 14 amounting to a sum of \$1,006,953.63 was settled on 24 November, followed by #15 on 21 December 2000 when the amount of \$55,128.26 was paid.

2. Raising funds through membership drive

With all these payments being made, it was time yet again to get new members and to raise funds.

For a start – publicity was important. The year 2000 kicked off with the publication of the SPGG Journal 2000 with messages from Principal Low and SP Board Chair Lim Yong Wah. The print run was 3,500 copies.

With the spanking new guild house fast taking shape and with it, exciting new directions, the Ex-co decided to engage an experienced manager in clubhouse management who would carry the title of General Manager. Mr Patrick Hogan, an American, reported for duty in March 2000 and was promptly challenged to bring in 1,000 members within a year and another 1,000 by April 2002.

3. Marketing talks in hotels – to increase membership

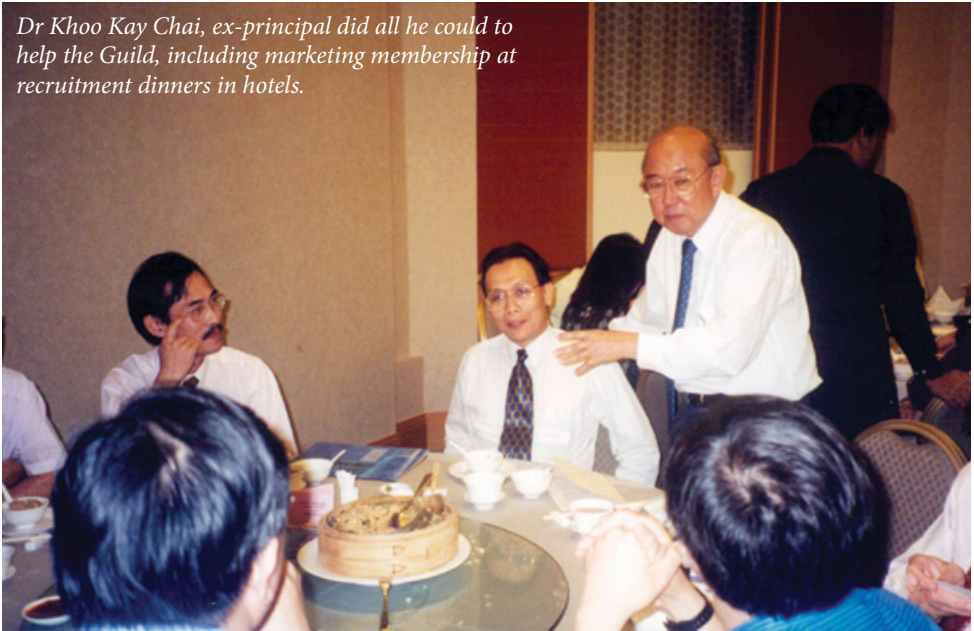
To reach out to potential members, Patrick approached SP's Student and Alumni Affairs for their addresses. But out of 36,500 mailers sent, only 32 or 1.4% eventually joined. Something

more glamorous was needed. Until the new Guild house was ready to host meetings and parties at the end of the year, Patrick kicked off a series of membership cocktails at venues like the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel and Raffles Hotel. SP graduates were studiously invited and presentations on the new clubhouse and membership promotions were the order of the evening. Ex-co members would take turns to attend, and many times, former SP principal Dr Khoo Kay Chai came

to lend moral support and motivate potential members.

Sometimes these marketing talks had something extra. The one on 29 September 2000 was dubbed “CEOs & Entrepreneurs’ Night” and held at the East India Room, Raffles Hotel. Besides the briefing on the Clubhouse development and opening, there was a presentation on “Profits by the Internet” by Mr Michael Low, Chief Operating Officer of DataOne (Asia) PL.

Dr Khoo Kay Chai, ex-principal did all he could to help the Guild, including marketing membership at recruitment dinners in hotels.



Soft Opening

The new clubhouse was allotted the address 1010, Dover Road. When construction was completed in September 2000, the Ex-co intentionally timed the soft opening to be on 10 October 2000. The theme then became 1010, on the advice of their media consultant Mr Peter Yeo Toon Joo. Guests were to wait outside the locked gate at the foyer and the Ex-co inside the gate, until the clock struck 10.10am.

Symbolic keys were presented to Patron Peter Chen, Senior Minister of State for Education and to Principal Low Wong Fook. As the frisky lion pussyfooted about, and the auspicious time struck, Dr Lim Boh Soon unlocked the gate to let the guests in. Then the Patron pushed a button to start the waterfall from the piano lounge to the swimming pool below. Balloons were released and the student Daiko drummers pounded out the message to the neighbourhood. A tour of the facilities followed.

The Ex-co held its 21st annual general meeting, on 27 October 2000 at the new ballroom. Officially it had received the Temporary Occupation Permit and was now paying the annual rent of \$12 as a sub-lease tenant of Singapore Polytechnic. On 31 October 2000, the Guild officially moved from its hilltop premises.



*Mr Peter Chen
“switching” on the
waterfall.*



Dr Lim Boh Soon welcoming guests after unlocking the gate.

Guild Facts and Figures

On the same day, responding to a query from the Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, SP's Director of Estates Mr Lim Lian Seng supplied the following figures: the clubhouse could accommodate 5,000 people; the Gross Floor Area for indoor facilities was 6002 square meters; the outdoor area was 7,200 square meters; and there were 35 car park lots available. These lots, around the building, were well within the area allotted to the Guild. The main car park with 60 lots meant for users of the Sports Complex still belonged to SP. In March 1999, Principal Low had given his formal permission for the Guild to share the use of the 60-lot parking at the Sports Complex, which was hardly used in the evenings by SP.



It had taken a full ten years from the approval of the piece of land in 1990 to the final completion of the clubhouse in 2000.

The actual construction of the SPGG clubhouse, after the piling stage, commenced on 30 July 1999 and was completed on 4 September 2000. It took only 14 months, a commendable feat. The adjusted contract sum paid to main contractor Kim Seng Heng Engineering Construction was \$7,404,956.10.

List of contractors:

1. Kim Seng Heng Engineering Construction Pte Ltd (direct contract, main contractor)
2. P&T Architects Pte Ltd (consultants)
3. P&T Mechanical Engineering Pte Ltd (consultants)
4. P&T Engineers Pte Ltd (consultants)
5. KPK Quantity Surveyors (consultants)
6. Design Pin PL (consultants)
7. Interior Designer
8. Brunswick Bowling Equipment (direct contractor for supply and installation of bowling equipment)
9. Komco Engineering Pte ltd (nominated subcontractor of Kim Seng Heng)
10. D'Law Design & Associates (direct contractor, landscape architecture consultants)





Profile:

**Lim Yong Wah: a Caring Chairman
of the SP Board of Governors**

AFTER THE EXCITEMENT of having Singapore's President Wee Kim Wee support the Guild's golf tournaments in 1992 and 1993, the tournament of 1994 was also significant. It raised a record sum of \$206,000 for the clubhouse development fund under a committee chaired by Mr Lim Yong Wah, then a member of SP's Board of Governors (BOG). Big organisations like Singapore Pools, Ssangyong, and Caltex, stepped forward with donations. These were big employers of SP graduates too.

Mr Lim was the chair of the SP BOG, from 1995 to 2000 – the first alumnus to be given the honour and the trust. He was among the early Accountancy cohort to spend their first two years at SP and then continued for another two years in the degree in Accountancy course before it was hived off to the university. He says, "I joined the degree course after finishing two years of the diploma course. The degree course was conducted in SP and I enjoyed my years there and made many good friends."

He was invited to join the SP Board in 1986, at a time when the Guild's Ex-co, led by the new president, Jeffrey Lee, was mulling over the take-over of an existing building on campus. Several papers were presented to the Board and the final decision was to allow the Guild to occupy the second floor of the old building on the hilltop, Extension Block 7. The renovation cost of half a million dollars was picked up by SP. Mr Lim bought Guild membership in 1987 in a significant show of support. He was certainly well acquainted with the needs and struggles of the Guild.

What many might not have realised was that in the difficult period of the early 1990s when the Guild's request for a piece of land for their clubhouse went through so many government authorities, Mr Lim and Principal Khoo really tried to help by making phone calls over issues like land premium charges and alienation of land. With

Mr Lim's active encouragement, Principal Khoo went on to form two advisory committees to give some guidance to the Ex-co in planning for the construction and financial sustainability. Both committees were chaired and served by prominent alumni in the building and real estate industry.

It was during his tenure too that the Guild had to source for millions of dollars to fund the construction, a most daunting task beyond dinners and golf fundraisers. The Ex-co approached the SP Management who had their own constraints. Mr Lim told the Guild that they should get clean loans from the banks and he proceeded to introduce them to his contacts, the senior executives from the Development Bank of Singapore and the Keppel Tat Lee Bank. The latter eventually provided the loan.

Chairing the 1994 golf committee was the high point in a series of tournaments when he persuaded many of his friends and former SP classmates to buy slots. Despite his very busy schedule, he continued supporting the Guild as much as he could. Even after the successful 1994

fund-raiser, his was a familiar face in the VIP flights of subsequent tournaments. His avowed motivation was that he wanted to support the Guild reach its target of \$6.5 million.

When he stepped down from the Board in 2000 to concentrate on his illustrious career, he had given SP 14 years of his professional life. With his characteristic calm demeanour, he was hardly the sort to come in with guns a-blazing but he was certainly task-oriented and focused.

He joined the Economic Development Board in 1967 and was a member of the pioneering team that established the Development Bank of Singapore. He served on several statutory boards and also on boards of engineering companies. He was the board chairman of Pteris Global Limited from 1992 to 2011.

Mr Lim has also been involved in public hospitals for years, as the former Chairman of the SingHealth and National University Hospital Boards, before his appointment as chairman of JurongHealth. He is now retired.



Mr Low receiving his Honorary Membership from President Jimmy Lim in February 2012.

Profile:

Low Wong Fook: A Kindly Principal and Friend of the Guild

JUST MENTION Low Wong Fook to SP staff and SPGG members, and words like SP CORE Values and Kindness naturally spurt forth. The SP CORE Values – Self-discipline, Personal integrity, Care and

concern, Openness, Responsibility and Excellence – are a strong anchor in the ethos of Singapore's most established polytechnic. Mr Low who took over as SP Principal in 1996 initiated this. During his

watch, Mr Low displayed these core values in all his dealings with the Guild.

He joined SP at a time when the Guild's Development Committee – initiated by his predecessor Dr Khoo Kay Chai and headed by real estate bigwig Edmund Tie – was in full swing. Discussions on funding for the clubhouse development soon followed. The Guild faced an uphill task to raise adequate funds and the loan amounts were only resolved in 2000, months before the completion of the clubhouse project.

With Mr Low's help, the Ex-co made presentations to the SP Board of Governors for help. The loan amount from SP was increased to a generous \$2.5 million from the initially agreed \$1 million, on very reasonable terms like a ten-year repayment period and a recruitment target of 400 new members within two years of the first loan drawdown. To ease the concerns of Keppel Tat Lee Finance, the other main financier of the project, Mr Low agreed to subordinate SP's loan to that of Keppel Tat Lee Finance, allowing their \$4 million loan to be repaid before SP's.

Other concrete examples of his concern for the Guild abound. In May 1998, the Ex-co met late in the night for an urgent meeting to discuss whether to forgo building a covered car park as provided in

the original plan. Not building the car park would save the Guild a significant sum of \$750,000. The Development & Building Control office of the Land Transport Authority (LTA) had mandated 44 parking lots for the clubhouse development but only 31 lots could be provided around the clubhouse. The Ex-co brought this to Principal Low's attention and he wrote to the



Guild that SP was ready to share with the Guild, the use of its 60 lots at the Sports Complex. This was communicated to LTA and up to this day, Guild members park their cars on the SP land in front of the clubhouse.

Interviewed by Fission newsletter just before he stepped down as Principal in October 2007, Mr Low exhorted the Guild to be

more than just a social club. “To be relevant, SPGG must support the growth of its members intellectually and professionally as well as socially. It must also support the growth of its alma mater.”

Mr Low recognised that SP and SPGG are inextricably linked in a symbiotic relationship, with both benefiting when they add value to each other.



Mr Low sharing a light moment with his SP colleagues at SPGG.

Golf Fundraisers and Fun Dinner- and-Dances





Before the advent of the Internet and digital fundraising sites like GoFundMe.com, golf tournaments and dinner-and-dances were the customary means to raise funds... and to have lots of fun.

President Wee Kim Wee, centre, arriving for the 1st golf fund-raiser for the clubhouse development, on 16 June 1992.

Golf Fund-raisers: tour de force

Golf tournaments are recognized to be excellent avenues not just for business networking but also for fund raising. Over and above the fun of playing in well-kept golf fairways, fresh air and sun, golf players enjoy the friendly competition while simultaneously raise funds for a worthy cause. The SP Graduates' Guild Clubhouse development was one such cause.

1. First fund-raising golf tournament, 1991

The first fundraising golf tournament in March 1991 saw a gross collection of \$42,400. Dr Tay Eng Soon was the guest-of-honour for the tournament but abstained from playing the game. He attended the post-tournament dinner with his wife. The tournament was led by then SP Board Chairman, Professor George Fong, and held at the Singapore Island Country Club. He teed off with a loaded golf ball that exploded, simultaneously launching 24 flights in one stroke.

From left, Mr. Lim Yong Wah, Bobby Chong, Professor George Fong, Dr. Khoo Kay Chai, and two tournament sponsors (from NTUC Fairprice and Antara Koh Pte Ltd.).

Besides Professor Fong, the VIP party included the chairman of the sponsor, Keppel Bank; the General Manager of NTUC Fairprice; the Executive Vice President of UOB bank; a senior management official from Singapore Pools, and of course, SP Principal Khoo. The overall champion of the tournament was then SP Deputy Principal Cheng Huang Leng who won 45 Stableford points and received a Bohemian crystal trophy.





Hole-in-one prize.

*Members and their guests
limbering up for the Guild's
first big-scale tournament.*



*Dr Tay Eng Soon and Mrs Tay attended
the post-tournament dinner.*



*Prize presentation at the first fund-
raising golf tournament 1991.*

2. First SP golf tournament 1992

The tournament in the following year was also dubbed as a first, with a slight name change – First SP Golf Tournament 1992 – probably because the President of Singapore had assented to play.

It raised around \$100,000 for the clubhouse development. This time, it was publicly announced that all proceeds would go to fund the clubhouse development project. Former Ex-co member Mr Seah Lam Kok – well-remembered for organising the Guild's main golf tournaments – was certainly rewarded when he got to play with the Singapore President. It was held on 16 June 1992 at the Palm course of the Raffles Country Club with 164 players participating.

At the prize presentation dinner that night, attended by the President and Mrs Wee, a new challenge trophy saw the light of day. Donated by Principal Khoo, it was given to the overall champion who happened to be Mr Andrew Ang. Nobody though won the hole-in-one prizes of a Mitsubishi Lancer and a Mazda 626.

3. Second SP golf tournament 1993: President Wee to the rescue again

Although it poured in the afternoon of 7 April 1993, the heavens must have been shining on the Guild. For the second consecutive year, President Wee Kim Wee supported another golf tournament – the Second SP Golf Tournament 1993 at the Lake course, Raffles Country Club, in aid of the clubhouse development project. Although this time he did not play, he and Mrs Wee graciously attended the dinner that night.

The atmosphere at the follow-up dinner at the country club was certainly convivial as Mr and Mrs Wee joked and laughed with diners. On behalf of the Guild, Mr Eric Gwee, Acting Chairman of SP's Board, presented the President with a unique wooden putter of ramin wood with a striped billiard cue hand-made by the students of SP. A bouquet of yellow roses was presented to the charming and very friendly First Lady. The overall champion Mr Bernard Lu received the Khoo Kay Chai Challenge Trophy. Winners of the Divisions A and B each received a dinner plate engraved with the President's crest.

The Golf Challenge Trophy donated by Dr Khoo Kay Chai in 1992, in aid of the clubhouse development.



Acting Board Chairman Mr Eric Gwee presenting a souvenir – a ramin wooden putter – to the President.

Principal Khoo welcoming Mrs Wee Kim Wee, at the dinner after the 2nd SP golf tournament on 7 April, 1993.

President Wee concentrating on his game.



Principal Khoo, left, accompanying Guest-of-Honour Lieutenant-General Ng Jui Ping, Chief of Defence Forces, Singapore Armed Forces.

...at the annual general meeting of 2000, at final tally, all those golf fundraisers collected a most impressive total of \$472,450.

4. SP 40th anniversary golf in aid of the clubhouse fund

As the chairperson of this tournament, Mr Lim Yong Wah (then a member of the SP Board of Governors who would soon be appointed its chairman), increased the modest target fund of \$60,000 as set by the Ex-co, to a whopping \$206,000. Mr Lim was able to attract significant sponsorship: \$40,000 from Singapore Pools (S) Ltd; \$20,000 from Ssangyong (S) Pte Ltd; \$10,000 cash and \$15,000 worth of giveaways for the goodie bags from Caltex Group, and the promise of a Rover 416 (M) car for the hole-in-one winner, from Intra Motors. There were many other smaller cash donations too. It all went into the clubhouse development fund.

The tournament was held at the Jurong Country Club on 3 August 1994. The guest-of-honour, Lieutenant-General Ng Jui Ping, Chief of Defence Forces, Singapore Armed Forces was also an SP Board member. A total of 106 players each paid \$1,000. The Caltex Group of Companies and SP issued the press release jointly. The actual cost of the event was only \$25,000.

5. Third SP golf tournament 1995

The highlight of 1995 must surely be the third fund raising golf tournament on 10 October 1995 held at the Raffles Country Club. With support from more than 100 golfers, about \$30,000 was raised for the clubhouse development fund. Chaired by Mr Victor Ow, a member of the SP Entrepreneurs' Club, the tournament was in honour of newly retired SP principal Dr Khoo Kay Chai.

As stated in the accounts at the annual general meeting of 2000, at final tally, all those golf fundraisers collected a most impressive total of \$472,450.



Third golf tournament chair Victor Ow (left) presenting a prize to principal Khoo.

Annual Dinners and Dances

As a social and recreational club, dinner-and-dances are annual highlights at the Guild, eagerly anticipated by members and their families. Past annual dinners reflected the phases of the Guild's development – graduation balls in the first half of the 1980s to raise their profile to get new members, and fund-raising dinner-and-dances in the 1990s to support the Dover Road clubhouse.

Way back in April 1972, the Ex-co organized an exhilarating Inaugural Dinner at the Mandarin Hotel to mark the birth of the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild, with the most distinguished guest possible – Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

The Guild went into a quiet mode after that. Its second phase was the revival in 1980 that culminated in a huge Reunion Dinner to celebrate the 30th anniversary of its alma mater in 1984. Although it was not held at any ritzy hotel, but in the SP Administration Block Car Park, more than 3,000 alumni turned up to catch up with their former classmates and lecturers. The guest-of-honour was Dr Tay Eng Soon, the Minister of State for Education and the Minister-in-charge of the polytechnics.

It was at the Annual Ball 1985 that members heard of a new exciting direction: they were going to get their

own clubhouse! SP's Board chairman, Mr Chua Chor Teck announced that SP would be providing half a million dollars to renovate an existing building for use as the clubhouse. He also handed a cheque of \$10,132 for the clubhouse fund, as it was the surplus money raised by graduates towards the Polytechnic's 30th Anniversary Reunion Dinner held in 1984. It was the Guild's first ever seed money raised by themselves for the clubhouse development. That ushered in a long period of some 15 years that saw annual dinners as a medium to raise funds for the clubhouse development and also to enhance its public image and boost membership.

1. Dinners in 1988, 1989 and 1990: raising the Guild's profile

Dinner-and-Dance 1988 held on 27 August at the Mandarin Hotel saw an encouraging crowd of 430 members and friends. Attending as guest-of-honour was Dr Wang Kai Yuen, the Member of Parliament for Bukit Timah, accompanied by his wife. This was even before the opening of the clubhouse on the hill exactly two months later.

The next dinner-and-dance, on 5 August 1989, was held at the Shangri-La Hotel. It attracted 500 diners and was graced by Dr Tan Cheng Bock, Member of Parliament for Ayer Rajah.



Jeffrey Lee accompanying Member of Parliament Dr Wang Kai Yuen into the Mandarin Hotel Ballroom.

Member of Parliament Dr Tan Cheng Bock, as guest-of-honour at Dinner and Dance 1989.

For the 1990 dinner-and-dance at the Neptune Theatre on 18 August, the Ex-co managed to get the Minister-in-charge of polytechnics, Dr Tay Eng Soon as guest-of-honour. Addressing the 600 members and guests Dr Tay identified the Ex-co as “a group of dedicated and enthusiastic people who feel a strong sense of loyalty to the Poly and who want to develop a guild worthy of the many thousands of Poly graduates.” He said that the Ministry of Education was aware of the Guild’s search for bigger premises. He also noted that SPGG would be raising its own funds for building it, and increasing its contribution to the SP Endowment Fund from \$3,000 for needy students. The event was covered in the Straits Times with the headline “S’pore Poly grads to get their own guild house”.

Support also came from the Chairman of the SP Board of Governors, Professor George Fong whose message in the dinner souvenir magazine said: “Nothing is gained without pain, and success breeds success. The Guild is on a good run, and I encourage you all to keep going.”

The successful night ended with a topless revue by an international dance troupe discreetly placed at the very end of the programme.

Fission newsletter of September/October 1990 reported that Dr Tay thought the hilltop clubhouse had the ambience of a friendly English pub.



Fission

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1990 A quarterly newsletter by Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild

**SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC GRADUATES' GUILD
DINNER & DANCE '90**

If ever there was a night for a party it must surely have been the 18th of August. The Graduates Guild Dinner and Dance at the Neptune Theatre Restaurant that night lived up to all expectations and much, much more. The overwhelming response of at least 600 guests was they had, what could only be described as a roaring good time. They came in all shapes and sizes with one thing in mind to party. And what a party it was!

This year's event had all the elements of a memorable evening: games, "hot" entertainment, dancing, colourful characters, special moments and even a little romance. The festivities began promptly at five as our guest of honour, Dr Tay Eng Soon, arrived to grace the occasion. The master of ceremony for the night was Melvin Pereira, a brilliant DJ and composer. Dispensing with the usual formalities he proceeded to invite the chairman of the organising committee, Koh Wei Keng to address the audience. Wei Keng thanked the guests and the sponsors for their support for the year's activities and made special mention of his committee for their contribution. Jeffrey Lee, the President of the Guild, followed this by speaking briefly on the goals of executive committee to established a full-fledged clubhouse, one that would cater to the needs of members. Finally, Dr Tay, in his usual amiable style, gave his address. He assured everyone who had attended the challenge to an English pub, saying it had a very cosy and friendly atmosphere. He noted that the Guild had seen remarkable growth in membership over the last five years and thanked the executive committee for their dedication. Stressing the importance of a strong alumni as an institution like the Poly, Dr Tay encouraged the Guild to do more in helping needy students and giving support to their alma mater.

**CONTINUE ON
PAGE 8**



Dr Tay Eng Soon arriving at Neptune Theatre, accompanied by Principal Khoo Kay Chai and SPGG President Jeffrey Lee, 1990.

1990 Dinner souvenir booklet.



The happy crowd at the Neptune Theatre.

Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew signing the guest book at the 1991 Dinner-and-Dance.



2. The 1991 Dinner-and-Dance: first fund-raiser

Twenty years after gracing the Guild's inaugural dinner in 1972, Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew again accepted the Ex-co's invitation to be a significant part of the 1991 dinner-and-dance. That event was really the first big fund-raising dinner with several luminaries – Senior Minister Lee and Mrs Lee, and Singapore's first international entertainer Anita Sarawak. No other dinner since then has been its equal,

thanks to the Ex-co and the organising chair, Lee Kum Swee. Held on 26 October 1991 at the Mandarin Hotel, it was to celebrate the Guild's 20th anniversary, concurrently raise funds for the new clubhouse and to unveil the winning architectural design for the new clubhouse, by alumnus Ronnie Ng Swee Huat of P & T Architects.

Earlier in the day, Anita Sarawak and her band, The American Dream Band, fresh from their flight from Las Vegas, appeared at the Clubhouse to “re-open”

S M Lee onstage after unveiling the wall of 250 bricks.



Anita Sarawak.



Senior Minister Lee receiving the \$100,000 cheque on behalf of SPGG, from SP Students' Union President Nigel Khoo Kay Seng.



Anita Sarawak showing off her bomber jacket at the press conference.

the lounge. SP Board Chairman Professor George Fong and Mrs Fong were there to welcome her. She unveiled a plaque and sang a reassuring song “Stand By Me”. A press conference was also held at which Ms Sarawak donated her Caesar’s Palace bomber jacket to raise funds for the clubhouse.

That night, the Singapore’s number one entertainer again teased and warbled with her dulcet voice and glittering hot pants and boots. She was on her feet for one and a half solid

hours closing her brilliant performance with a national song “Stand up for Singapore” ostensibly to please Senior Minister. Word got around that days before she and her band touched down in Singapore, the Guild couriered the tape of the song to Anita’s band, to help them re-arrange the musical score.

The second big donation was a collection of \$100,000 from the students and staff of SP. The president of the SP Students’ Union, Nigel Khoo Kay Seng, handed the cheque to Senior Minister.

3. The 1993 dinner-and-dance: second fund-raiser

The 1993 dinner-and-dance was also full of glitter and glamour with a talent and beauty contest thrown in for good measure. The guest-of-honour was

Brigadier General (Ret) George Yeo, the Minister for Information and the Arts and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs. Students from the polytechnics and local universities vied for the Ms Tertiary Charisma and Mr Tertiary Manhunt 1993 titles.



Winner Robbie Lee from NUS; first runner-up Chew Yee Lay, SP; second runner-up Jackie Low, NUS.



Paired contestants for the Ms Tertiary Charisma and Mr Tertiary Manhunt 1993.



Minister George Yeo, centre, led by Guild President Jeffrey Lee. Behind them are Guild Patron Dr Tay and Mrs Tay.

4. SP 40th anniversary dinner-and-dance 1994

The year 1994 was a very significant year for SP, being the alma mater's 40th anniversary. Both SP and the Guild jointly organised a golf tournament and a dinner. Held on 15 October, the photography for the tables and filling-up the orders for the photographs were taken care of by the Guild. They also managed the registration of guests and the sale of SP's new anniversary book "First and Foremost". In return for such help, the Guild was allowed to market their memberships and Jeffrey Lee gave a persuasive ten-minute presentation. The Guild's help was also sought to sell dinner tables at \$600 each.



Guild members supporting the SP 40th Anniversary dinner-and-dance.



Cutting the anniversary cake are from left, Hoe Lye Soon, Lim Yong Wah, Low Wong Fook and Jeffrey Lee.

5. SPGG's 25th anniversary dinner, 1996

Organised by Ex-co member Hoe Lye Soon, the 25th anniversary dinner of the Guild on 19 September 1996 at the Mandarin Hotel was a night of reminiscences of the Guild's early history: a cake was cut and shared. To commemorate the anniversary, a limited edition crystal ship was sold at \$18 each.

The event was hosted by veteran impresario and comedian Victor Khoo whose puppet Charlie brought on pure fun and laughter. His genius at reading the crowd and spewing forth deprecating jokes like how Singaporeans spent a typical work week gossiping on Mondays to 4-digit lottery on Saturdays and atonement for sins on Sundays brought the house down. He also devised a simple betting game to raise funds for the Building Fund: guess the four numbers that he had written down much earlier on, with a minimum of \$2 a guess. A long line formed and a sum of \$516 was raised, rewarding the lucky guesser with a free return ticket to Jakarta.

The souvenir magazine produced by Koh & Cheng agency managed to rake in some \$70,000. The net profit from the 25th anniversary dinner – a sum of \$34,458.15 – was salted away for the new Guild house development fund.

6. Joint SP-SPGG dinner-and-dance 1999

With the clubhouse well on its way to being a castle on the ground, both the Ex-co and the SP Management were in a celebratory mood. They organised a joint SP-SPGG annual dinner on 8 October 1999 in support of the SP Endowment Fund. For the Guild, it was a great opportunity to sell membership. Both sides worked hard to sell the \$50 tickets and the final count of diners reached 900!

The organising chair was Dr Lim Boh Soon who would soon be elected as the 21st Ex-co president. Together with Ex-co Member Chai Wee Thong, he saw to details like the VIP table having white lace over a red table cloth, and for the three tables that paid double (\$1,000), a gold cloth over the white.

There were 90 tables at the Mandarin Hotel at a special discounted rate of \$300 per table – which allowed for some profit for the clubhouse development. The master of ceremonies, television host Darryl David kindly agreed to accept an honorarium of \$1,500. Even Sebastian Sim, an alumnus and artiste from the Television Corporation of Singapore sang for free. The spruced-up students from the SP Ambassadorial Relations Corps rendered a professional ushering service. SP's Mr Tan Chin Chye, from the Student and Alumni Affairs Department helped to source for lucky draw prizes.

In his speech as guest-of-honour, Patron and Senior Minister of Education Peter Chen, referred to the many alumni guests as “Yin Shui Si Yuan”, meaning, “those who drink of the water, never forget the source.” The new SPGG clubhouse, located virtually in the SP grounds, was a symbol of the close relationship between SP and her alumni. With SP's unstinting support for the Guild's clubhouse, “the source of the water continues to flow.”

He exhorted alumni to go upstream to the source and to contribute to the continued development of the institute with their talents and experiences



through the alumni network and activities organised by SP. Alternatively, they could join the SPGG membership or leadership.

In his speech, President Jeffrey Lee gave details of the source of funding for the new clubhouse: "At a cost of \$9 million, this new clubhouse with sports facilities will be ready for our occupation in October 2000, just in time for our 21st AGM. With a lot of support from SP (\$2.5 million), Keppel Tat Lee Finance (up to \$5 million) and our own cash reserves at SPGG (\$3 million), we have commenced construction."

Noting that the Guild would be the only society with an in-house bowling centre, he pledged to support SP in a bigger way once SPGG was self-sufficient and financially stable. He ended: "A special vote of thanks to our Patron must be given as he has been instrumental in helping and guiding us up to this stage of work; and to other special people, Mr Lim Yong Wah and Mr Low Wong Fook, for their constant and continuing support of SPGG."

The dinner netted a sum of \$14,941 towards the development of the new clubhouse and also collared some diners to buy membership.



Television host Daryl David enlivening the programme at the joint SP-SPGG dinner, 8 October, 1999.

Mr Peter Chen (left) sitting beside Jeffrey Lee; on the right is Principal Low.



Heady Dinner-and-Dances @ the new Clubhouse

Every festival was a reason to celebrate together. New Year's eve was a popular staple when bubbly champagne was served unreservedly. Annual dinner-and-dances revolved around themes to maintain members' engagement and participation. There were also other fun parties...

The Guild certainly does not disappoint in their entertainment offerings.

*Local celebrity
Eileen Wee
revving up the
New Year's
eve party
2003, themed
"Swinging 70s!"*



*Countdown to 2005: Thai
Extravaganza Night, New Year's eve.*



*Super Heroes
vs Villains;
Year-end
Party, 2013.*



*Aloha Year-end
Party, 2015*



*Oscar Nite cum Countdown
New Year's eve party, 2011*

Chapter Eight

SPGG @ New Millennium Clubhouse (2001 - 2007)





2001: The Executive Committee exulted over their achievement of building their own full-facility Guild house. It had been 30 years since the Guild was registered and it had taken a full ten years from 1990 when they were allowed to lease land from their alma mater to get their gleaming clubhouse. It was now possible to dream big and set new directions. It was also possible to make unwise decisions.

President Dr Tony Tan and Mrs Tan being treated to a red carpet welcome at the grand opening of the new clubhouse on 8 May, 2001.

The Grand Opening

Preparations for the opening started in earnest in January 2001 and by 8 May, the Guild was officially opened. The Ex-co created a 'big splash' with the guest-of-honour Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence. The Guild's Patron, Dr Peter Chen, Senior Minister for Education, Trade & Industry, accompanied him.

The Ballroom was too small and an innovative solution was found: the new swimming pool was emptied to seat the guests and house a temporary stage. Guests parked their cars at the SP campus and were bussed in and welcomed by huge dancing balloons. In keeping with the Guild's address at 1010 Dover Road, a total of 1010

colourful balloons were released when the commemorative plaque was unveiled, to the auspicious din of pyrotechnics.

A multi-media video on the Guild's history was shown and commemorative compact disks were given to guests. Radio deejays John Klass and Jamie Yeo spun the music and Channel News Asia's Babes was mistress of ceremony. The SP Chinese Orchestra played before dinner, and the SP String Ensemble during dinner. Members who booked four places and paid \$400 were given an extra place for free, a bottle of wine, and preferential seating with guests on the pool floor. Others celebrated under marquees in the corridors and those in seminar rooms watched the stage proceedings on real-time projectors.



The new swimming pool was emptied of water and dinner was served!



*Comperes from Mediacorp –
John Klass and Jamie Yeo.*



The president of the Guild, Dr Lim Boh Soon delivered his speech announcing the good news that Singapore Management University (SMU) had agreed to allow Polytechnic students to apply for a place even before their final year results were known. He said, "We are hopeful that this change by SMU will herald other similarly enlightened changes that will open up new avenues for Poly graduates to pursue degree courses locally."

Everything went on like clockwork. The local media came in full force: the

Straits Times, Lianhe Zaobao, Lianhe Wanbao, MediaCorp News, Radio Corporation of Singapore, The New Paper and Berita Harian. The eventual cost of \$147,000 was well worth it. SP BOG Chair, Tan Kay Yong wrote a letter to Dr Lim Boh Soon to say how impressed and proud he was to be associated with SP and the Guild: "The New Millennium Clubhouse shines as a solid testimony to the determination of our alumni in forging a distinctive identity. It also demonstrates their belief in what the Singapore Polytechnic stands for."

Poly students welcome SMU's move

POLYTECHNIC students welcomed the decision by the Singapore Management University (SMU) to allow them to apply for a place before their final-year results are known.

The decision, reported in *The Straits Times* yesterday, would greatly shorten the waiting time of polytechnic graduates to pursue a degree course in SMU.

The president of Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild, Dr Lim Boh Soon, applauded the decision during the official opening of its clubhouse.

He said: "We are hopeful that this change by SMU will herald other similar enlightened changes that will open up new avenues for polytechnic graduates to pursue degree courses locally."

"I also look forward to the day when we will see the first President's Scholar coming from a polytechnic, and poly graduates receiving government scholarships for higher studies."

With SMU's move, polytechnic students in their last year of study can apply for a place even before they

sit for their final exams.

These exams took place late last month.

If they secure a provisional place, they will have to submit their final-exam results at the end of this month to confirm the place.

They can then start their university studies in mid-August, three months after graduating.

Polytechnic graduates hoping to clinch a place at the National University of Singapore and the Nanyang Technological University have to wait a year to do so.

Also at yesterday's open-

ing of the new clubhouse was the Deputy Prime Minister Tony Tan.

He spoke about the important role of polytechnics since the Singapore Polytechnic was officially opened in 1959.

"All new inventions and innovations require scientific and technological know-how to translate them from the conceptualisation stage to the marketplace."

"By having many of our young people trained in these disciplines, we ensure that Singapore will always

remain an attractive location for high-value added activities."

Student enrolment in the polytechnics grew from 21,000 in 1983 to 75,000 in 1999, increasing the rate of participation in polytechnics from 1.3 per cent in 1985 to nearly 40 per cent of the Primary 1 cohort today.

He also called on polytechnic graduates to step forward and serve in alumni associations.

Dr Tan later opened the new clubhouse. Built at a cost of \$10 million, it was

designed and paid for by graduates of the polytechnic. The club has state-of-the-art facilities, including a resort-style swimming pool, tennis courts and a gym.

Located at 1010, Dover Road, the clubhouse has been aptly named *Connection 1010* since it offers high-speed electronic access and wireless communication facilities.

It also has a business offices service centre to help graduates get a foot up in their businesses.



Announced at the clubhouse Opening: SMU would accept applications from Polytechnic students before their final year results were released.

Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission.

Dancing balloons towering above diners in the pool.

Big Dreams

It was at the Grand Opening that big dreams for the Guild were revealed. Dr Lim Boh Soon gave an inkling of the new directions to be taken by the Guild. First, the Guild intended to be a “significant player” in providing life-long education opportunities for graduates. In fact, it was already collaborating with Middlesex University, United Kingdom, to launch a Master of Science degree in Business IT. Second, the Guild would set up an Innovation and Entrepreneur Centre that would be an incubator of winning business ideas and a nursery for innovations. Third, it would match seasoned business leaders with young alumni to work on business start-ups.

1. Providing Lifelong Education

Right from the time of its inception in 1954, the mandate of Polytechnic education had always been to provide a ready and technically trained workforce for Singapore's industries, not to be confused with the training for those deemed more suitable for the university. However, that did not stop many Polytechnic alumni from dreaming of attaining a degree.



Further education for Polytechnic graduates was hotly debated in the media from the 1970s to the 1990s. By the start of 2000, many overseas universities had launched degree courses in Singapore. Now with a spacious clubhouse in their hands, the Ex-co looked into partnering with a reputable overseas university to offer Master's degrees. It certainly helped that the new Guild house was just next-door to Singapore Polytechnic which had well-equipped laboratories and classrooms, and qualified staff to assist the overseas lecturers. The 21st Ex-co approached the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST), University of Middlesex, and later, Strathclyde University, for collaboration.



Dr Damian Tan, the top student in the first cohort of the Middlesex University Master's in Business IT via distance learning, conducted by the Guild.

administration staff from Middlesex started flying to Singapore, led by Vice Chancellor Professor John Driscoll. Marketing presentations were rolled out at a budget of \$30,000.

An application was made to the Ministry of Education's Private Schools Section in August 2000. The approval came in October and the institutional review was held in November. The course was named the Middlesex University Master's in Business IT via distance learning. It was the first Internet course in Singapore for Business IT. The course would equip students to plan, design and manage information systems through modules like Systems Analysis and Design, Object-oriented Software Development, e-Commerce, Database systems, and Information System Management & Strategy.

1. Partnering Middlesex University

Middlesex University was then the sixth largest in the United Kingdom with a reputation of having a global outlook. In September 2000, Patrick Hogan, the Guild's General Manager, met with Professor George Chadwick of Middlesex University, London, Principal Low and Mr Song Nay Hay and Mr Timothy Chan, both from SP's Department of Info-Communications Technology. Mr Low expressed hopes that a steering committee be formed to include SP's academic staff, that the programme take in some SP staff for upgrading courses and other SP staff be permitted to tutor the students. Delegations of faculty and

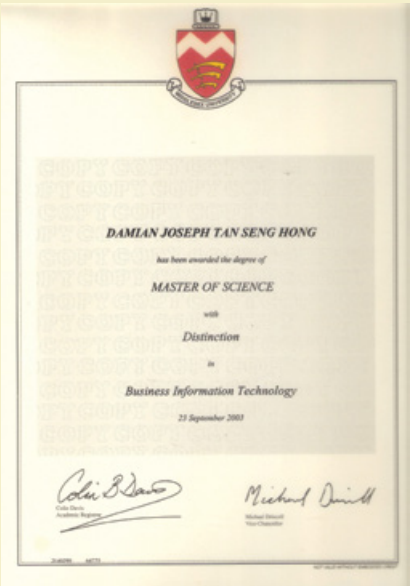
SPGG became the first higher education guild to offer a Master's degree programme to its members, which was recognised by the British Computer Society. The first cohort of 18 students commenced in October 2001. Each of them received lessons on CD ROM after which assignments were sent to them via the Internet. Singapore Polytechnic lecturers facilitated follow-up weekly tutorials at the Guild and students had access to the Polytechnic's library and the National University of Singapore's library. The course fee was \$21,000 but the first intake was given a sizeable discount reducing the fee to \$19,500, while SPGG members paid only \$17,500.

Damian Tan: Top Graduand of SPGG's Masters programme

ONE OF THE Guild members who joined the course was Mr Damian Tan, an SP Diploma graduate. Holding down a full-time job as project director at Hewlett Packard, the long-distance two-year course was ideal for him. He was also looking for a technical Master's course with a thesis requirement as he was planning to continue with a doctorate. He went on to become the top student of the course, scoring eight distinctions out of nine, and graduated with an MSc in Business IT with Distinction, which was equivalent to a First Class Honours. Although he was offered a scholarship by Middlesex to pursue a PhD education in the United Kingdom, he chose another online Doctor of Business Administration course from a California university that would put him in good stead as an entrepreneur.

Today, Dr Damian Tan, now serving in the Ex-co, fondly

remembers: "It was like studying in a country club and as a member of SPGG it was so convenient to have a swim, a shower, and then go right into discussions with fellow students over a beer. Academic resources were just next-door, so were our lecturers from the Poly who facilitated our classes on behalf of the University. We were part of the 500 Internet distance-learning Middlesex cohort in several countries and it was enjoyable having online discussions and being able to gauge the quality of discussions going on across the world." Middlesex was an ideal programme because it made use of the Internet so we could study anywhere, anytime, rather than attend evening classes every weeknight, which was the old fashioned way. So Middlesex was a trendsetter back then. It suited the busy executive who needed the time flexibility."



While Damian Tan (see box), handled the course and did very well, quite a few did not, at great cost to the Guild. Without realising the ramifications, the Guild had promised all students that they could repeat failed modules. This soon became one of the main reasons that the course could not continue for long. An unwise and unnecessary purchase of expensive laptops also drained any profit from running the course. In a meeting in September 2001, the Middlesex team voiced their expectation that they would expect intakes to climb steadily, like 30 in January 2003, to 50 in September 2003. If these figures were not met, they would terminate the programme. For the course to break even, there had to be 25 students per intake.

There were other unforeseen costs like the fee of \$750 for a project supervisor to oversee the quality of each student for their final year projects. For a cohort of 25 students, the bill ran up to \$18,750. This was not budgeted for in the course fees. Providing a wireless service also

proved excessive. The Ex-co conceded that student growth could never reach Middlesex's target of 80 per year as the course appealed to a unique group, and many competitors offered similar courses. Marketing was a luxury too: \$40,000 was spent in marketing for the fifth intake in early 2003, and only 8 students registered. By the end of 2003, the Ex-co made the decision to discontinue the course and the partnership with Middlesex, but course operations tapered off well into 2008 after the Guild fulfilled all its commitments to students.

The budget for the Financial Year 2005-2006 stated a deficit of nearly \$20,000. At the 25th annual general meeting on 28 October 2005, Jeffrey Lee the strategic advisor estimated the losses arising from the Middlesex course to be around \$200,000, excluding the installation of wireless infrastructure, computer equipment and accessories. As late as March 2006, there were still seven active students who would graduate only in January 2008.

The Ex-co conceded that student growth could never reach Middlesex's target of 80 per year as the course appealed to a unique group, and many competitors offered similar courses.

2. Collaborating with University of Strathclyde

That is not to say that the Guild's foray into further education abruptly stopped. In 2003, the Ex-co initiated meetings with the University of Strathclyde's Professor Susan Shaw and SP's Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (SP EEE). SP graduates would be given first year exemption for entry into the Strathclyde degree programme. The Guild and their partner SP EEE expressed its interest in collaborating with Strathclyde to run business management programmes, which they surmised would not need laboratories. The Strathclyde project was subsequently hived to the purview of the SPGG Holdings (Business Arm).

SP EEE was not allowed to offer degree courses by the Ministry of Education but would still help in negotiations and work on the details. The Guild had to lead in the collaboration with Strathclyde. A group comprising Ex-co members Jeffrey Lee and Bobby Chong, and an SP EEE staff, Mr Battul flew off to Strathclyde to gauge Strathclyde's facilities and assess whether the laboratory courses could be conducted in SP. The four-day trip cost \$14,000. The Ex-co expressed the hope that mistakes made with the Middlesex project would not be repeated.

At the Ex-co meeting in November 2005, Jeffrey reported that marketing

would commence within a few weeks. With exemptions, an SP graduate would be able to get a degree in two and a half years, that is, join the course in its third year programme and complete 80 per cent in SP and the rest at Strathclyde. However, after a thorough feasibility study and in view of the costs of launching a new course, the Ex-co decided to terminate the project.

3. Working with SOTA (Singapore Optical Trade Association)

After the Middlesex and Strathclyde experiences, new further education collaboration was initiated between SPGG and SOTA (Singapore Optical Trade Association). Through Dr Aaron Loh, the chair of the Ex-co's membership committee, who was also the president of SOTA, the Guild started facilitating the one-month course for the Certificate in Ophthalmic Performance and Dispensing under the government's Industrial Capability Upgrading Programme (ICAP). Its first run on 15 September 2003 had a hundred attendees. While the Guild provided the venue and food, the Singapore Polytechnic released lecturers to teach the course. After several runs, this course also ran into financial problems, as SOTA could not pay its bills. Legal efforts were made by both the Guild and SP to recover its monies but Dr Aaron Loh had left Singapore with no forwarding address.

2. Setting up the SPInnovation Centre

The Guild's new rallying cry was "Be Connected, Get Connected, Stay Connected". The gleaming new clubhouse became the venue for a new initiative – to support members and other alumni to bring their innovative dreams to potential investors. Very soon a new SPInnovation Centre was launched to facilitate the following: educational courses to develop innovation and entrepreneurship, mentoring services to help good ideas and concepts move towards commercial viability, business consulting from start-up to re-engineering, link-ups with angel investors, and developing venture capital funds. The Guild would provide start-up offices at lower cost for members to support them in their quest to be entrepreneurs. Member tenants would be allowed to lease for one year only, to give others a chance.

The Centre kicked off with an inaugural launch on 10 July 2001 where Mr Tan Kay Yong, SP Board Chairman and Managing Director of Glaxo Wellcome Manufacturing PL, gave the keynote address. Three speakers from industry gave talks: "Innovation & Entrepreneurship: My Experience" by Mr Goh Boon Chye, Managing Director of KS Technology; "Innovation & y-Entrepreneurship: The Long View" by Mr Koh How Eng, Director, National



Launch of the SPInnovation Centre by Patron Dr Peter Chen, centre, flanked by SP Board Chair Mr Tan Kay Yong (left), Dr Lim Boh Soon and Principal Low Wong Fook (extreme right).

Science and Technology Board; and "Innovation & Entrepreneurship: The SPInnovation Way" by Mr Peter Kwok. A memorandum of understanding was signed with Angel Innovation Corporation.

To develop the centre, a memorandum of understanding between SPGG and SP was signed on 23 April 2002 to form SPInnovate Private Limited. Records show that at its own end, the Ex-co had bought over an existing firm for \$30,000 as early as July 2001 as a platform to run the Centre. It then engaged a business development manager to operate it. But somehow this project did not work out.

The Spinovation Centre and all the above efforts in educational programmes dovetailed neatly into the Guild's "Business Arm".

3. SPGG Holdings Private Limited — for New Start-ups

In August 2001, the Ex-co applied to the Registrar of Societies to register SPGG Holdings Private Limited, as an umbrella for new start-ups and any business that the Guild would own. It was incorporated on 25 November 2002

and added into the Guild's Constitution. The shares would be owned by the Guild and registered in the name of the Guild President's office. The paid-up capital was \$30,000. Over the next few years, SPGG Holdings Private Limited



Ex-co member Seah Lam Kok presenting a prize to a winner at a Members' Night. Mr Seah was one of the few members who indicated interest to start an SPGG Investee company.

absorbed SPinnovate Private Limited, a collaboration between SP and the SPGG. The vision for the holdings entity was to have an Education Arm and a Business Arm. The aim of the “Business Arm” was to help members spin off businesses with the Guild as a minority partner.

There was also the recognition that the Guild should not depend only on membership recruitment and monthly subscription fees for its income. Collaborating with members in business start-ups could be another source of significant income. But somehow, experienced business-savvy members did not take the bait.

The Ex-co re-packaged it and presented a new action plan at the extraordinary general meeting of 20 February 2004. The SPGG Holdings might form an SPGG Company with any other company owned by a member and hold at least a 50 per cent share. On another level, members were encouraged to present their business ideas or their current business, by and by, and set up “investee companies”, with the Guild having the option of taking a ten to 20 per cent stake. Directors of each investee company would comprise members of past and current executive committees and a few independent directors.

However little action followed. Then at the Ex-co meeting of June 2006, it was announced that six Ex-co members – Dr Lim Boh Soon, Seah Lam Kok,

... members were encouraged to present their business ideas or their current business, by and by, and set up “investee companies”, with the Guild having the option of taking a ten to 20 per cent stake.

Bobby Chong, Jimmy Lim, Dr Aaron Loh and Jeffrey Lee – had registered a new company, MRE Holdings in partnership with SPGG Holdings and down the line, SPGG Academy. They planned to invest \$30,000, constituting a 60 per cent equity stake while SPGG Holdings would hold the other 40 per cent for free. The objective was to allow the Guild to benefit from the equity share and to create a multiplier effect to encourage Ordinary members to start other Investee companies. Should it fail, the Guild would not lose anything. Its only outlay would be providing rooms and staff. An agreement between the founding investors from the Ex-co and SPGG Holdings would be drafted.

Not much happened after that and the holdings company was eventually de-registered in 2012.

Landlord Guild

The Guild also had other big plans. It ushered in the first day of January 2001 by announcing that it would start leasing out ten small offices at its new Business Centre to assist small companies and start-ups in the national spirit to encourage start-up companies. They would get a business address, telephones and the services of a receptionist to respond to incoming calls for a small fee.

After mulling it over, the Ex-co leased the Warren Golf and Country Club's former premises at Clementi Road from the main lessee Transview Golf. Guild members would be able to play golf at a discount and use the swimming pool. As it was a matter of time that the authorities would find another use for the land, the sub-lease had to be renewed from year to year. Dubbed the SPGG-Clementi clubhouse, renovations were carried out to carve out more office rooms for rental.

Initially, the Guild paid Transview \$35,000 a month but even if all 19 rooms were successfully tenanted, the Guild would still lose \$14,000 per month. Although operating the pub was part of the package, Transview instead allowed another tenant, the Tiong Bahru Football Club to run the jackpot



machines. The Guild appealed to the boss of Transview Holdings and the monthly rental went down to a more manageable \$12,000 a month.

It was also difficult to get enough tenants to fill up all office rental rooms, so rental charges went down from \$1,000 to between \$500 and \$700. With more aggressive marketing, a fresh coat of



paint and the Ministry of Environment's inspection and approval on 18 July 2002, tenants like the Institute of Electrical Engineers, the British Alumni, Swimfast Aquatic and the Singapore Optical Trade Association's secretariat office moved in. Despite 16 rooms out of 19 being rented out in January 2003 and Transview bearing the cost of utilities, the venture was still not profitable.

To save costs the Ex-co finally ended its lease of the Clementi Clubhouse at the Transview Golf and Country Club in Dover Road. It began in September 2001 and ended its run at the end of March 2003. Tenants were persuaded to move across Dover Road to the new offices in the Guild house. The video games room and the mahjong room in the main Dover Road clubhouse were renovated to make way for more business and incubation offices. The Ex-co agreed to waive the first one month's rental and to review rentals on a case-by-case basis. For example, the British Alumni requested for a rental waiver of \$300 for six months due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome episode and for their members and immediate families to use the swimming pool on Sundays. The Ex-co assented.

On and off, minor problems surfaced with the tenants but the business offices have survived in the Dover clubhouse, which now has a total of 27 rooms. Many of the tenants are associations, societies and small businesses. For a reasonable rental, they get clean air-conditioned office rooms not far from the central business district, parking, a pantry and access to the in-house food and beverage venues. Those tenants who had bought Guild membership – and there are many – are welcome to use all facilities.

Facing Realities: Paying Property Taxes

Owning a new clubhouse meant that the Guild now would have to pay property taxes. IRAS, the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore started its assessment from the time the clubhouse was ready for occupation in October 2000. The annual taxes were a whopping sum of around \$139,000 – based on the assumption that the clubhouse cost \$12 million to build and the annual value being \$1,194,000. The Ex-co baulked and appealed. IRAS pointed out that the Guild had the choice of getting an independent valuation, but of course it would incur costs.

Meetings with IRAS officers started in June 2002 and IRAS offered a reduction of annual value to \$1,000,000, thereby reducing the tax to \$163,545 for the period Oct 2000 to December 2001. The Ex-co met up with their Member of Parliament, consulted their legal advisor

and engaged Colliers International – at a fee of \$6,000 – who gave an estimate of \$700,000 as annual value. On behalf of the Guild, Colliers submitted to the Valuation Review Board, a final report estimating an annual value of \$700,000, in September 2002.

The Chief Assessor decreased the value of the SPGG building to \$8,141,388 from the original \$12 million.

Appeals did not work and finally, the Ex-co offered IRAS the annual value of \$900,000 instead. IRAS agreed and the Guild withdrew its appeal to the Valuation Review Board in March 2003. There was a saving of \$50,000, which IRAS wanted to apply and offset the 2003 tax. But the Guild requested the refund of the \$50,000 and to re-compute the 2003 tax to be paid via GIRO. The matter was finally resolved.

A Matter of Membership Identity

The Guild was ready to launch its first ever membership cum credit card. It entered into an agreement with the United Overseas Bank (UOB) to provide the Visa credit card to be operational for all food and beverage outlets and facilities from 1 March 2001. Members still could opt for the private label UOB card without credit facilities.

With the installation of a new Point-Of-Sale (POS) system in 2005, the Guild took the opportunity to change its membership card. The POS system

was compatible with the membership database and accounting programmes, and allowed tracking of spending patterns of members at the food and beverage outlets. Thus it was just neat to dovetail the new membership swipe card that had a magnetic strip to capture members' membership numbers and their patronage. Ex-co member Koh Wee Keng conducted surveys before deciding on the new card design. Members' faces were included. The Guild is still using this design today.



SPGG-UOB Visa membership card.



Current membership card.

Busy Breezy Club Happenings

1. Trade missions to Batam

Hailing from the corporate banking world, President Dr Lim Boh Soon was especially interested in trade missions. Regular networking was organised with BIDA (Batam Industrial Development Authority) and IBAS (Indonesian Business Association, Singapore). The first trade mission on 27 March 2002 saw 47 Guild members and 25 IBAS participants board the ferry at our World Trade Centre to Batam. It was a breeze through the VIP customs clearance and a coach ride to Novotel Hotel to attend panel discussions on investment opportunities, labour issues and regulations, and prospects in the oil and gas supporting industry. This was followed by two site tours to an oil and gas plant and a shipbuilding company.

Another session, in May 2002, had a talk by Mr Eddy Hariadi, Deputy Chief of Mission from the Indonesian embassy: "Regional Autonomy – what it means to business". The 5th IBAS-SPGG Joint Networking Series featured a presentation by Dr Fachrurrozie Sjarkowi, head of the business and investment coordinating body, of the provincial government of South Sumatra. He spoke on investment opportunities before engaging in a dialogue on tax reduction and security.

2. The inter-Poly connection

Being the only alumni association with a bowling alley, the Guild organised the first Joint Alumni Bowling Galore cum Dinner on 8 April 2001 at its Cosmic Bowling Centre. The friendly match attracted around 500 bowlers from the Ngee Ann Alumni, Temasek Polytechnic Graduates' Association and Nanyang Polytechnic Graduates' Association. More matches followed over the next couple of years and the Institute of Technical Education Alumni Association soon joined in. By 2003, Ottawa University Alumni and British Alumni started bowling with the group.



Bowling ra-ra among alumni from the polytechnics and ITE.

3. Talks and professional development

With the new clubhouse, professional and business talks took on a shine. The highlight was the talk on “Focus on IT” on 7 June, 2002 by Prof Norman Revell of Middlesex University. Many speakers were from the alumni pool. In January 2005, Dr Finian Tan gave a seminar “Economic Outlook and Business Opportunities for ’05 – Global & Regional Perspectives”. Dr Finian Tan

was the first SP alumnus to graduate from Cambridge University.

Talks in 2003 included “Investment Planning in a Hostile Economy” by IPP Capital Management PL and “Understanding ISO 9001 by Life member, Lim Meng Tong and Mr Chua Teong Joo of Vision Management & Training Consultants. There were also talks that engaged the audience’s personal interests, like astro-palmistry and beauty.



Dr Finian Tan (centre).



A talk on Astro-Palmistry, 2004.



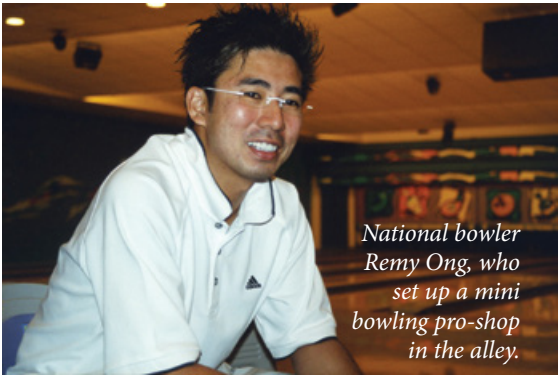
Workshop on “Look Good, Feel Good” by General Manager Millicent Loo on 17 January, 2004.



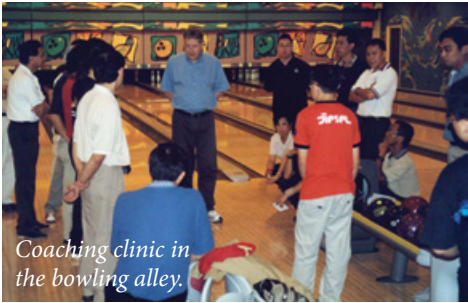
Lancome make-up workshop, 4 March 2006.

4. Sports

Not having a golf course has never deterred the Guild from organising competitions and friendly matches. To celebrate the Guild's 30th anniversary in April 2001, the golf interest group took a ferry from Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal to play at Seban Cove Johor. Golf, soccer and bowling have each their faithful enthusiasts. Soccer, usually played in SP's soccer field, has been held annually.



National bowler Remy Ong, who set up a mini bowling pro-shop in the alley.



Coaching clinic in the bowling alley.



Eye-catching bowling balls for the little people..



Tennis Camp, December 2005



Soccer Team 2003.



Time to nail the bull's eye, 2005.

5. Children of the Guild

Children of members and their little friends are honoured guests. Their new playground near the swimming pool had made-in-Sweden equipment. Many activities were organised for them, like the Easter Treasure Hunt and Egg painting in both 2001 and 2003.

Children's Day Carnival, 29 September, 2003.



Members' children learned to make their own lanterns at the Lantern Festival, September, 2003.



Finger-licking chocolate-making session, 2004.



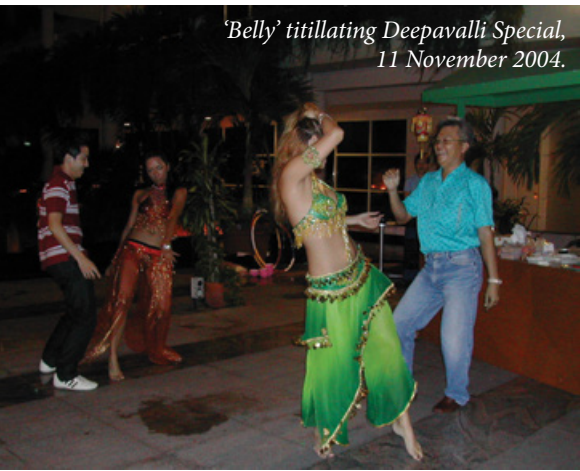
Members' children restlessly waiting for their painted Easter eggs to be selected as winners, April 2003.

6. Charity, culture, and community

Twice, the Guild adopted a charity for a few years. The St Joseph's Home & Hospice was its first, selected in 2003. Guild members contributed Christmas gifts to the aged and the sick residing there. In later years, the Guild decided to help the Boys' Brigade for their Sharity Gift Box every Christmas. Members were encouraged to donate gifts based on the wish lists of the needy.



It's all in the family: Dancing the "joget" at Kampung Nite 2003. The family features prominently in the Guild ethos. Most activities are child-friendly.



Fishing for their dinner, Kukup trip, March, 2006.



A treat at the Kampung Nite: a rare 'kompong' performance.

*Registering at the Batam
Harris Resort, 2004.*



Special items on sale at Family Day, 2004.



*Christmas Light-
up, 2004.*



*Short trips out of the
clubhouse and often away
from Singapore, are a
perennial favourite. "An
ostrich is still a harmless
bird" – trip to
Pengerang, 2001.*



*Waddling on a Singapore
Duck Tour, 2004.*

Continued Cooperation with the Alma Mater

1. Marketing consumer items

Being the largest alumni club of Singapore's first polytechnic, the Guild was happy to support SP's 50th Anniversary celebrations in 2004. One of the themes was to raise \$2 million for various charitable organisations and SPGG's collaboration was sought. One such collaboration with SP was the marketing of consumer items that found its beginnings in the Polytechnic's Technology Centre and the School of Chemical and Life Sciences students' projects in food and perfume formulations.

These items were belt buckles, tie pins and pendants crafted from innovative metal alloys; food items like chocolates, perfumes and noodles; engraved wood mementoes and tee shirts designed by Business students. As marketing agent, the Guild would take

home a percentage of the projected \$30,000 profit. After a few months of deliberation and a budget analysis, the Guild declined, voicing concerns over the significant upfront payment for some of the items that would affect its cash flow; the burden of unsold items and storage; and the costs of sustained advertising, promotions and getting new sales staff. In November 2003, the General Manager reported to the Ex-co that she had written to SP's 50th Anniversary chairperson to decline the collaboration but offered the Guild's cooperation and assistance. The Guild went on to display the collectibles and souvenirs at its lobby and take orders from its members and visitors.



Patron Chan Soo Sen viewing the display of mementoes that the Guild was helping SP to sell in commemoration of its 50th Anniversary.



Mr V Maheantharan, chairman of SP's 50th Anniversary commemorative items, approached the Guild to market the items to raise funds for its Endowment Fund. Beside him is Dr Ng Cheng Siong, director of the Chemical and Life Sciences Department. Staff and students produced most of the items.



Lending a presence to the Giant Hongbao Line organised by SP's Student & Alumni Affairs (SAA) are from left, Millicent Loo, Guild's general manager; Roland Tan, director, SAA; Hoe Lye Soon, honorary assistant treasurer; Principal Low Wong Fook; Jeffrey lee, Guild's strategic advisor; Roger Toh, honorary assistant general secretary.

2. Fund raising events

Another SP 50th Anniversary charity event in 2004 supported by the Ex-co was a massive full-day golf tournament in two different golf clubs – Raffles Country Club and the National Service and Reservist Country Club. Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan was the guest-of-honour. Chaired by Mr George Wong, the chairman of another alumni group, the SP Industrial Alumni Association (SPIMA), the tournament netted more than \$100,000 for SP's endowment fund. Yet another project was the Giant Hongbao Line in which corporate sponsors' donations were translated into red packets strung around the perimeter of the campus fencing.



EduFair, 2003.

3. EduFair @ SPGG

In 2003, the SP Alumni Office (SAA) and the Guild jointly organised the EduFair @ SPGG, a one-stop exhibition on university courses offered by local education providers. Profits, from fees charged to exhibition stalls, would be shared at 50-50. There would be seminars, an advertisement in The New Paper, and in-house event marketing. Although the response was not great because the final year students were studying for their examinations and others cited the location of SPGG being tucked away from the train station, there was still a decent profit of \$22,156. Out of the total profit of this, the Guild's share was \$11,078. SP's Alumni Manager Pearly Gan requested the Guild to remit SAA's share to the Giant Hongbao Line fundraising event.

So while money matters faced by the Guild had never been easy, collaboration and cooperation on the other hand had been smooth and well between the alma mater and the Guild, 50 years after the polytechnic's inception and the Guild's 33rd year of existence.

Profile:

Dr Lim Boh Soon: Fourth Guild President (1999 – 2005)

ONE OF THE largest donations to the SPGG Endowment Fund – \$260,000 – is from CSE Global Limited, a public-listed company with global operations in providing industrial systems integration services to various industries. How it came to know about the Endowment Fund was through one of its independent directors, Dr Lim Boh Soon who was the Guild's fourth president.

Boh Soon was one of those identified by then SP principal, Dr Khoo Kay Chai way back in 1986 to revitalise the Guild. Fresh from overseas with first-class honours in BSc and a PhD in Mechanical Engineering, he cut his teeth in the field of IT and then moved on to the venture capital and private equity

sector, holding senior positions such as chief executive officer (CEO) of the Kuwait Finance House in Singapore and the Vietcombank Fund Management Company in Vietnam. He now has a few companies that he co-owns, like Arise Asset Management. He is also an adjunct professor at the Singapore Management University since 2013.

Boh Soon served in different capacities in the Ex-co: honorary committee member in 1986, 1987 and 1996; first vice president in 1991; honorary treasurer in 1992; and honorary assistant general secretary in 1995, 1997 and 1998. In 1999 when the Guild was striving to secure loans to build their clubhouse, Boh Soon took on the post of president to leverage on his banking and finance



Dr Lim Boh Soon, receiving an award on behalf of CSE Global Ltd from His Excellency Paul Madden, the former British High Commissioner to Singapore. The UKTI International Business Award 2008 was for the company's outstanding business achievements in the UK.

background. He helped to prepare and present proposals and business plans on the new clubhouse to the SP Board and potential bank lenders.

He says: “Most importantly, we were able to gain the trust of the bankers and ensured that none of the Ex-co members needed to put down any personal guarantees for the total construction loan of \$6.5



SP's Alumni Homecoming Dinner in 2014: From left, former principal, Low Wong Fook; Dr Lim Boh Soon; former SP Board Chair, Tan Kay Yong; former SP Board Chair, Lim Yong Wah; and current SP Board Chair, Bill Chang.

million. After all, the Ex-co were all volunteers with day jobs. There were many detractors who didn't have much confidence that we, a bunch of rascally Polytechnic graduates, could build a large full-facility clubhouse on our own, second only to the NUS Society clubhouse. But we were very determined to the point of brazen obstinacy.”

As president, Boh Soon converted his Life membership to Ordinary so that he could then contribute monthly subscriptions to the Guild. He asked Ex-co members to sign a pledge of non-interest and non-participation in business with the Guild, and even forbade any one of them to play the jackpot. After stepping down as president in 2005, Boh Soon stayed on as honorary general secretary in 2006, and as second vice president in 2007 to 2009.

A year before the SPGG Endowment Fund was launched in



Boh Soon and his wife, with his daughter (centre) who had just received a scholarship award from Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister of Health (left).

February 2013, he donated \$25,000 to SP's inSPire Fund, a repository for alumni to help SP students in various ways. Dr Lim Boh Soon never hesitates to tell people that he is a Singapore Polytechnic graduate. Today, he is also very happy to tell people that his eldest daughter - also an SP graduate - won a scholarship from the Ministry of Health to study Physiotherapy at the University of Queensland in Australia.

Chapter Nine

The Nuts and Bolts of Keeping Afloat

Setting directions for and managing a full-facility alumni clubhouse require a steep learning curve. The Ex-co had to grapple with survival issues like declining membership, bottom-line of food and beverage outlets, loan repayments, maintenance of facilities and prudent financial management.

*First ever Ministerial Dialogue with
Mr Lim Swee Say, September 2007.*



ORE POLYTECHNIC GRADUATES' GUILD
G Ministerial Dialogue with
Mr. Lim Swee Say
e Minister's Office & Secretary-General of NTUC
: 29 SEPTEMBER 2007, SATURDAY



Inaugural Ministerial Dialogue

The highlight of the early years at the Dover Road clubhouse must surely be the first SPGG Ministerial Dialogue with Mr Lim Swee Say, the then Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and the Secretary-General of the National Trades Union Congress. It was 29 September 2007, weeks after the National Rally speech by the Prime Minister who had touched on the widening income gap, the aging population and a higher retirement age, tweaking of the Central Provident Fund (CPF) and new public housing initiatives... issues very close to Guild members' hearts.

Mr Lim Swee Say mingling with the Polytechnic community.

The 150-strong audience at the closed dialogue comprised Guild members, SP students and also alumni from the other polytechnics. Anxious about the economy, their questions came full and fast on job opportunities, employment competitiveness, foreign workers, changes in the retirement fund scheme and the social impact of the upcoming Integrated Resorts with its casinos. The Ex-co resolved to continue organizing such dialogues.

While Ministerial dialogues created a buzz and are of immediate interest to members, it is the managing of a full-facility alumni clubhouse that presented the Guild management with lots of issues that require almost immediate attention... and creative solutions.



Types of Membership and Recruitment



All hands on deck: Guild Senior Advisor Dr Khoo Kay Chai, hosting a recruitment dinner on 28 January, 2004.

Inevitably the main issue has always been the recruitment of new members, keeping them, and collecting membership fees. The management had to get creative to come up with all kinds of membership to cater to different groups of people. Other than Ordinary Membership and Life Membership, the Guild introduced Student Membership, Fresh Graduate Scheme, Associate Membership, Term Membership and Corporate Term Membership.

From August 1999 to July 2000, in the excitement of getting a full-facility clubhouse, 124 members were recruited. As soon as the new clubhouse was operational, Patrick Hogan the new general manager moved his membership cocktails from hotels to the spanking new clubhouse ballroom. In December 2000 alone, there were five cocktails in 14 days. The Academic Departments in SP helped by providing their alumni contacts.

Help in recruitment also came from the Directors of SP's International Relations (Anne Chiang) and SP's Student and Alumni Affairs (Roland Tan). In the six months that the clubhouse was ready, from September 2000 till March 2001, a total of 360 new members and 43 SP staff members had signed up. Entrance fee then was \$5,500. The plan was to have a grand lucky draw for a BMW 318iA car when recruitment reached 500. Members who referred other new members were given double tickets for the lucky draw. New members were presented with a Mont Blanc ballpoint pen.

With much more space and facilities than the old hilltop clubhouse, the rallying cry was to aim for a membership of 8,000. Membership

in all categories in June 2008 was only 2719. After aggressive and targeted marketing was put in place by the Ex-co, recruitment improved visibly, especially in the Student and Corporate Term categories. Membership recruitment in the Financial Year 2011-2012 netted 385 new members that included 199 Student members and 35 Corporate Term nominees from the Marketing Institute of Singapore and the Singapore University of Technology and Design. That made the total count to be 4,368. Using more creative marketing channels, the Guild's management staff have found flyer distribution to be the most effective, followed by e-marketing to the contacts from the SP Alumni database, newspaper advertising, and ad hoc means like shuttle bus advertisements and mobile applications. The last count in December 2016 was 3,470 stable members.

1. Ordinary membership

The Guild started out in the early days of 1971 with Ordinary membership. More than other categories of membership the fortunes of the Guild are tied up with the numbers of Ordinary members who are likely to have strong alumni affiliation. When not enough alumni buy into Ordinary membership or when those who joined subsequently defaulted, the Guild should be worried.

In the early 2000s, for various reasons – the economic downturn, disappointment with club facilities, the daunting distance from their homes, and dissatisfaction with the performance of freelance recruiters – some members defaulted in their payments within months of joining and wanted to terminate their



Free-lance marketing personnel were employed to sell memberships at SP's convocation ceremonies.

membership. The total reached 297 in November 2002, owing a worrying sum of around \$253,600. This was a significant drain on the Guild's coffers. Compounding the problem was the partnership with United Overseas Bank (UOB), the Guild's credit card partner. Out of the entrance fees paid in instalments by members, the Guild had to pay for any default under the Private Label credit cards.

The episode of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) broke out in the first week of April 2003 and safety procedures like contact tracing really affected recruitment and marketing activities. In May, there were 30 resignations, while recruitment was less than ten. Fortunately, the SARS episode was soon under control but the bleeding continued. To stem the flow, new tactics like gifts and vouchers for the use of facilities were offered to members. The instalment plan for payment of entrance fees was made

easier. Birthday vouchers of \$30 each could be redeemed at Fission restaurant. From December 2001 to January 2003, the Guild gave out 866 vouchers which meant a payment of around \$25,000 to the restaurant operator.

Two extraordinary general meetings were held in 2004 and members approved a raft of resolutions like, two members for the price of one. When two new members joined together, they each paid half of the entrance fee of \$5,500. This was in tandem with the local universities' low instalment scheme. The entrance fee was further pared down in an extraordinary meeting in February 2006, from \$5,500 to \$2,000, with free vouchers that could be used to pay for food and facilities.

In February 2005, defaulted and suspended members numbered 273, amounting to a loss of \$278,000. Letters of arrears and demand, follow-up phone calls, and suspension of membership commenced. Still, the Ex-co tried to soften the blow for those members who had genuine problems like medical issues, no retirement income and bankruptcy. Their monthly subscriptions and monthly spending levy were waived.

Members who upgraded their membership to a sub-category of Family, only had to pay an extra \$10. When records of Family-category members were belatedly updated in 2005, it was found that 51 members had not been paying the extra \$10



Ordinary and Life members at the 24th Annual General Meeting, 31 October, 2003.

Members voting at their annual general meeting in SP's lecture theatre, 1986.



monthly for their families since 2000 as their records were left out in the process of the transfer from Excel spread sheets to the new information system. The loss amounted to \$30,000. The Ex-co had no choice but to waive the sum and subsequently took action to improve the procedure of updating membership records. Instead of relying on one executive to input membership data every six months, there should be monthly updating and another executive to check for accuracy of the monthly data.

Throughout this period of 2002 to 2005, the high rate of terminations and low take-up rate meant that the Guild was definitely moving into negative territory. Fortunately, takings from jackpot operations and rental of offices helped to mitigate it somewhat. Today's total of Ordinary members is 1539.

2. Life membership

Life membership was added in March 1981 by the 2nd Ex-co at a give-away entrance fee of \$100. After Jeffrey Lee took over as president in 1986, and aspired to upgrade the hilltop clubhouse into a full-facility clubhouse, he turned to Life members to raise quick funds. In 1994, Life membership was sold at \$4,000 with the promise that they would not have to pay monthly subscriptions. In years to come, this promise proved to be a liability. From October 2004 to June 2005, 41 out of 391 terminated were Life members despite not having to pay monthly subscriptions. This downward trend continued through 2005. There were about 480 Life members then. Those Life members who remained agreed to contribute monthly subscriptions of \$10 for three years – to help the Guild's finances. Today the number is 407.



Every year, SP would kindly include a visit to the clubhouse in its Freshmen Orientation Programme. (Photo was taken in 2004.)

3. Student membership

Mindful of nurturing SP students as future members, Guild members attending an extraordinary general meeting in August 2004 voted in a new category, Student membership. The Ex-co wanted the Student Union to regard the clubhouse as a second home. Working with SP's Student Affairs department, the Guild held events like Prom Night, sponsored lucky draw prizes for academic departments' dinner and dances and gave out gifts like teddy bears and fridge magnets. They contributed up to \$100 for any final year student recruited at these events to the Student Needy Fund or the Student Club Fund. The idea was that when the students signed up for membership, they get to help their peers or their own club.

In addition, SPGG also formed student clubs for pool, snooker, bowling, and aikido; and a music band to perform in its entertainment outlet, the Guild House Rock. Some 84 students took up membership, after a lively orientation at the clubhouse, and the launch of the Guild's own student clubs. SP and other secondary school students who joined the Pool club paid a fee of \$30 per month and they had the benefit of subsidised instructors and trainers for various sporting activities.

Another initiative to attract students was the website competition which awarded prizes of \$1500, \$700, and \$500. The Guild got in return, a new website design that was capable of churning out statistics.

In 2006, the Ex-co proposed a First Year SP student en-bloc scheme to



the SP Management. The aim, like in some overseas universities, was to grow strong affiliation with the alumni body right from the start. Students would be registered automatically on SP's platform and a low joining fee would be included in the bundle that the new students pay at the beginning of every academic year. It was understandably received with a lot of caution and scepticism from the Directors of SP's Schools as there would be massive administrative problems of transferring monies and keeping track of changes in the status of the 14,000-strong student body. The proposal was finally implemented in a limited way, that is, the Guild was allowed access to students' contacts for future reference. However, after a couple of years, SP changed its portal platform and the Guild lost this access.

Today, Freshmen are invited to Open House events where they register their interest and submit their contact details. They can continue to use a few facilities at a nominal charge, or join as Student members and pay an entrance fee of \$200, with no monthly subscriptions. Once they graduate, the Student membership is automatically converted into Ordinary membership and they pay discounted monthly fees for five years. These Ordinary (Fresh Graduate) members now number 546.

The Guild would take up a stall at SP's annual Co-curricular Activity Week. In 2005, the foosball table from the Prince Edward Lounge was the star attraction at its stall.



To hook fresh graduates, the marketing team parked themselves at successive graduation venues, first at Kallang Theatre, then at the SP Convention Centre.

4. Fresh graduate (Ordinary) membership

Fresh graduates are routinely recruited at graduation ceremonies, like in 1992 – a bumper year – 490 joined to become Ordinary members. Since many of them would proceed to their National Service or to further their studies, they were given significant discounts for entrance fees and monthly subscriptions. This became formalized as the new Graduate membership category, approved by the extraordinary general meeting of February 2004. After graduation, the National Servicemen paid only \$500 for entrance fee with \$5 monthly subscriptions.

Graduation ceremonies of the Polytechnic are traditionally a fertile hunting ground to get new members. In most years, the Guild contributed medals and \$100 prizes to top graduands of selected courses, and took the opportunity to station their recruitment specialists, some

of whom were freelancers. After the initial honeymoon period of the new clubhouse, and with Ordinary members resigning, the recruitment of Fresh Graduates at the graduation ceremonies brought some comfort, although in actual terms, these new Graduate members were not working yet and their entrance fee was much lower than Ordinary members'. Graduation packages were sent out to these graduands, with the

Guild's newsletter, and membership application and GIRO forms. At the 2003 Graduation, SPGG announced a special membership scheme offered to the top ten graduands among the Model Students. They would be given a free one-year membership and after that, they would only need to pay an entrance fee of \$1,000 (savings of \$4500), payable in ten instalments. A total of 210 new graduate members were added.



Registration at the Graduation Bash, Zouk Disco, 2004.

The marketing highlight in 2004 was a Graduation Bash on 19 May at the Zouk disco, to create awareness among a target of 500 new graduates. Although the Guild subsidized the bill at \$11 per pax, only 300 turned up, which included non-SP guests of the graduands. Another highlight, in September, was the “Introduce-a-Friend” scheme opened to the new fresh graduates, paying a \$500 entrance fee and very low monthly instalments for 53 months, with monthly subscriptions of \$5. The response was encouraging, with 110 new Fresh Graduate Scheme members netted at the SP Convocation 2004. At the 2005 SP Convocation, 90 graduates were recruited, 14 of whom had participated in student activities at the clubhouse.

5. Associate membership

Associate membership became viable, paying a premium to join and faithfully paying the same monthly subscription as Ordinary members. They enjoy all benefits except for voting rights. They could be alumni of other polytechnics, university graduates and SP staff. In 2001, they paid \$5,500 and this rose to \$8,250 but in February 2006, the entrance fee slid down to \$3000. Today, the entrance fee is \$2,000 which could climb down to \$800 during special promotions. Their current number is 277.

A study hub for all members.



6. Term membership: for SP staff

As soon as the new clubhouse was operational in 2000, the Guild planned to offer Term membership to SP staff. Guild General Manager Patrick Hogan attended a meeting in October 2000 – chaired by Mr Edward Quah, Deputy Principal (Administration) – to lay the framework for SP staff to become members of the Guild. Mr Quah commented that the proposed entrance fee of \$640 per year plus \$30 monthly subscription was too “hefty” as staff already had access to similar facilities at SP. He counter-proposed a corporate membership that would allow 20 to 30 staff to use Guild’s facilities at any one time.

Both sides then agreed to do away with entrance fees and have just a monthly subscription of \$30 until such a time when the Guild membership reached a base of 8000 members. This scheme would also be open to staff who were SP alumni and their families. Staff who did not join could still patronise the Guild’s restaurants. Both sides would inform each other of staff members’ resignations, either from SPGG or SP.

In April 2012, Singapore Polytechnic signed up for corporate membership with SPGG. There were no entrance fees; instead SP would pay a monthly subscription for each staff. This continues today.



Family and community bonding at St Joseph's Home.



Welcome for members of SingTel Recreation Club, the first Corporate Term member for the Guild. Mr Tong Kok Yeo is second on the right.

7. Corporate Term membership

i. Singtel Recreation Club

Through the good offices of prominent SP alumni and former Nominated Member of Parliament Mr Tong Kok Yeo, the Guild managed to attract Singtel Recreation Club (SRC) to buy the first ever Corporate Term membership. SRC had 6,000 members from its Singtel group of companies and their clubhouse in Hillcrest was going to be sold off. They needed alternative facilities.

At the launch of this category of membership in April 2006, a plaque was presented to SRC's president, Mrs Tan Kah Rhu. The following weekend, an open house by the poolside was organized for all SRC members and those Guild members who bought coupons to participate in the mini

hawker fair, cartoon shows, sculptured balloon activity, a bazaar and games stalls. The first year entrance fee was \$20,000 for 20 nominees. Over six years of the partnership, the number of open nominees – SRC members using the facilities at any one time – ranged from 20 to 40. Monthly subscriptions started at \$80 per nominee and were reduced to \$60 in later years. The Singtel corporate term membership ended in March 2012.

Mr Tong was elected into the 25th Ex-co in October 2007 as the Honorary Assistant Treasurer. He stepped down in 2011 as the Honorary General Secretary.

ii. Other Corporate Term members

Jimmy Lim and his Ex-co continued to court other Corporate Term members. The latter in turn nominated certain of their staff to be “corporate nominees”.



	Corporate Members	Duration
1.	Singapore Polytechnic	Apr 2012 – present
2.	Marketing Institute of Singapore	Mar 2012 – Feb 2016
3.	Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD)	Apr 2012 – Mar 2013
4.	ASHRAE Singapore Chapter (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers)	Jan 2014 – Dec 2014
5.	Kurihara Kogyo Co Ltd	Jan 2016 – 31 Dec 2016

Managing Food and Beverage

Food, Beverage and Catering is again another area which, if not managed carefully, could lead the Guild into financial problems. There were originally three food and beverage outlets – the Restaurant, Poolside Café and the Wine and KTV Lounge. Over the years, the Lounge changed names according to out-sourced operators and space was reconfigured to accommodate pool tables. Today, the second level houses the Prince Edward Lounge and the pool table room, which has karaoke and dart facilities. The third level has a catering room called Carnation Room and more incubation offices for rental.



1. The Restaurant and Poolside Café

The Guild started with outsourcing their own food and beverage outlets. It was not easy to attract reliable operators with staying power or to engage good chefs to draw in the crowd.

The restaurant 'Fission' was opened in April 2001. The operator, Mount Pleasant Food and Beverage, was given three rent-free months after which, they paid a rent of \$3,000 per month. The Guild helped to raise awareness of the restaurant through their newsletters and emails to SP staff. Problems soon arose and Mt Pleasant left in August 2001 leaving behind a debt of some \$25,000 for unpaid rent, utility charges, grease trap fees, disposal fees, and service charges. However, the Guild had collected around \$20,000 on behalf of Mt Pleasant, from credit card transactions paid by member patrons. Mt Pleasant did not make any move to get back this sum, which the Guild viewed as payment for their debts.

Inside Fission... on clubhouse opening day, 2001.



Renamed Strawberry and Spice in 2002 and renovated with new kitchen equipment costing \$88,000, the restaurant which was exclusive only for members, still did not manage to do well. The contract changed hands to Marco Polo which was also running the Poolside café at \$2,000 monthly. They too soon requested for rental waiver from January to June 2004. The Ex-co wanted to see the menu improved but baulked at opening the restaurant to the public and losing its exclusivity. The operator soon left in December.

After much pondering and discussion, the Ex-co decided it was time that the Guild operate the restaurant Fission on

its own. Bob Ko, an industry veteran was appointed to be the new executive chef in charge of all the menus in the restaurant and poolside café. Bob has remained in SPGG to this day.

Fission re-opened on 24 April 2005 with free food tasting at lunch for invited guests from the jackpot regulars, Guild House Rock patrons, SP, and New Town Secondary School next door. Members were also treated to a free dinner buffet. The Poolside café started serving light snacks on weekdays, and special local food and barbecue spreads on weekends and public holidays. Pricing at the café was kept below \$10 for the sake of members and staff.





Sub Zero band performing at Guild House Rock, 2005.

2. The Wine Pub and KTV

The Wine Pub and KTV (karaoke) operator Food & Beverage Services ceased operations without notice on 7 December 2002 and left a debt of nearly \$32,000, being the outstanding sum for rental, utilities, refuse collection, toiletries, and grease trap fees. The Guild's legal advisor issued a letter of demand to them to pay within seven days. The advisor also wrote to their guarantor AXA Insurance Singapore PL to claim the amount of \$14,994, which they eventually paid. As to the remaining sum of around \$17,000, the Ex-co considered legal action but eventually wrote it off.

The Wine Pub and KTV lounge reopened on 15 March 2003, operated

by Nouvelle Events, an events catering company of Apex Pal International Private Limited that also owned the popular Sakae Sushi and other chains. Members could now tinkle and dine on crepes and sushi. But seven months later, in October 2003, Nouvelle Events claimed they were bleeding due to the SARS health episode and asked for a rental waiver for three months amounting to more than \$15,000. After a few unhappy incidents between both parties, Nouvelle ended its tenancy in May 2004. The wine pub was renovated to become Prince Edward Lounge and Guild House Rock. In 2008, the two outlets became one again. Another operator christened it Lustre Lounge. Currently it is back to "Prince Edward Lounge" which appears to be the most popular name, given the history of the Polytechnic.

Operating Food and Beverage in-house

As a result of the disappointing performance of catering companies, the Guild decided to operate the wine pub cum lounge in 2004, and the Poolside café and restaurant in 2005. By managing all its food, beverage and entertainment outlets, the Ex-co had high hopes that these could be profitable and be a steady source of income. To get a better handle, they decided that each outlet should be responsible for reporting its own cost, purchases and revenue figures rather than be lumped together so that specific corrective actions could be taken. But income for Food and Beverage largely remained below the target of \$80,000 per month. Staff costs were high and members expected to continue receiving a ten to 15 percent discount. During the long vacations at the polytechnic, the outlets were even quieter.

Newly elected President Jimmy Lim insisted there should be accountability for each outlet and they should at least break even. Unaccounted revenue and increases in certain items should be explained thoroughly before costs snowballed. Food and beverage performance slowly improved as tighter controls over wastage from buffets kicked in and promotions were offered to draw in more diners. The Poolside café underwent the process to get a halal certification and in 2015 received the halal certification. With this, banquet bookings soared. On any given weekend, it was a common sight to see wedding receptions and festive celebrations in the ballroom. But there were problems in adhering to the strict requirements like halal food not to be served in non-halal outlets. The Guild has not applied to renew the certification.



*Former F&B
Manager Charlie Lee,
left, with his staff.*

Loan Repayments

The Guild moved into the new Dover Road clubhouse in October 2000, opened it officially in May 2001, and received their Certificate of Statutory Completion from the Building and Construction Authority in June 2002. The Dover Road clubhouse construction would not have been possible without the eventual loan of \$4 million from Keppel Tat Lee Finance (which later became OCBC Finance in January 2002), and another loan of \$2.5million from Singapore Polytechnic (SP). The Guild also got back its funds saved through the years through events like golf tournaments and dinners. The sum of \$877,928 had been parked in SP's coffers. Based on its loan terms, the Guild was committed to pay off the bank loan before SP's loan.

1. OCBC Loan fully paid up in 2011

The original loan sum was \$5 million and payment was originally agreed to be in three annual instalments of \$1,500,000 each and a final instalment of \$500,000. However, it was quickly

apparent that a \$1.5 million payment a year was a difficult uphill task. Discussions started on rescheduling the repayment structure. On 1 November 2001, Keppel Tat-Lee (pre-cursor to OCBC Finance) formally agreed to restructure the loan payment over eight instalments of \$500,000 within four years. The condition was that the total Construction Loan drawdown should be \$4 million.

Restructuring of loan payments

The Guild paid the first half a million in October 2001, another sum of \$300,000 in December 2001 and \$400,000 in January 2002. But after that, with problems of slow membership growth and looming deficits, it was not able to meet its payment schedule. It still had \$2.8 million to pay. In October 2002, OCBC agreed to restructure the loan repayment to annual instalments of \$560,000 per year. The last instalment of \$560,000 would have to be settled by 31 March 2007.

However, by September 2003, the Guild could only settle \$90,000 for the first instalment of \$560,000. Clearly, the re-structuring plan was too ambitious. OCBC swiftly agreed to another restructuring proposal: the balance loan of \$2,710,000 would be paid in 48 monthly instalments of \$20,000 to \$136,750 per month from July 2003 to June 2007. Soon, realising that it was undergoing a painful period of internal problems, the Guild appealed for yet another restructuring exercise while paying what it could. In April 2006, OCBC agreed to further restructure the loan balance of \$1,730,000 from 48 monthly instalments to 96 monthly instalments. The last instalment of \$100,000 was settled on 1 June 2011 and SPGG finally cleared the loan from OCBC Limited, inclusive of the interest payable.

2. Paying up the SP loan by 2018

The loan agreement with Singapore Polytechnic signed on 2 May 2000 stated that the repayment by instalments to Singapore Polytechnic (SP) would only commence in the month following the last and final instalment of the term loan

to (then) Keppel Tat-Lee Finance, which eventually stretched to June 2011. The total sums including interest would have to be repaid within ten years from the first drawdown of the principal sum.

Extension of repayment: In August 2007, SPGG obtained the in-principal consent from SP to extend the repayment period by another five years, commencing 2 June 2011. SPGG further requested SP for a longer repayment period. On 4 October 2011, SP agreed and signed the Supplemental Agreement, to grant SPGG an extension period of up to 1 June 2026 for the repayment of the term loan and interest thereon.

Waiving of interest: However, on 24 September 2012, SP kindly agreed to waive the cumulative interest charges of around \$1.05 million on the \$2.5million term loan. A new repayment schedule was agreed for the remaining outstanding principal sum with no interest charge. The outstanding principal sum was \$2,175,000 as at 31 July 2012. Instalments of \$30,000 per month started in August 2012 and the final instalment of \$45,000 would be settled by July 2018.

Big Ticket Expenditure Items

In their management of the Guild house, the Ex-co often had to ponder, deliberate, balance and decide on expensive systems. Some of these were:

1. A Management Information System

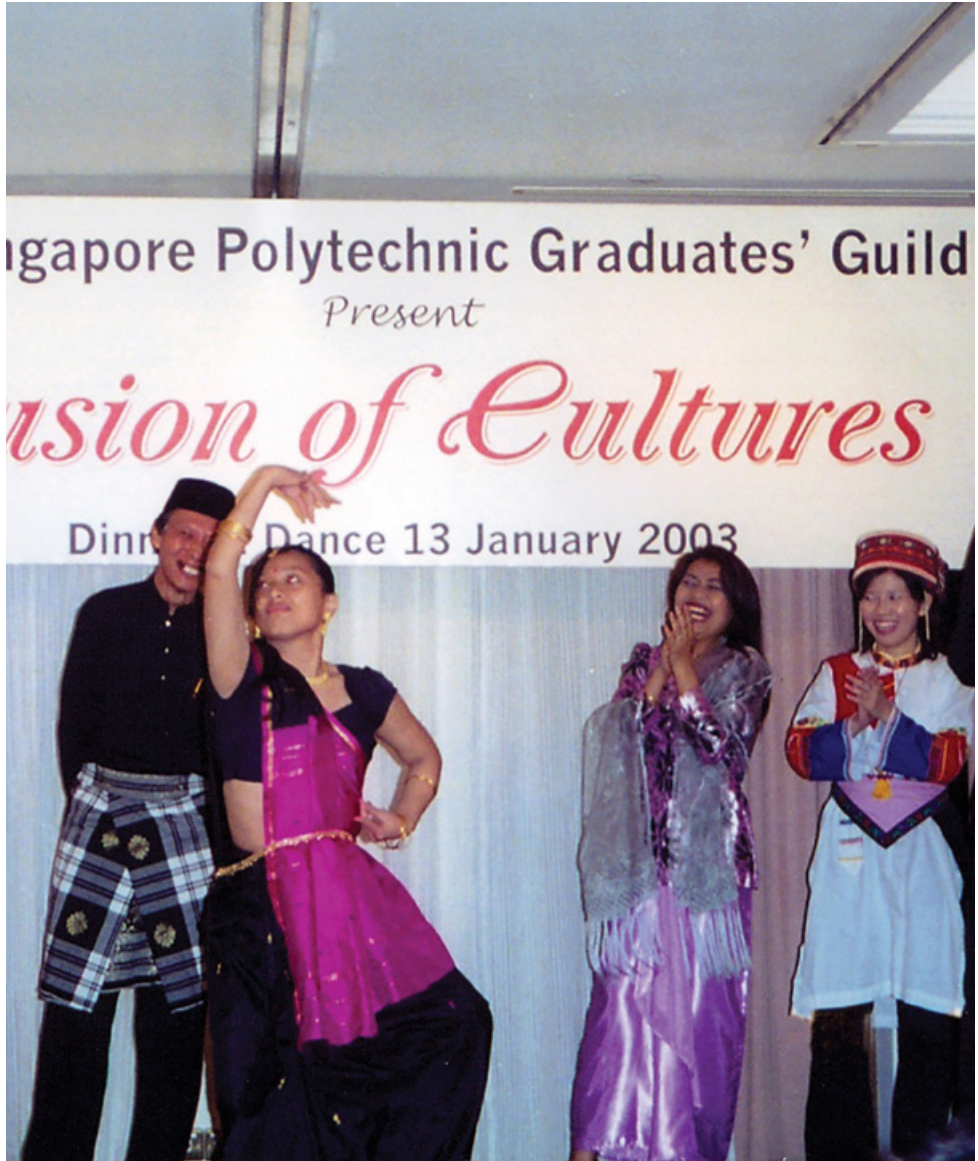
This system, acquired in 2002 from Sun Technosystems, cost \$58,000 and was meant for membership records. With the new system, membership data could generate profiles on sex, income and age.

2. Point of Sale System software

This modern Point-of-Sale system was installed at a cost of \$63,642. It allowed cash registers to be connected to the Monthly Spending Levy and the Accounting servers. Members from then on have been receiving clear statements of account. Before that staff at the four food outlets had to photocopy membership cards and receipts and submit these to the Accounts department to enter data manually.

3. Insurance, maintenance contracts and staff wages

Other big-ticket items were the annual insurance for the clubhouse, cleaning maintenance contracts, pesticide services, entertainment items like karaoke equipment, replacement of faulty equipment like those in the gymnasium and renovations to the rooms and toilets. Before 2004, the professional cleaning and ISO-certified contractor charged \$15,800 per month, while the bowling alley maintenance was \$8,800 monthly. Foreseeing that there would be a problem of labour shortage, the second vice president, Jimmy Lim proposed employing foreign workers for housekeeping, maintenance and banquet. After a three-month experiment with three workers, the Ex-co did their sums and hired more foreign cleaning staff from September 2004. They were housed in a rented apartment to save costs on transport to and from Johor Bahru. Staff strength inevitably crept up. In October 2004, there were 37 full-time and 18 part-time staff. By February 2005, the numbers rose to 54 and 15 respectively.



The staff had their own dinner and dance as part of their welfare benefits.

4. Jackpot machines

The jackpot machines provide entertainment for the Guild's members, but the capital costs are rather high. Also, the fruit machines have to be registered with the Inland Revenue of Singapore (IRAS), which charges a deposit that may increase over time.

A letter from IRAS dated October 2002 informed the Guild that the deposit for each machine would be increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000. So with 16 machines, the additional deposit was \$80,000 to be paid by January 2003. The then Acting General Manager wrote in to request that payment be made in eight monthly instalments of \$10,000. IRAS agreed.

There was also a jackpot tax involved. In May 2005, it was reported in the *Ex-co* minutes that jackpot taxes were a sizeable sum. In addition, new coin counting machines were also needed for the jackpot machines and they were costly to acquire. Disposal of old jackpot machines after de-registration involved some drama too. As per IRAS regulations, they had to be irreversibly taken apart before disposal.

5. Upgrading kitchen equipment

As the Guild tried to draw members to dine in, the eateries and pub would undergo makeovers, and kitchen equipment was upgraded. For example, in 2005, new kitchen equipment was bought from Q'son, on hire purchase for 36 months at 4.5 per cent interest rate per annum. Totalling \$51,000, it included a long list of racks, chillers, freezer, meat slicer, and banquet utensils. Old equipment that no longer met operational requirements was sold off.

6. Subsidising social activities

Often social activities – the life-blood of any clubhouse – were subsidized for members. A run-up to December festivities could easily cost \$20,000: freshly-baked Christmas goodies on sale at competitive prices, Christmas Tree Light-up, a special Christmas Poolside BBQ Party for SP students, an SPGG children's party and a New Year's Eve countdown party.



The gym like other facilities needs to be maintained well.



New Year's Eve party.

Missing Monies and Court Action

1. Missing money

A sum of around \$30,000 was found to be missing from June 2001 to January 2002. An internal board of inquiry found that a certain finance staff was responsible. She could only return \$11,000 and was given some time to make full restitution or be reported to the police. The police were duly informed and the said staff pleaded guilty in court. By the final hearing in December 2002, she had made full restitution and was charged with a \$10,000 fine and handed down a four-month jail term.

Another missing sum of nearly \$2,000 in the bingo collection from June to August 2001 was also discovered in an audit ending in July 2002. A police report was made and this time, the Guild could make an insurance claim, which it did.

Recognising the need for better internal controls, the Ex-co tightened and tweaked the Finance standard operating procedures. For example, when the Honorary Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer could not come in to sign cheques for invoices like Jackpot Duty

(taxes) and franking costs of Christmas cards, embarrassing delays occurred. To resolve this, there would be two groups of signatories and the key members of the Ex-co to approve different sums of money. This was tweaked several times over the next few years. Still, cheques were sometimes pre-signed to avoid bottlenecks which was, on hindsight, a questionable practice.

2. Legal disputes with service providers

In April 2004, the Guild partnered a supplier cum operator of pool and billiard tables – to offer SP students coin-operated American pool tables, which needed less manpower. Profits would be shared. When the partnership contract was ending, the Guild decided to operate its own snookerium. However the operator claimed that a certain managerial staff had renewed the contract. The Ex-co was stunned. Before the matter was resolved, the operator removed their tables and equipment without informing the Guild management. They served SPGG with a writ of summons, claiming that the

Guild broke its contract when it wanted them to terminate prematurely and had not allowed SP students to play pool. It sued for a high sum for break of contract. Court mediation commenced. The Ex-co suspected collusion between their own managerial staff – who had then resigned – and the operator. Suits and countersuits among the three parties – SPGG, the operator and the

resigned staff – ensued until all agreed to attend a mediation which was unsuccessful. The case dragged on for two years. Feeling drained, all parties, agreed to settle in March 2007. The Guild agreed to compensate the operator with a much-reduced sum from the initial claim of \$40,000. For the Guild, legal and filing fees had added up to around \$72,000.



Table Pool has always been very popular among students.

Negative Territory... and Prudent Recovery

In April 2004, Honorary Assistant Treasurer Hoe Lye Soon, sounded the alarm bell to the Ex-co that the Guild would run out of cash by the end of the year. By end January 2005 the Ex-co was astonished to see an enormous deficit cash flow. It requested a thorough check on the figures for the cash outflow, and all instalments and capital expenditure to be reported to Honorary Treasurer Chai Wee Thong and Strategic Advisor Jeffrey Lee. In view of the deficit, some upgrading works were put on hold, like the new digital recording system that would expand the surveillance areas of the jackpot room, the billiard centre, the bowling alley and the lift lobby. This would have set finances back by nearly

\$7,000. Also, the installation of new air conditioners for the bowling alley was postponed. The Ex-co's avowed priorities were to control expenditure, generate more revenue, and get back arrears from defaulting members.

Total outstanding debt by defaulting members crept up to more than \$500,000 in December 2005. The collection for the monthly spending levy was found to be complicated as some members were working overseas without informing the Guild.

Around this period too, the Guild commenced operating the food and beverage outlets on its own, gave out

*Honorary Assistant
Treasurer Hoe Lye Soon
addressing a student
assembly at SP*



generous discounts to attract members and non-members, modernised the kitchen facilities and renovated the outlets to create ambience. The discounts included free buffets to those who bought two bottles of liquor or accumulated seven stamps on their Value card at the Jackpot Room. For every \$50 spent, a diner received a \$10 voucher. While members enjoyed a 15 percent discount, SP staff received ten percent. Guild House Rock patrons were given 15 percent discount on top of the commissions given to pub staff on liquor sales. At one time, staff had a concession of 50 percent off their dining bill.

New expenditure also appeared in the form of management and consultancy fees and in 2003 the sum was a hefty \$195,000. Upon queries, members were told that with the frequent changes in clubhouse general managers, there was a need to pay for the services of a strategic advisor and an acting clubhouse manager. The figure increased to more than \$346,000 for 2004 and \$224,000 for 2005. In 2006, the consultancy fee stood at \$261,776.

The net operating surplus (before tax and depreciation) was only around \$137,000 for the financial year 2004 while the net operating deficit after taxation was about \$794,000. In 2005, the net operating surplus showed some improvement at approximately \$406,000 and the net operating deficit after taxation was nearly \$586,000. Still, in January 2006, the Ex-co meeting reported a debt of

\$500,000 owed to creditors and a bank balance of about \$707,000 only. The report card improved later in the year, as the surplus was about \$470,000 and the deficit nearly \$497,000. But the Guild was still technically bankrupt due to the building loans.

Under such circumstances of insolvency, monthly payments of over \$40,000 for the construction loan were a struggle; and from July 2006, the repayment sum would be \$135,000 a month. The only way out was to appeal to the lender bank for a re-structuring of monthly loan payments.

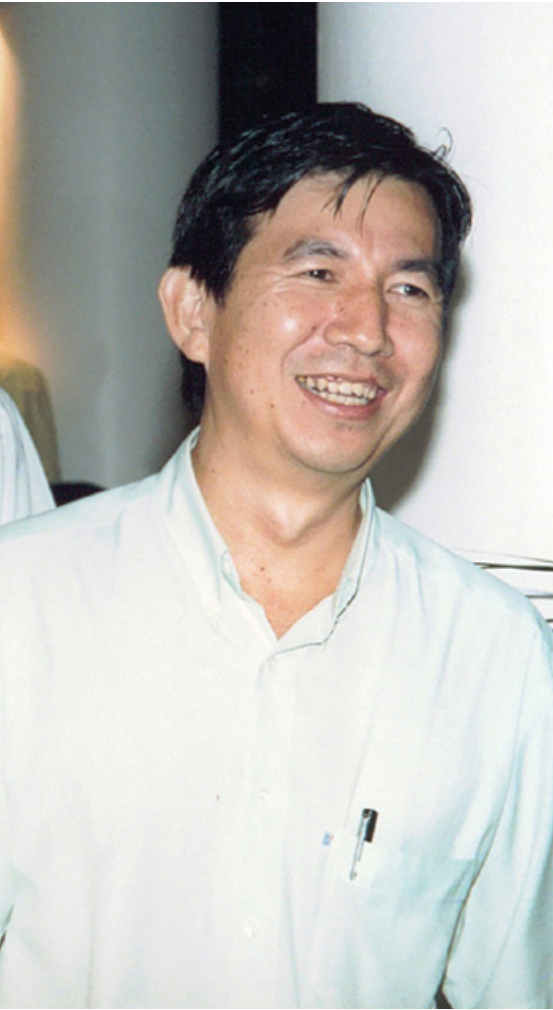
The new president, Jimmy Lim, elected in October 2005, repeatedly asked for a better system to track debts and a key KPI (key productivity indicator) – like 60 days – to track debts closely to avoid further accumulation of arrears. He also wanted an action plan to tidy up the outstanding accounts of members' receivables and then passing the information to the appointed debt collection company. Final warning letters were sent to 111 Life and Ordinary members with personal arrears of up to \$56,000. Genuine cases of sick members or those who had pressing reasons would be offered restructuring. For example, a member who was undergoing kidney dialysis had his arrears waived and membership suspended for six months. After a grace period of 14 days, the contacts of defaulters were handed over to the debt collection company. However, the success rate was below expectations.



New President, New Measures

At the extraordinary general meeting in February 2006, President Jimmy Lim announced the four objectives of his newly elected executive committee – to aim for a membership of 5,000; to replace 25 percent of the Ex-co with younger members; to expand

cooperation with other alumni organisations by way of reciprocal arrangements and to develop new sources of income by launching an “investee company”. The meeting discussed detailed membership marketing plans.



*Annual General Meeting 2001:
Jimmy Lim leading a visually-
handicapped member.*

This was the turning point for the new Ex-co to attempt a new approach of save more, spend less. With more careful leadership and prudent-minded managers, the financial accounts for 2007 showed a surplus of \$888,081...

After the annual general meeting of 2006 in October, Jeffrey Lee the fourth Guild president stepped down from his dual posts of Strategic Advisor and Acting Clubhouse Manager. Subsequently, Mr Bobby Chong, the first Vice President, also resigned from the Ex-co. This was the turning point for the new Ex-co to attempt a new approach of save more, spend less. With more careful leadership

and prudent-minded managers, the financial accounts for 2007 showed a surplus of \$888,081 – a six per cent improvement. This was a significant decline of four percent in expenditure. The Guild's accounts were firmly on the mend. The net surplus for 2008 was a whopping 18 percent increase, to \$1,052,000 aided by a seven percent decrease in total expenditure. Net surplus after tax and depreciation was \$108,833. President Jimmy managed the balanced sheets by striving for efficient utilization of funds to avoid extravagance and wastage.

The Guild was ready for a new era.

Profile:
Jimmy Lim: Sixth Guild President
(2005-2011, 2013-2017)

Jimmy Lim became the sixth president in 2005 and turned the Guild around to have healthy surpluses in 2008. Some eleven years later, Jimmy successfully instituted an impressive fund to help financially-challenged students from SP.



President Jimmy Lim, presenting the first cheque contribution for the SPGG Endowment Fund to SP Principal Tan Choon Shian, 2013.

Shaping Vision into Reality

LOQUACIOUS BUT action-oriented. Visionary thinker. Persuasive salesman. No nonsense leadership. Kind. Passionate. When you get to know Jimmy Lim better, these words come to mind. These are the traits that have helped him to achieve impressive milestones for the Guild.

When he became president in 2005, Jimmy Lim took on more than he bargained for. The Guild was teetering on insolvency: members were resigning and defaulting on their subscriptions; it was barely able to service the huge repayments for the clubhouse construction loan; expenditure was uncomfortably high; and income vehicles like the jackpot, and food and beverage were just not delivering. For the next few years, he worked very hard to turn the Guild around and drove the Ex-co and staff with unwavering determination. He had to juggle his responsibilities at the Guild with his job as the Asia Regional Director of Sanmina-SCI Systems Singapore PL, and also with his family. It was every which way but loose. Reminiscing, he says, “I really gave my life for the Guild.”

Jimmy’s ties with SPGG commenced way back in 1987 when as a young member, he wanted to make a complaint on the clubhouse’s service and ran into then-President Jeffrey Lee. The latter talked him into joining the Ex-co as the honorary

general secretary for the next two years. He was even the vice president in 1989. But there was a long hiatus after that due to his job posting in Taiwan as country general manager for his company, Teradyne. Back in Singapore in 2003, he was voted into the Ex-co as second vice president and in the next annual general meeting in 2005, he became President. In 2011, he stepped down from the post to concentrate on the SPGG Endowment Fund. From 2013 onwards, he has been the president.

His vision for the Guild is always evolving. His current vision – crystallised in 2014, has “Four Pillars” – Raise the profile of SPGG, Give Back, Build an Entrepreneur Hub, and Target Service Quality and Create Vibrancy.

He has certainly raised the profile of the Guild. Of all his achievements in leading the Guild, the SPGG Endowment Fund – the culmination of the pillar “Give Back” has given him the most satisfaction. One reason is that he himself grew up poor. In his first year as an Electronics and Communication Engineering student in SP in the 1970s, he would stave off hunger by drinking as much free water from water coolers as he could. He got by with some good friends who would buy him food and offer him the odd dollar. He also tried giving tuition and door-to-door selling. Fortunately, he secured a Public

Service Commission merit bursary in his Second Year.

What if he had not been a merit student and not awarded the bursary? If a student is hungry and has to hold two part-time jobs to survive and pay off his fees, how can he hope to produce stellar examination results? So Jimmy made sure that the Endowment Fund is for those who genuinely need financial help, without the requirement to be brilliant in studies. It should also be sustainable: only the interest from investments made with the funds would be used for the bursaries.

The inspiration to help poor students became a burning passion. He had chanced upon an SP student who wanted to drop out from sheer exhaustion due to working the graveyard shift at a bar in Clarke Quay to support his family. One day while golfing in 2010, he got his first donor – his friend and mentor Mr Yeo Keng Joon from the National University of Singapore Society Business School Alumni. With the help of his Fund team in the Ex-co he tried to sell this dream to whoever was willing to listen: current and former Guild members, SP alumni, SP management and staff, personal friends and the big boys in industry.

He remembers touching moments:

- One of the donors is Mr Wee Chwee Heng, the first president of SPGG. Mr Wee organised a



lunch at the Cricket Club for friends, locked the door and pushed Jimmy to the rostrum to appeal for the Fund.

- Several donors made repeat donations. Some of them joined in the selection interviews and offered internships to the recipients.
- At the selection interviews for the first awardees in May 2013, the applicants told of loan shark harassment, having to work long hours to



Jimmy, 2nd from left, at the Cycling for Charity 2016, in aid of the Singapore association for the Deaf. Mr Chan Chun Sing, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office is in the centre.

help support their families, and having parents who were divorced or ill.

He has achieved what previous executive committees could not do before: launch a sizeable lasting endowment fund to help SP students. He is not the first Guild president who had the lofty aim of helping SP students. But he has developed the idea to its fullest potential. The donation now is over \$2 million. With a government matching of 1.5 times, the total sum of the fund is

a very impressive \$5 million. Four batches of students – 301 in total – have been helped.

One of the celebratory events of SP's 60th Anniversary was the Alumni Homecoming Dinner held in September 2014. Principal Tan Choon Shian presented the Alumni Service to SP Award to 60 outstanding graduates and to two registered alumni associations. Jimmy was one of the 60. He also accepted another award on behalf of SPGG.

Chapter Ten

The Guild in Fine Fettle





Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam in dialogue with Guild members, 3 June 2014. On the left is the moderator, Mr Daniel Tan, President of the SP Entrepreneurs' Club.

For the last eight years, the Ex-co has rejuvenated itself with new youthful and energetic faces. For the first time in its history, its stable membership has increased to 3,470, nudged up by innovative marketing approaches. Facilities are upgraded with prudent budgeting and healthy surpluses. It has created another first: raising impressive funds for the SPGG Endowment Fund. And with good governance and policies in place the Guild is set to move confidently and meaningfully ahead.

New Era, New Directions

In 2007, fully-in-charge and adrenaline fully-charged, Guild President Jimmy Lim set new directions that reflected his work ethic: a streamlined, strictly-accountable and open financial system, a more innovative membership recruitment and management of members' receivables, fresh and youthful Ex-co members, good relationship with SP and with other Polytechnics, and stringent cost trimming.

1. Accountable and open financial system

There was strict budgeting and stringent cost trimming. Every possible revenue stream was optimized like rental of offices, members' activities and promotions in the jackpot room, boosting banquet sales, outsourcing the Pub, Karaoke and Pool tables to generate monthly rental and attracting corporate term members. Jimmy pushed managerial staff for action plans and strict budgeting and staff had to multi-task. By 2008, the Ex-co could report a healthy surplus. In June 2011, the OCBC construction loan was fully repaid and only the SP loan was left to be settled. The financial challenges of 2003 to 2007 were firmly left behind.

2. New faces in executive committees

It was a welcome change when new faces accepted the challenge to serve in the Ex-co. With Ex-co members Tong Kok Yeo, Ng Hoo Yin, James Chua and "Ex-co Veteran" Hoe Lye Soon, and later, members like Gerald Ng, Tay Choon Mong, Jasmond Chua, Dr Damian Tan, Victor Lye, Dr Khong Poh Wah and Raymond Tay, the clubhouse has been growing in vibrancy.

Each Ex-co member chairs a focused area and works with relevant Management staff to strategise and drive initiatives. In the 27th Ex-co in March 2013, Ng Hoo Yin, the First Vice President, chaired Corporate Communications and Marketing; Tay Choon Mong, the Second Vice President, was in charge of Members' and Students' Welfare; Wong Kian Keong was concurrent Treasurer and Chair of Special Facilities Projects; and Raymond Tay, the Honorary Assistant General Secretary was also Chair of Lifestyle and Wellness. Gerald Ng chaired Membership Strategic Planning; and Cindy Ang, Membership Services.



A new signage, a new era with the alma mater.

3. Close relationship with the alma mater

In October 2011, SP Management proposed a new signage at the entry gate, and would sponsor it. The Ex-co was even allowed to meet the designer and select their preferred design. All that the Guild had to do was to

maintain it. When it was ready the Guild invited Principal Tan Hang Cheong to officiate on 7 November 2012, by cutting the ribbon and setting free red and golden balloons. SP's Lion Dance troupe strutted and jumped in unbridled joy, perhaps to celebrate a new era of close cooperation with the Guild.

4. A new buzz

Having achieved financial recovery and a vitalized membership, Jimmy's vision in 2010 was to grow the Guild into a "club of distinction with diverse activities to foster a lifelong bond between SPGG and SP together with SPGG members and the community".

The accompanying mission was 1) to connect SPGG members through lifestyle activities based on social activities, recreation, health and wellness, and sports; 2) to render mutual assistance to charitable organisations through community service; 3) to forge professional and entrepreneurship development through social and business networking activities with industry leaders, professionals and SP; and 4) to collaborate and foster relationships with other organisations to maximize SPGG's opportunities and effectiveness.

There were varied activities helped in no small part by the formation of interest groups like Brisk Walking, Bowling, Youth Chapter, EduTours and more. There were monthly networking nights for members and guests, development of reciprocal ties with other clubs, dialogue sessions with government ministers, politicians, community leaders and entrepreneurs, and targeted marketing for Corporate Term membership and all other categories.



A friendly pool match with members of the Raffles Marina Club, August 2013.



Buzz@Piano Lounge: Students and their lecturer Michael Spicer from SP's Diploma in Music and Audio Technology performing fortnightly, 2011.

5. Reciprocal tie-ups

To raise the Guild's profile, provide options for members to enjoy the facilities of other clubhouses, and to create a buzz, the Ex-co actively sought tie-ups with like-minded clubs and alumni associations. Agreements on shared facilities vary from food and beverage outlets to sports facilities, and even discounted rates from those clubs that had hotel rooms, like Raffles Marina Club and Hollandse Club. The Ngee Ann Alumni Club was naturally the first to sign up in May 2008.

Reciprocal tie-ups extend beyond our shores like university clubs in Australia and the United States of America. However, given the distance from Singapore, these clubs' offerings are limited to food and beverage and guest accommodations if any.

	Reciprocal Partners	Duration
1	Ngee Ann Alumni Club	1 May 2008 – 30 Nov 2014
2	NUSS – Kent Ridge Guildhouse (National University of Singapore Society)	23 Aug 2010 – 31 Dec 2014
3	Hollandse Club	1 Apr 2012 – 31 Mar 2015
4	SIA Group Sports Club (Singapore Airlines)	1 Apr 2012 – 31 Mar 2018
5	Raffles Marina Club	1 Jul 2016 – 30 Jun 2018
6	The University Club of Portland	15 May 2011 – present
7	The Faculty Club of California at Berkeley	15 Jun 2011 – present
8	The University Club of Australia	15 Jun 2011 – present
9	Monash University Club	15 Jun 2011 – present
10	Royal Sungei Ujong Club	1 Mar 2012 – present

6. Group personal accident insurance

In 2008, Honorary Treasurer Tong Kok Yeo proposed membership benefits as a new helpful approach to attract new members and stem the defaults and resignations. He came up with a new benefit – group personal accident insurance – for all active or passive members. Quotes from various insurance companies were carefully compared before the launch in 2009. Even members aged 65 and above were included. The cost to cover everybody was nearly \$20,000 a year. Members did not have to pay any premium. Sums assured ranged from \$10,000 to \$30,000. The scheme continued for a total of three years but was discontinued after 2011, as there were too few claims.

7. Networking: SPGG style

Success in membership recruitment was strongly supported by events and activities. More than the usual round of golf games, escapades to Pulau Ubin, car rallies, and talks on health and wealth creation, the Ex-co looked for more new things to excite members.

July 2008 saw the first Members' Networking Night, initiated by then honorary general secretary, Hoe Lye Soon. Having served in various Ex-cos from 1991, Lye Soon saw that such networking could lead to a series of CEO Talks and bigger activities, and could help to transform the Guild into an entrepreneurial hub. There were 90 participants comprising members, and guests from the Guild's reciprocal



Mr Edward Quah, then-Deputy Principal (Services), SP.



Lawrence Kim: Managing Director, Ebenezer Group; former Ex-co member.

partners – Ngee Ann Alumni, National University of Singapore (NUS) Society and Singtel Recreation Club. It was unstructured and informal which certainly encouraged a participant, Vincent Siew, to make an impromptu business presentation.

There were four presentations at another Networking Night in March 2009, on diverse topics that appealed to different interest groups. The first speaker was Keith Tan, an SP graduate who had won an international competition; he gave tips on guerilla marketing in an economic downturn. The second presenter BG (Ret) Eric Tan, the Chief Operating Officer and director of the Youth Olympic Games Organizing Committee related his experiences and invited the audience

to volunteer at the Games. Next was Mr Edward Quah, Deputy Principal (Services) of SP who as Co-Chairman of the Organising Committee for RoboCup 2010 gave a sneak preview on RoboCup 2010, which SP was jointly organizing. Finally, the audience was treated to professional advice on how to deal with hair loss, courtesy of Vantage Hair Salon.

Wherever SP graduates get together, they find lots to share. The easy-going brotherly camaraderie was evident at the networking night of 24 July 2009 when two young entrepreneurs – Jerry Chen of ExpressInMusic and Lawrence Kim of Ebenezer Engineering Group related their experiences in their journey to success. Before the night ended, Jerry had clinched three business deals.



Former Ex-co member, Mr Patrick Liew giving tips in May 2010.



Richard Tan, sharing at the first Lunch Forum, 2010.

Sometimes, Guild members who were successful entrepreneurs were invited to present practical talks, like Patrick Liew's "How to invest and make millions in the property market" in May 2010. Patrick founded realty company HSR Global, which he sold in 2013 for a hefty sum. Two years later, after studying for a doctorate from the University of Southern California, he bought back a division of the company for \$1 to develop the company in the international arena.

Another networking platform was the Lunch Forum. Kicking off the first one in January 2010 was another successful

Guild member, Mr Richard Tan of Success Resources, the largest seminar organiser in Asia. Held before lunch at the clubhouse restaurant, Richard shared his experiences and gave valuable finer points for hosting a successful event. Selling, marketing and promoting to the right customers should take up about 85 percent of successful event planning. And even at that event, one must seize the opportunity to market the next event.

Networking nights later naturally evolved into a new initiative rolled out in 2014, dubbed The Big Idea. It was part of the push to encourage the growth of the Entrepreneurial Hub at SPGG.

Celebration 101010

THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY of the Dover Guild house on 10 October 2010 rekindled members' nostalgic memories of the early days at the hilltop clubhouse in SP, which they vacated in 2000. The group of 80

InnoVillage on the hilltop where the old Guild house used to be. They were given a tour of the eco-centric InnoVillage, much of which was built with recycled materials, with its innovative use of natural sunlight

for indoor lighting and a zero-energy filtration system to recycle rainwater.

Back at the clubhouse, other members were given unlimited bowling games with friends and family, while the children were treated to a fun party. The day ended with a convivial celebration dinner for members and SP Management, namely, Principal Tan Hang Cheong and the two past

principals, Low Wong Fook and Khoo Kay Chai.

While partaking of the festivities for the whole day – the walk up the hilltop, auctions and dinner – members raised \$12,900 for the SPGG Bursary Fund 2012 in aid of school-going children of members who needed help, and of needy SP students.



A nostalgic visit to the site of the hilltop clubhouse that is now SP's InnoVillage.

members and staff started trooping on the dot of 10.10am from the Guild house to the site of their first clubhouse on the hillock in the SP campus. Easing them into the mood was SP's DJ Club. They walked by the refurbished Moberly Block, the same stolid Administration Block, the expanded library and on to

A Shelved Shanghai Chapter

FROM 2009 TO 2010, the Ex-co put in effort to start an Overseas Chapter possibly in Shanghai as former Ex-co Member Roger Toh had offered his office in Shanghai as a rallying point. It was estimated that 34.5 per cent of absentee members were working or living in China, 20.5 percent in Australia, and 11 per cent in the United States. The Ex-co hoped to attract 20 members working in China to join the chapter in Shanghai. Jimmy Lim, Ex-co President, timed his business trip to stop over in Shanghai to assess the possibility of a Shanghai chapter. The Singapore Consulate-General introduced

Jimmy and Roger to other Singapore representatives in Shanghai, like the Nanyang Technological University's office in Shanghai and the Singapore Business Association. The two men were advised to register with a recognized organization like SingCham in Shanghai before commencing formal operations. They also explored taking up corporate membership of the Shanghai Singapore Business Association-Singapore Club Shanghai (SSBA-SCS) and using their resources to assess interest from SP alumni in Shanghai. The effort did not garner much interest from those alumni based in Shanghai.



Long-time Ex-co Member Roger Toh was the Guild's 'Shanghai man'. Here at a 2002 dinner, he is giving out a Lucky Draw prize in his capacity as Honorary Treasurer.

Vision 2014: Four Pillars for Transformation

After the 5th SPGG president, Vincent Lim stepped down in July 2013, Ng Hoo Yin stepped up as acting president until the annual general meeting in October when Jimmy took up the mantle again.

The Ex-co was well aware of the demographics of members and the real possibility of the Guild becoming a senior citizens' club. With more and more initiatives and activities along familiar paths, Jimmy and his Ex-co refined and finalized their vision into Vision 2014 at their Ex-co and Management Staff retreat in Sentosa Island. The big push would be to rebrand the Guild into a real club of diversity, with a strong emphasis on attracting younger members. The vision is still to be a "Club of Distinction" but the strategic initiatives are orchestrated under "Four Pillars". Each of these has a champion in the Ex-co. They are:

- Raising the Profile of SPGG by being a Voice of Influence,
- Giving Back and Volunteerism,
- Growing an Entrepreneurs' Hub,
- Raising Service Quality and Vibrancy through Rebranding.

Pillar One: Raising SPGG's Profile by being a Voice of Influence

Ministerial and Leadership Dialogues

The Ministerial Dialogue Programme was initiated in September 2007 with Mr Lim Swee Say, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and Secretary-General of the NTUC (National Trade Union Congress). The Ministerial Dialogues have morphed into a Leadership Dialogue Series, with the objective to educate, inspire and instill leadership values and qualities among SPGG members and the SP Community by learning from our national leaders, industry captains and business champions. Quite simply, the Guild now aspires to be "a voice of influence" for its members and associates. All Dialogues are just intimate exchanges between the distinguished speakers and Guild members and their guests, and the Press are not invited. Members often surface questions on policies that affect their businesses and professions.

1. Dialogue with Mr Goh Chok Tong

Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong addressed the Guild in 2011. He highlighted the government's strategies to secure Singapore's Future – investing heavily in education and training, grabbing new opportunities in Asia, restructuring Singapore's economy and improving productivity, maintaining high standards of leadership in government, and creating an inclusive society. Ex-co Member Hoe Lye Soon was the moderator.

2. Dialogue with Department Heads from SPRING and with Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam

The theme for the next dialogue in June 2014 was "Singapore Restructuring: How do we ensure the competitive edge of businesses and Singaporeans into 2020". There were actually two sharing sessions – the first half had two able department heads from SPRING Singapore and the Internal Revenue Authority. Members sought clarification



Mr Hoe Lye Soon (left) with speaker, Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong.



Deputy Prime Minister Tharman viewing SPGG's history wall.

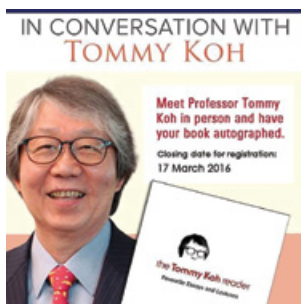
on various schemes purported to help the small and medium entrepreneurs like the Productivity and Innovation Credit, Innovation and Capability Voucher, and the Business Advisors' Programme.

For the second half of the Dialogue, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam who is also the Finance Minister spoke on what the government hoped to achieve through restructuring by encouraging disruptive

technologies to improve old economy industries like food manufacturing and precision engineering. Simply put, companies should innovate and redesign with new methods to give a lower price for equal quality. With a tight labour market, businesses should do things differently and stand above their competitors by increasing customer satisfaction. Mr Daniel Tan, President of the SP Entrepreneurs' Club (SPEC), moderated the session.

3. Dialogue with Professor Tommy Koh

The next three Dialogues happened in quick succession in 2016, thanks to the Guild's collaborator, World Scientific Publishing who did the linking. Ambassador-at-Large Professor Tommy Koh was the Dialogue speaker on 19th March 2016. He engaged the audience with his experiences in diplomatic circles, especially in the United Nations, and showed how a small nation like ours could stand tall among formidable ones. The moderator was Mr Viswa Sadisivan, former news and current affairs anchor and Nominated Member of Parliament.



A poster publicizing Professor Tommy Koh's talk.



Professor Tommy Koh autographing.

4. Dialogue with Dr Tan Cheng Bock

Next on 24th June 2016 was Dr Tan Cheng Bock, a former and seasoned Member of Parliament, and also a candidate in the 2011 Presidential elections. His dedication to his medical profession and to public engagement as a parliamentarian was pretty obvious – from his early days as a doctor administering to the poor unschooled farmers in Ama Keng to those uncomfortable encounters with our founding Prime Minister. He regaled the audience with his tongue-in-cheek delivery. The guest moderators, Dr John Ng and Mr Alvin Foo, are both authors of the book, “Heart-to-Heart with Asian Leaders” which featured Mr Lim Siong Guan and Dr Tan Cheng Bock.



Dr Tan Cheng Bock, centre, with guest moderators - Mr Alvin Foo, left, and Dr John Ng, right.

5. Dialogue with Mr Lim Siong Guan

Mr Lim Siong Guan, former head of the Singapore Civil Service, former Chairman of the Singapore Economic Development Board, and former Permanent Secretary of various government ministries, shared his vision for Singapore in the next half century in a dialogue on 3 September 2016. Currently the advisor to the GIC (Government Investment Corporation) and an Adjunct Professor in the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore since 2005, he discussed the everlasting value of 'Honour'. He chairs the Board of Directors of Honour (Singapore), a charity that seeks to promote the culture of honour and honouring in Singapore. The moderator was Dr Tan Hwee Hoon, from the Singapore Management University's Lee Kong Chian School of Business.

6. Dialogue with Minister Ong Ye Kung

The latest Dialogue guest-of-honour was Mr Ong Ye Kung, the Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) and Second Minister for Defence. Moderated again by Dr Tan Hwee Hoon on 11 February 2017, the session started with Mr Ong talking about how culture was shaped by geography and human experience. Although Singapore had limitations, its geographic location made it ideally-suited for trading. Being a small nation with limited resources, Singaporeans should venture out and do business in a rapidly changing world of digital technology. In this regard, schools and institutions of higher learning should assist their students to venture out in various ways like community service and overseas internships. He threw up an interesting idea: Skills Future can be applied in schools by helping students to discover their own strengths and develop their talents and inclinations.

Mr Lim Siong Guan autographing his books.



Mr Ong Ye Kung, centre, arriving for the dialogue. On his right is current SP Principal Soh Wai Wah. Behind him is SP Board Chair Bill Chang. On his left are President Jimmy Lim and Mr Roddy Mu Ligu, Ex-co member and Chair of Outreach Projects.

Pillar Two: Giving Back and Volunteerism

1. Volunteering work

In Giving Back, the aim is to harness the spirit of generosity in the SP community to help the less fortunate. Over the years, SPGG has organized fundraising for various charitable organisations like St Joseph's Home and Hospice and the Boys' Brigade Sharity Box. In 2009, Guild members joined SP students, the Singtel Recreation Club and the Metropolitan YMCA to thoroughly spring clean and paint three apartments belonging to under-privileged families in Pipit Road. It took them all about seven hours.

The Guild has also partnered other voluntary groups like the People's Association to organize a charity car drive in April 2014, dubbed "Love on Wheels" to benefit children from the West Coast Community Centre. Likewise in June 2016, "Cycling for Charity 2016" was a collaboration with the Holland Neighbourhood Committee and more than \$40,000 was raised for the educational programmes at the Singapore Association for the Deaf.



2. Web portal to connect members for joy and business

In 2008 and 2009, Singapore's economy took a beating from the collapse of the US investment bank Lehmann Brothers and when the H1N1 bird influenza reared its ugly beak. Ex-co meetings were peppered with concern for Guild members who were losing their jobs and had school-going children. Vincent Lim, then Ex-co chair for member and student welfare, was particularly concerned with jobless members and proposed a portal in the website to bring together, within the Guild community, employers, the unemployed, those with business ideas who were seeking partners, and those who were looking for contract jobs. It was also advertised as a way for members to connect with each other.



Sixth Guild President Vincent Lim (2011-2013), centre, at the annual general meeting, 2012.



Ex-co Member Tay Choon Mong with SPGG Bursary awardees from SP, 2013.

3. Bursary awards for members' children and SP students

Another proposal of member helping member came from Treasurer Hoe Lye Soon: the SPGG Bursary Awards, to help members' children in schools, the Institute of Technical Education, and SP.

The first SPGG Bursary Awards 2010 presentation came to fruition in December 2009 when seven school-going children of members and 14 students from SP received awards. There were ten primary school children who received \$100 each, five from Secondary schools who were given \$200 each, another five from the Institute of Technical Education who received the same amount, and five from Singapore Polytechnic who were awarded \$400

each. The total sum was \$7,000. The award presentation was held concurrently with the annual Christmas Light-up.

The SPGG Bursary Awards continued for a few years but the number of members' children needing help dwindled. Bursary Awards 2011 gave a total of \$10,300 to only five members' children but 23 SP students received awards. For 2012, only three members' children compared to 38 SP students received awards that totalled \$15,000. There were no applications from members' children in 2013 while 32 SP needy students were selected and subsequently received \$12,800 in total. Since then, the Guild decided not to offer the SPGG Bursary awards. SP students would be advised to apply for the bursaries in the SPGG Endowment Fund.

4. The SPGG Endowment Fund

In 1984, the SP Board accepted the Guild's proposal for the renovations of the second floor of the hilltop clubhouse and decided to sponsor it to the tune of \$500,000. One of the agreed conditions was for the Guild to assist the alma mater to raise funds for the betterment of students through the launch of the Graduate Endowment Fund. This was announced on the opening day of the hilltop clubhouse on 27 October 1988, the same day that SP was instituted 34 years ago. Later, in July 1990, the Guild was able to send a Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank Corporation cheque of \$3,000 – its first instalment into SP's Endowment Fund.

Then in 2008, when Ex-co meetings were full of discussions on how to help members affected by the economic slow-down, Jimmy proposed a charity fund for SP students who were not covered by existing financial schemes in the Polytechnic and were not top-notch students academically. To be jointly managed with SP, the donors should get tax-exempt receipts and one-to-one matching by the government could be explored. He soon broached the idea to various parties in SP and out of SP – those who had experience in running similar funds.

i. New terms of reference for the SPGG Endowment Fund

In 2010, Jimmy met the right champion – SP Principal Tan Hang Cheong who



was very positive and agreed to set up the SPGG Endowment Sub-Fund in which the government could increase any donation by 1.5 times. Jimmy refined the terms of reference of the SPGG Endowment Fund.



Dr Indrayogan Yogarajah, the highest individual donor (arms folded) at a dinner for benefactors and beneficiaries to meet, 2014.

The sum of each bursary donation is \$20,000 while each successful student would be awarded \$1800. The donor would get to name the bursary and the selection criteria, for example, according

to the diploma course of the recipient, or his or her country of origin.

S'pore Polytechnic grads' fund helps needy students

By PRISCILLA GOY

SINCE his mother retired from her job as an administrative officer three months ago, Mr Tan Yong Jie and his family have had to rely on their life savings.

But the third-year student at Singapore Polytechnic will now have a lighter financial load, thanks to the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild Endowment Fund.

"It will definitely help to pay for my school fees and I may not need to work odd jobs on weekends any more," said the 22-year-old, an only child who lives with his divorcee mother.

Mr Tan is one of the first 25 financially needy students to benefit from the fund, which was established in July last year by school alumni to help students who have fallen through the cracks of existing bursary schemes.

They received the fund award last month and will have a bursary of at least \$1,800 each year.

The school is only able to help fewer than half the applicants who require financial assistance every year.

Many cannot benefit from the other financial schemes because their academic grades do not meet the requirements.

The fund stands at over \$450,000, thanks to donors such as the Lee Foundation and former students who donate to their alma mater.

Fund chairman Jimmy Lim, 54, who played a key role in setting it up, hopes it will hit the million-dollar mark by the end of this year.

"I almost could not complete my first year at school back in the 1970s due to a dire lack of money," he recalled. "If not for the support, financial and otherwise, I would not have been able to obtain my diploma – a passport to the working world."

"Just as I was a beneficiary of kindness, I also want to pass on this torch of kindness in the form of a priceless gift of education."

✉ goyshiyi@sph.com.sg

ii. Getting Potential Donors

The team made lists to reach out to potential donors and charitable foundations. Prosperous alumni, past and present Ex-co members, and even close associates and friends who were not Guild members were infected with the team's enthusiasm. The alma mater certainly helped to link some donors like Mr Indrayogan Yogarajah who initially wanted to give to SP but was told of the SPGG Endowment Fund. He has become the highest individual donor with \$500,000! More than half of the donors are SPGG members. Even the former patron of the Guild, Mr Peter Chen contributed five bursaries – a total of \$100,000. Another donor of note is Mr Choo Chiau Beng, the Board Chairman of M1 Limited and former Chief Executive Officer of Keppel Corporation. With no affiliation to SPGG and SP, he responded positively to Jimmy's cold letter of solicitation and donated a bursary.

The Launch of the SPGG Endowment Fund was picked up by the Straits Times. Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission.

iii. Launch of the SPGG Endowment Fund

The Fund was quietly launched at the Chinese New Year “Lo-hei” celebration in February 2013. With a glowing heart, Jimmy presented the first cheque of \$285,400 to SP Principal Tan Choon Shian. A few months later in May 2013, the selection committee had the opportunity to hear the 25 successful applicants’ sad stories. These recipients later attended an appreciation dinner in May 2014 where they met their benefactors. Benefactors like Wee

Chwee Heng the first Guild president, rushed there from another event, as he really wanted to meet the recipient. He dropped another sum of \$20,000. The three students selected to share their stories reiterated that they hoped to be the donors one day.

As of July 2017, the SPGG Endowment Fund reached over \$2 million dollars and with a matching of 1.5 times by the government, the total fund size is over \$5 million. In total, 301 students have benefited from the SPGG Endowment Fund.



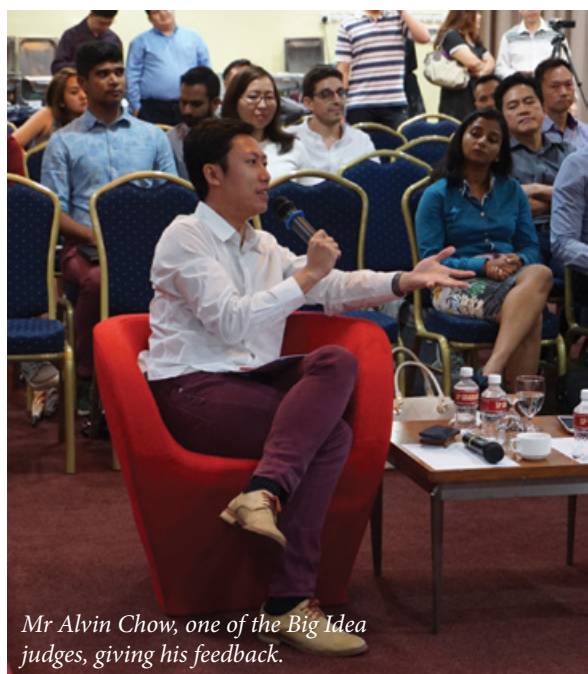
*Donors at the SPGG Endowment Fund
appreciation dinner, 2017.*

Pillar Three: Transforming into an Entrepreneurs' Hub



Poster of The Big Idea.

Many Singapore Polytechnic graduates have set up their own businesses that are listed in the Association for Small and Medium Enterprises. As the biggest registered alumni association, SPGG has always had the wish to get involved in entrepreneurship and be of help to its members and SP graduates to develop their entrepreneurial ideas. When the Dover Road clubhouse opened in 2001 there was a vision to support members and other alumni to work towards their entrepreneurship dreams. The SPInnovation centre was launched with the alma mater, but it never quite took off.



Mr Alvin Chow, one of the Big Idea judges, giving his feedback.

1. The BIG IDEA – SPGG's functioning Entrepreneurial Hub

Today, SPGG has styled itself into an entrepreneurs' hub to help young aspiring businessmen walk through capital investment, mentorship, and networking. In April 2015, Dr Damian Tan the Ex-co's Chairman for entrepreneurship, was ready to launch the Guild's entrepreneurs' hub. Called The Big Idea, it is a platform to bring together hopeful entrepreneurs, seasoned mentors, angel investors and technical experts. The format is to invite budding entrepreneurs in and out of the SP fraternity to present their big idea to a panel of judges comprising of established entrepreneurs. This way, they get valuable feedback on their business ideas and a chance to meet and network with potential investors.



Ex-co Member Dr Damian Tan giving the BIG-GEST Award to winner Mr Ravi Patel for his Yolopay idea.

entrepreneurship is more fun as it gives you a bigger challenge and the rewards are immense”.

2. Pitching viable ideas at The Big Idea

To date, The Big Idea has had four sessions of pitching before judges who would comment on the financial viability and presentation skills, and give insights into possibilities and pitfalls of the idea. Teams are given certificates of participation. At the second session in October 2015, the team that won, Visual Mass, aspired to produce boutique quality eyewear at a fraction of the cost. Its well-thought-out idea and business plan was commended. One of the judges, Dato’ Ramasamy, a successful businessman, serial entrepreneur and an SP alumnus, advised the youthful participants: “It’s no good getting a degree anymore. A degree only helps to open doors and gives a different perspective. As Dr Damian Tan said,

At the fourth session in December 2016, eight teams pitched their ideas to a panel of wizened investors and experienced entrepreneurs, in the hope of turning their Big Ideas into reality. Many outstanding ideas were pitched. The winner was YoloPay whose idea was an IT application to help families manage their money prudently. Parents could be given insights and the control mechanisms to manage their households better through their own ‘banking’ platform.

The Big Idea is certainly the Guild’s contribution to develop start-ups among youths whether from the SP community or elsewhere. They get an airing for their ideas, honest critique from experienced entrepreneurs, a chance to meet angel investors and network with like-minded people.

Pillar Four: Raising Service Quality and Vibrancy

1. Service Quality

Service quality initiatives start from taking care of staff welfare and their motivation, enhanced training for staff, recognition of best-performing staff, and simplifying work procedures. Any complaints from members are taken seriously and investigated.

Service quality shows in upgrading and renewal of facilities. Between 2010 and 2013, SPGG embarked on renovations, starting from the two wellness centres, the front desk lobby area, a new coffee hub, the arcade room, the poolside café,

and the history wall that runs from the lobby area to the coffee hub, all at a whopping sum of \$700,000.

Service quality is also about “delighting” members and their families and friends. To serve members, the Guild collaborates with partners to provide rewarding experiences in the form of rebates, packages, and early-bird registration privileges. Merchant partners run the gamut of health providers, entertainment and lifestyle companies and travel agencies. One such partnership in 2015 was with the Castlewood group to offer discounted tickets to football enthusiasts from the Guild to meet the Stoke City first team squad. Big one-off events are also organized. An example was the Style and Chic Party in 2014, for youthful members and their guests. There was live music, games and food, and the swimming pool was actually converted into a fashion runway!

2. Vibrancy

The Guild today is humming with activities. In the day, there could be corporate bodies running their staff training and student members bounding in to book a pool table game or a bowling lane. In the evenings, the gymnasium grinds with single-minded body-builders and there might be a talk or a networking event. In the weekends, young families converge at the pool and the restaurants, and a huge crowd would be attending a wedding reception. It all started in early 2012 when the Ex-co wanted to inject more life into the clubhouse; they



One of the many offers for members.

Weekend family fun.



discussed new initiatives and ideas with members, business partners, and even guests. Initiatives to raise the vibrancy factor come from the vision to be “a club of distinction with diverse activities”.

In addition to the usual sports competitions, open houses, and talks, the Ex-co has added a Youth Chapter to engage young members and their friends, ranging from 15 to 35 years old. It is an important strategy for the Guild’s continuity. No less important are Interest Groups, to attract members to be more active and in turn, encourage their friends to join as members.

i. SPGG Youth Chapter

The SPGG Youth Chapter was launched in March 2014 and driven by the Honorary General Secretary in the Ex-co, Mr Raymond Tay who is also the Chair for Lifestyle, Wellness and Youth. At its first event Wine 101 in March 2014, an impressive crowd of 55 people learned how to pair wines with local dishes and went through an aroma exercise. The Youth Chapter’s chairman, Mr Ryan Wong, believes that “Being young is all about boldly following your passion and interests, while having lots and lots of fun”.

Youth Chapter packing food for distribution to the Aged.



With so much adrenalin, their next activities were a friendly game of paintball at the Singapore Discovery Centre; and Spook Night when they visited supposedly haunted places like Dead Man Village at Bukit Brown, in the still of the night. They also organised a Beer Appreciation with representatives from Sapporo beer, courtesy of the operator of the Prince Edward Lounge, in May 2016. Members were treated to a spread of Japanese-inspired cuisine and complimentary bottles of Sapporo beer, after which they adjourned to the Prince Edward Lounge to party away with more Sapporo beer.

ii. Interest Groups @SPGG

Interest groups have created a high level of member engagement and vibrancy. In 2012, Mr Raymond Tay, the Chairman for Lifestyle, Wellness and Youth, gave out survey forms to find out what members were really interested.

• Sports Interest Groups

The first Sports Interest Group started with the formation of the Bowling Interest Group in April 2009 by Mr Victor Lye, currently the Chairman of Sports. The Bowling Interest Group sub-



Youth Chapter members playing Paintball.

committee was so successful in attracting members into the game of bowling and related activities that it eventually morphed into the Bowling Section in July 2011. The vibrant Bowling Section with its hardworking committee not only organises the usual bowling activities, but also builds up awareness of SPGG by having friendly games with other Clubs on an ‘away-and-home’ basis. It also encourages SP students to sign up for SPGG membership.

Next under Sports was the Running Interest Group, which was officially set-up in August 2012. This group meets up regularly on Tuesday evenings for their interaction and runs, guiding members on the finer points of safe running with regular participation in competitions such as Poly 50 Campus Relay and the Standard Chartered Marathon Run.

The Golf Passion Group is still in its infancy and was inaugurated in December 2015. Golf clinics for beginners as well as 18-hole games at external golf courses are organised to build up the interest of members in this sport.

• **EduTours Interest Group**

The EduTours Interest Group has gone on a number of tours to food factories – old-school traditional types and those using biotechnology principles – to hidden corners of the island that members would not normally go on their own. In 2014, they also visited an exhibition on “Our City of the Future”. Many of such activities are family-oriented,

allowing members to bond with other members’ families too. The highlight in 2015 was the TCM and Clean Eating EduTours. It had a balanced programme of the Science Arts TCM College on the origins of herbs and traditional Chinese medicine. They visited the Fei Fah Ointment and Balm Factory to learn about the benefits of crocodile oil as a miracle cure for skin problems, and Mate Tea as a control for ailments such as diabetes. The final and perhaps most interesting stop on the tour was Gene Oasis, a laboratory set up to rid the highly-beneficial bird’s nest product from common contaminants that still exist in today’s commercial bird’s nest products.



The happy Running Interest Group.



The EduTours group on a discovery trip at the shop in the Fei Fah Ointment and Balm Factory, April 2015.

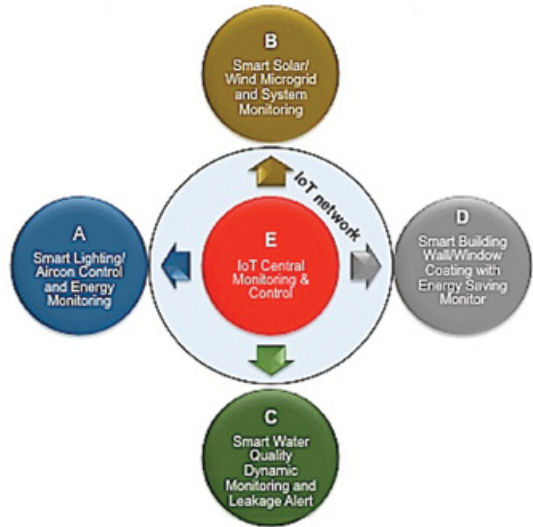
What's Next: The SMART Clubhouse

The fourth industrial revolution is the current trend of automation and data exchange in technological development. It includes cyber-physical systems, the Internet of Things (IoT) and cloud computing.

To cope with technology advancement and members' high expectations, SPGG is taking a giant step to improve daily operations with additional requirements, namely Connectivity, Data Security, Accountability and Smart Services Quality. SPGG and SP are collaborating to develop these system facility management and operation in the Guild's premises. The collaboration is essentially to design, develop, deploy, and showcase the integration of Smart and Green technologies in a clubhouse environment, for enhanced operational efficiency and sustainability.

The benefit for SPGG in being a test bed is that it will get a wonderful opportunity to apply enterprise resource planning with Smart and Green technologies. For SP, the project will be a valuable live learning laboratory for its students, and may possibly spin off other research and development projects.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 31 October 2016



Applying Smart and Green Technologies in a clubhouse environment for enhanced operational efficiency and sustainability.

with the School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Other departments that will be involved are the School of Architecture and the Built Environment; the Department of Industry Services; the Department of Technology, Innovation & Enterprise (TIE); and TIE's Advanced Materials Technology Centre.

How did this vision come about? In the past few years, the Ex-co had been thinking of ways to increase productivity, control costs and optimize the use of limited resources

The four signatories to the memorandum of understanding, from left: Mr Loon Yeong Tai, General Manager of SPGG; Mr Jimmy Lim, President of SPGG; Mr Lim Peng Hun, Deputy Principal, Engineering Cluster; and Mr Loh Yew Chiong, Director of School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering.



to sustain the operations of this Guild house. Introducing Enterprise Resource Planning system (ERP) seems to be the most progressive direction. This trend inspired Dr Khong Poh Wah, the first Vice President, to introduce SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) experiences to the SPGG Clubhouse. The SMART experiences will bring together people, process, data, and things to make networked connections more relevant and valuable than ever before. It will turn information into actions that create new capabilities, richer experiences, and improved service qualities. With an IoT (Internet of Things) platform, a suite of components consisting of devices, buildings and items that are embedded with electronics, software, sensors, and network connectivity, will offer members an opportunity to drink, to eat, and meet former SP classmates in a new hospitality environment.

The project team includes General Manager Loon Yeong Tai who began exploring with various parties – members, vendors and institutional experts who have experiences in ERP systems and smart technology. Mr Lim Peng Hun, SP's Deputy Principal (Engineering) was also consulted. After numerous meetings, the SP-SPGG collaboration was formalised.

SPGG General Manager Mr Loon Yeong Tai, who is also an SP alumnus, says: "The whole project is understandably very challenging and success is dependent on many factors: commitment, co-operation from various parties, and the ability to leverage on each party's strength and resources. Just like how the early Guild pioneers who had rallied many alumni to build this millennium clubhouse, the current Ex-co now wishes to rely on that same SP spirit to transform the current clubhouse into a SMART Guild house."

Moving Forward: the Challenges

Right now the Guild is in good shape. But as with everything else in life, there are no guarantees, only wise decisions to recognize what needs to be changed, and an innovative gung-ho spirit to see the right things through.

With the transformative Four Pillars, the Guild has clear directions on how to maintain the vibrancy of the clubhouse

and keep members coming. To survive, the Guild must of course be financially strong. Beyond that, it must maintain a healthy membership enrolment and be relevant to its members and its biggest supporter – Singapore Polytechnic and the student community. If all three main stakeholders in the Guild – the Ex-co and staff, the Members and the alma mater – understand and work towards



The “action heroes” of SPGG past and present presidents, patrons, SP principals and a few friends at the Guild’s Tenth Guild house Anniversary, 2010. Standing from left – Dr Lim Boh Soon, Mr Peter Chen, Mr Jimmy Lim, Mr Chan Soo Sen, Mr Wilson Fu (SP Industrial Management Alumni), Mr Lim Chin Aik, and Mr Alex Lo (SP Entrepreneurs’ Club). Sitting from left are three former SP principals – Mr Low Wong Fook, Dr Khoo Kay Chai and Mr Tan Hang Cheong.

meeting each other's expectations, the Guild would be in great health.

The importance of a committed Ex-co cannot be over emphasized. The Ex-co members are generally over-worked volunteers who understandably feel unappreciated at times and who might not always have a sense of ownership of the Guild nor make the best decisions. Will they always have the honesty and gumption to overturn things that do not work well and look into revolutionary strategies? Do they always motivate staff to give their best and walk the extra mile? Do they have succession plans to recruit new leaders who are willing, able and ready to serve the Guild?

Stable membership over the years has never gone above 4,000 although the current number of SP graduates is now 195,654. How can the Guild attract younger alumni who would still value the unique history of the Polytechnic and the relationships formed in their student days? Today, the young easily form their own hobby-based affiliations through social media. Already facilities like the swimming pool and the bowling alley are passé to the millennial generation. How can the Guild engender a stronger emotional connection among them? The Guild has been organising various

activities to engage them but having a much stronger presence on social media is now utterly necessary.

Last but certainly not least is the need for the Guild to continue to forge, and improve even, the good symbiotic relationship that they have had with the alma mater. For now the Guild is a stronger and independent alumni body compared to those of other polytechnics. One of the ways the Guild is supporting SP is the SPGG Endowment Fund with more than \$5 million (inclusive of government matching) for SP students who have fallen through the cracks of the usual financial support schemes. This is an additional benefit for students of SP, an advantage that none of the other Polytechnic alumni associations can boast of. The Guild could also look into supporting SP in the new direction of Skills Future and adult education, like rallying successful alumni entrepreneurs to offer courses, internships and professional talks.

The alma mater would expect the Guild to be managed well as befits the latter's reputation as the premier alumni club of the nation's first polytechnic. Collaboration like the SMART clubhouse initiative hopefully is not the last.

Conclusion

Like other clubhouses, the Guild went through a long journey of ups and downs – an exciting start, a period of dormancy in the 1970s, the excitement of running a new clubhouse, tough processes of getting land, raising funds to build their own permanent clubhouse and exhilaration over running a full-facility clubhouse. But there have also been management slip-ups, unfulfilled dreams and projects, and near insolvency.

Today it is in good hands. Today it has all come together. Creative solutions, targeted initiatives, discipline, and most of all, hard work have led to a well-run Guild house. The binding factor has been the affiliation to the alma mater. Many times the Management of Singapore Polytechnic has lent a kind and helping hand, and invaluable advice. After 46 years, the Guild has thrived and will continue to thrive... as long as it has the support of Singapore Polytechnic, and as long as alumni deem it relevant. And in the words of Jimmy Lim, the current president of the Ex-co: “The existence of SPGG would not have any meaning without the support of its alma mater.”

With that support and good leadership, the Guild will continue to weather any storm that may appear on the horizon.

Creative solutions, targeted initiatives, discipline, and most of all, hard work have led to a well-run Guild house. The binding factor has been the affiliation to the alma mater. Many times the Management of Singapore Polytechnic has lent a kind and helping hand, and invaluable advice. After 46 years, the Guild has thrived and will continue to thrive...

Appendix 1

SPGG ENDOWMENT FUND

List of Donors, February 2017

S/N	Bursary Award	Donor Name	Total Donation
1	Acez Instruments Bursary Award	Acez Instruments (S) Pte Ltd	\$20,000
2	Ang Soo Cheng Bursary Award	Ang Soo Cheng	\$60,000
3	Apexid Bursary Award	Apexid Pte Ltd	\$22,672.50
4	Architecture Bursary Award	Balakrishnan S K Vellu, Birkhall Pte Ltd, Gan Eng Oon, Teoh Hock Guan	\$22,000
5	Challenger Bursary Award	Challenger Technologies Limited	\$20,000
6	Chen Siew Ik & Yip Siew Har Bursary Award	Chen Siew Ik	\$20,000
7	Choo & Lim Bursary Award	Choo Chiau Beng	\$20,000
8	Compass I Bursary Award	Lim Peng Hun & Family	\$20,000
9	CSE Global Engineering Bursary Award	CSE Global Limited	\$260,000
10	Dato' Ramasamy Ramesh Bursary Award	Dato' Ramasamy Ramesh	\$40,000
11	Dr Khoo Kay Chai Bursary Award I	The Community Foundation of Singapore, Hoe Lye Soon, Koh Whuan-Tim, Victor, Tay Choon Mong	\$20,000
12	Dr Khoo Kay Chai Bursary Award II	Wee Chwee Heng, Neo Garden Catering Pte Ltd, Koh Sock Yen, Kathleen, Marimuthu Gurunathan, Yap Kin Wai	\$20,500
13	Er Goh Siak Joo & Pei Sin Bursary Award Goh Khin Chiew & Gek Kee Bursary Award	SJ Thames Consulting Engineers Pte Ltd	\$60,000
14	Flotech Bursary Award	Flotech Controls Pte Ltd	\$20,000
15	Goh Yeow Lian Bursary Award	Goh Yeow Lian	\$20,000
16	ISOTeam Bursary Award	ISOTeam Ltd/ISO-Team Corporation Pte Ltd	\$40,000

17	Joseph Goh Boon Hock Bursary Award	Goh Teik Poh	\$20,000
18	Kumpulan Akitek Bursary Award	Wee Chwee Heng	\$71,000
19	Lee Foundation Bursary Award	Lee Foundation	\$25,000
20	Lim Seng Bee & Swee Cheng Bursary Award	SJ Thames Engineering Pte Ltd	\$40,000
21	Low BH Bursary Award Ong GK Bursary Award	Low How Han	\$40,000
22	Low Ming Wah Bursary Award	Low Ming Wah	\$80,000
23	Low Wong Fook Bursary Award	Prof. Low Poh Sim	\$80,000
24	Megawatts Bursary Award Services Pte Ltd	Megawatts Engineering Services Pte Ltd	\$20,000
25	Mrs Chen-Lee Hup Ee Bursary I Mrs Chen-Lee Hup Ee Bursary II	Chen Min Liang, Peter	\$100,000
26	MSE Consultants Pte Ltd Bursary Award	MSE Consultants Pte Ltd	\$20,000
27	Mui Siew Kim Bursary Award Seah Chian Seng Bursary Award	Seah Chin Hong, Albert	\$40,000
28	Ng Poh Lian Bursary Award	Lim Wei Cai	\$40,000
29	Sarojini Devi Bursary Award	Dr Indrayogan Yogarajah	\$500,000
30	Yogarajah & Sarojini Devi Bursary Award		
31	Yogarajah Bursary Award		
32	Siddhartha Centre Bursary Award	Siddhartha Centre	\$20,000
33	SPGG Bursary Award	Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild	\$20,000
34	Tan Cheng Siong Bursary Award	Tan Cheng Siong	\$40,000
35	Terence Ng & Associates Bursary Award	Ng Teck Huat, Terence	\$20,000
36	Tham Choon Kin/ Tran Thi Huyen Bursary Award	Tham Choon Kin	\$20,000
37	Tzlat Tze Bursary Award	Kok Choong Yang, Dan	\$20,000
38	Victor Lye Bursary Award	Lye, Victor	\$20,000
39	Yeapp Sui Hong Bursary Award	Ng Kok Hoon, Robin	\$40,000
40	YP Kong Bursary Award	Yeo Keng Joon	\$20,000
41	Farid Kamal Hussain Bursary	Farid's Family & Friends	\$40,000

Appendix 2

SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC GRADUATES' GUILD LIST OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

for the period from 1971 to 2017

Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	1st AGM held on 30 Jul 1971 1st Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Wee Chwee Heng Yim Teck Lim Fang S P, Bob Chan Pak Hong Peter Mui Fan Cheang Tan Cheng Siong Ong Teong Pin Teo Teck Soo Wan Soon Yong Loke Pak Chee Tan, David
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	2nd AGM held on 26 Jan 1980 2nd Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Balakrishnan S K Vellu Chan Pak Hong Ng Boon Piou Hong Hin Choon Ang Poh Soon Lake Yew Hang, Steven Lim Thian Soo Lee Soo Yong (resigned on 28.8.80) Tan Leong Kwee, Justine Sim Wee Meng Chang Seng Put
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	3rd AGM held on 28 Nov 1981 3rd Ex-co
President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Co-opt Co-opt	Ang Poh Soon Hong Hin Choon Lim, Johnny Ng Boon Piou Chan Pak Hong Balakrishnan S K Vellu Lake Yew Hang, Steven Teo Seng Cheong, Henry Tan Yew Seng Ng Ai Hua Lum Mei San, Sharon

Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	4th AGM held on 4 Jun 1983 4th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Ang Poh Soon Hong Hin Choon Ahmad Arif B Md Rasheed S. Mohan Ng Boon Piou Lim, Johnny Lake Yew Hang, Steven Lum Mei San, Sharon Sidharthan Balakrishnan S K Vellu Chua Eng Lam
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	5th EX-CO held on 27 Oct 1984 5th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Ang Poh Soon Lim Meng Tong Balakrishnan S K Vellu Hong Hin Choon Choo Kwai Hoong, Tony Mrs Leong-Chia Kim Yen Ng Boon Piou Lake Yew Hang, Steven Tan Soo Kon Kong Kean Wah Chua Eng Lam
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	6th AGM held on 10 May 1986 6th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Ong Yeaw Seng, Martin Dr Loh Chun Pong, Aaron Chua Swee Hee, Jack Liew Chin Chye, Roy Siew Wah Hoon Dr Lim Boh Soon Tiong Cherh Teck Cheong Kok Sing, Alex Somasundhram Mohan Syed Mohd Albar

Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	7th AGM held on 18 Oct 1986 7th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Ong Yeaw Seng, Martin Dr Loh Chun Pong, Aaron Capt Liew Chin Chye, Roy Chua Swee Hee, Jack Siew Wah Hoon Dr Lim Boh Soon Cheong Kok Sing, Alex Tiong Cherh Teck Wong Yew Chuen, Wayne Chan Tiow Meng, Dennis
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	8th AGM held on 26 Sep 1987 8th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Ong Yeaw Seng, Martin Lim Hock Seng, Jimmy Dr Siew Wah Hoon Capt Liew Chin Chye, Roy Fun Chee Heng (Membership) Goh, Reggie (Sports & Social) Lee, Patrick (Facilities) Tan Hwee Ee (Publication) Tiong Cherh Teck (Continuing Education)
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	9th AGM held on 17 Sep 1988 9th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Lim Hock Seng, Jimmy Liew Siow Gian, Patrick Low Eng Teck Chew Wan Cheong, Lionel Tan Hwee Ee Koh Wee Keng Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Lee Kum Swee Lim Keng Eng, Kelvin
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	10th AGM held on 21 Oct 1989 10th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Lim Hock Seng, Jimmy Chew Wan Cheong, Lionel Wong Joon Chew, Jason Low Eng Teck, Alvin Kok Choong Hwa Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Lee Kum Swee Koh Wee Keng Chan Kok Wei Seah Lam Kok

Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	11th AGM held on 27 Oct 1990 11th Ex-co
President	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey
Vice President	Lim Meng Tong
Hon Gen Secretary	Kok Choong Hwa
Hon Asst Gen Secretary	Chong Weng Tim, Bobby
Hon Treasurer	Seah Lam Kok
Committee Member	Chua, Michelle
Committee Member	Toh Chiew Chua, Roger
Committee Member	Hor Khim Thye
Committee Member	Chan Kok Wei
Committee Member	Koh Wee Keng
Committee Member	Lee Kum Swee
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	31 October 1991 12th Ex-co
President	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey
Vice President	Dr Lim Boh Soon
Hon Gen Secretary	Chong Weng Tim, Bobby
Hon Asst Gen Secretary	Loh Soo Chang, Wilfred
Hon Treasurer	Lee Kum Swee
Hon Asst Treasurer	Seah Lam Kok
Committee Member	Lee Khim Loo, William
Committee Member	Hoe Lye Soon
Committee Member	Lim Chin Aik
Committee Member	Tan Lip Teck, Jimmy
Committee Member	Tan Hock Kam, Richard
Committee Member	Toh Chiew Chua, Roger
Committee Member	Lim Meng Tong
Committee Member	Koh Wee Keng
Committee Member	Chai Wee Thong
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	23 October 1992 13th Ex-co
President	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey
Vice President	Seah Lam Kok
Hon Gen Secretary	Chong Weng Tim, Bobby
Hon Asst Gen Secretary	Lee Khim Loo, William
Hon Treasurer	Dr Lim Boh Soon
Hon Asst Treasurer	Toh Chiew Chua, Roger
Committee Member	Hoe Lye Soon
Committee Member	Lee Kum Swee
Committee Member	Tan Hock Kam, Richard
Committee Member	Lim Chin Aik
Committee Member	Koh Wee Keng
Committee Member	Chai Wee Thong
Committee Member	Tan Lip Teck, Jimmy
Committee Member	Lim Meng Tong
Committee Member	Kok Choong Hwa

Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	14th AGM held on 22 Oct 1993 14th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Seah Lam Kok Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Dr Lim Boh Soon Toh Chiew Chua, Roger Hoe Lye Soon Lee Kum Swee Kok Choong Hwa Tan Hock Kam, Richard Chai Wee Thong Tan Lip Teck, Jimmy Loh Soo Chang, Wilfred Koh Wee Keng Lim Chin Aik Lee Khim Loo, William
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	15th AGM held on 21 Oct 1994 15th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Seah Lam Kok Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Dr Lim Boh Soon Hoe Lye Soon Toh Chiew Chua, Roger Chai Wee Thong Koh Wee Keng Kok Choong Hwa Lee Kum Swee Lee Khim Loo, William Lim Chin Aik Tan Lip Teck, Jimmy Tan Hock Kam, Richard
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	16th AGM held on 26 Oct 1995 16th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Seah Lam Kok Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Dr Lim Boh Soon Lee Khim Loo, William Hoe Lye Soon Tan Hock Kam, Richard Kok Choong Hwa Lim Chin Aik Tan Lip Teck, Jimmy Chai Wee Thong Toh Chiew Chua, Roger Auyong Tuck Kheong

Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	17th AGM held on 25 Oct 1996 17th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Seah Lam Kok Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Lim Chin Aik Hoe Lye Soon Lee Khim Loo, William Chai Wee Thong Tan Hock Kam, Richard Auyong Tuck Kheong Dr Lim Boh Soon Kok Choong Hwa Toh Chiew Chua, Roger
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	18th AGM held on 24 Oct 1997 18th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Lim Chin Aik Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Dr Lim Boh Soon Lee Khim Loo, William Hoe Lye Soon Chai Wee Thong Tan Hock Kam, Richard Auyong Tuck Kheong Dr Loh Chun Pong, Aaron Toh Chiew Chua, Roger
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	19th AGM held on 16 Oct 1998 19th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Lim Chin Aik Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Dr Lim Boh Soon Hoe Lye Soon Lee Khim Loo, William Chai Wee Thong Tan Hock Kam, Richard Auyong Tuck Kheong Toh Chiew Chua, Roger Dr Loh Chun Pong, Aaron

Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	20th AGM held on 22 Oct 1999 20th Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Dr Lim Boh Soon Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Lee Khim Loo, William Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Toh Chiew Chua, Roger Hoe Lye Soon Auyong Tuck Kheong Chai Wee Thong Lim Chin Aik Tan Hock Kam, Richard Dr Loh Chun Pong, Aaron
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	21st AGM held on 27 Oct 2000 21st Ex-co
President Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Dr Lim Boh Soon Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Lee Khim Loo, William Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Hoe Lye Soon Toh Chiew Chua, Roger Auyong Tuck Kheong Chai Wee Thong (Sports & Recreation) Lim Chin Aik (Development) Dr Loh Chun Pong, Aaron (Membership) Tan Hock Kam, Richard (Facilities, F&B)
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	22nd AGM held on 31 Oct 2001 22nd Ex-co
President Vice President 2nd Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Dr Lim Boh Soon Lee Chin Hee, Jeffrey Lee Khim Loo, William Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Toh Chiew Chua, Roger Hoe Lye Soon Chai Wee Thong Dr Loh Chun Pong, Aaron Ng Thian Huat, Felix Tan Hock Kam, Richard Lim Chin Aik Remark: Postion of 2nd Vice President was created in 13 Oct 2001

Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	23rd AGM held on 25 Oct 2002 23rd Ex-co
President Vice President 2nd Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Dr Lim Boh Soon Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Dr Loh Chun Pong, Aaron Lee Khim Loo, William Toh Chiew Chua, Roger Hoe Lye Soon Tan Hock Kam, Richard (Food & Beverage) Lim Chin Aik Chai Wee Thong (Sports & Recreation) Seah Lam Kok (Business Development) Ng Thian Huat, Felix (Facilities) Remark: Jeffrey Lee became Advisor to EX-CO on 13 Oct 2001
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	24th AGM held on 31 Oct 2003 24th Ex-co
President Vice President 2nd Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member	Dr Lim Boh Soon Chong Weng Tim, Bobby Lim Hock Seng, Jimmy Dr Loh Chun Pong, Aaron Toh Chiew Chua, Roger Chai Wee Thong Hoe Lye Soon Tan Hock Kam, Richard Lim Chin Aik Lee Khim Loo, William Koh Wee Keng Ng Thian Huat, Felix
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	26th AGM held on 28 Oct 2005 26th Ex-co
President 1st Vice President 2nd Vice President Hon Gen Secretary Hon Asst Gen Secretary Hon Treasurer Hon Asst Treasurer Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member Co-opted Co-opted Co-opted	Lim Hock Seng, Jimmy Chong Weng Tim, Bobby (resigned and taken over by Seah Lam Kok) Dr Loh Chun Pong, Aaron Dr Lim Boh Soon Tan Lip Teck, Jimmy Hoe Lye Soon Chai Wee Thong Tan Hock Kam, Richard (Facilities) Seah Lam Kok (Business Development) (Became 1st Vice President after Bobby Chong resigned) Koh Wee Keng (Sports & Social) Lim Chin Aik Yeoh Poh Fang, Bridgette (Membership Services) Toh Chiew Chua, Roger Tong Kok Yeo (Co-opted in Jun 2007) Chee Kim Wee (Co-opted in Jun 2007)

Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	28th AGM held on 26 Oct 2007 28th Ex-co
President	Lim Hock Seng, Jimmy
1st Vice President	Koh Wee Keng (Public Relations & Marketing Communication)
2nd Vice President	Dr Lim Boh Soon
Hon Gen Secretary	Hoe Lye Soon
Hon Asst Gen Secretary	Yeoh Poh Fang, Bridgette (resigned wef Aug 2008)
Hon Treasurer	Seah Lam Kok (resigned wef Jun 2008)
Hon Asst Treasurer	Tong Kok Yeo (Became Hon. Treasurer on 4 Jun 2008 after Seah Lam Kok resigned)
Committee Member	Chai Wee Thong (Sports & Wellness)
Committee Member	Chee Kim Wui (Membership Service) (Became Hon. Asst. Treasurer 4 Jun 2008 after Tong Kok Yeo took over Hon. Treasurer)
Committee Member	Wong Meow Lui, Willy (Food & Beverage)
Committee Member	Choo Kelvin (Membership Development) (Resigned 16/1/2009)
Committee Member	Wong Kian Keong (Facilities)
Committee Member	Ng Hoo Yin (Appointed by EX-CO on 16/1/2009)
Committee Member	Lim Eng Soon, Vincent (Appointed by EX-CO on 16/1/2009)
Co-opted	Soh Kok Leong, Christopher (Co-opt on 16/1/ 2009)
Co-opted	Yeo Seck Kan, Henry (Co-opt on 16/1/2009)
Co-opted	Chua Loh Hoon, James (Co-opt on 16/1/2009)
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	30th AGM held on 30 Oct 2009 30th Ex-co
President	Lim Hock Seng, Jimmy
1st Vice President	Hoe Lye Soon
2nd Vice President	Ng Hoo Yin
Hon Gen Secretary	Tong Kok Yeo
Hon Asst Gen Secretary	Lim Eng Soon, Vincent (Member & Student Welfare)
Hon Treasurer	Chee Kim Wui
Hon Asst Treasurer	Soh Kok Leong, Christopher
Committee Member	Wong Kian Keong (Facilities Management)
Committee Member	Wong Meow Lui, Willy (Food & Beverage)
Committee Member	Chua Loh Hoon, James (Lifestyle, Sports & Wellness)
Committee Member	Yeo Seck Kan, Henry (Membership Services)
Committee Member	Kim Tze Wen, Lawrence (Membership Strategic Planning)
Co-opted	Chow Wai Weng
Co-opted	Ng Ti Lui, Gerald
Co-opted	Neo Teck Kwee, Alex
Co-opted	He Su Ling, Lily

Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	32nd AGM held on 28 Oct 2011 32nd Ex-co
President	Lim Eng Soon, Vincent (Stepped down wef Jul 2013)
1st Vice President	Ng Hoo Yin (Corp Comm & Marketing)(Became President after Vincent Lim stepped down)
2nd Vice President	Tay Choon Mong (Members and Student Welfare)
Hon Gen Secretary	Lim Hock Seng, Jimmy (SPGG Endowment Fund)
Hon Asst Gen Secretary	Tay, Raymond (Lifestyle & Wellness)
Hon Treasurer	Wong Kian Keong (Special Facilities Project)
Hon Asst Treasurer	Yeo Seck Kan, Henry
Committee Member	Ang Siew Kim, Cindy (Membership Services)
Committee Member	Lye, Victor (Sports)
Committee Member	Wong Meow Lui, Willy (Food & Beverage)
Committee Member	Ng Ti-Lui, Gerald (Membership Strategic Planning)
Committee Member	Tham Choon Kin (Operations Facilities Management)
Co-opted	Dr Khong Poh Wah
Co-opted	Low Ming Wah
Co-opted	Chua Wee Lin, Jasmond
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	34th AGM held on 26 Oct 2013 34th Ex-co
President	Lim Hock Seng, Jimmy (SPGG Endowment Fund)
1st Vice President	Dr Khong Poh Wah (Special Projects, Outreach)
2nd Vice President	Tay Choon Mong
Hon Gen Secretary	Wong Kian Keong
Hon Asst Gen Secretary	Tay Teck Chye, Raymond (Lifestyle, Wellness & Youth)
Hon Treasurer	Lye, Victor (Sports)
Hon Asst Treasurer	Tham Choon Kin (Facilities Management)
Committee Member	Yeo Seck Kan, Henry (Membership Strategic Planning)
Committee Member	Chua Wee Lin, Jasmond (Membership and Service Quality)
Committee Member	Ng Ti-Lui, Gerald (Corp Comm & Marketing)
Committee Member	Dr Tan Seng Hong, Damian (Entrepreneurship)
Committee Member	Low Ming Wah (Food & Beverage)
Co-opted	Tan Kay Sin, Norman
Date of appointment No. of EX-CO	36th AGM held on 24 Oct 2015 36th Ex-co
President	Lim Hock Seng, Jimmy (SPGG Endowment Fund)
1st Vice President	Dr Khong Poh Wah
2nd Vice President	Wong Kian Keong
Hon Gen Secretary	Tay Teck Chye, Raymond (Lifestyle, Wellness & Youth)
Hon Asst Gen Secretary	Tham Choon Kin (Facilities)
Hon Treasurer	Tay Choon Mong
Hon Asst Treasurer	Mu Li Guo, Roddy (Outreach Projects)
Committee Member	Lye, Victor (Sports, Food & Beverage)
Committee Member	Chua Wee Lin, Jasmond (Membership Service Quality)
Committee Member	Ng Ti-Lui, Gerald (Corp Comm & Marketing)
Committee Member	Dr Tan Seng Hong, Damian (Entrepreneurship/Social Responsibility)
Committee Member	Lam Boon Kee, Jeffrey (Social Responsibility)
Co-opted	Dato' Ramasamy Ramesh
Co-opted	Cheong Mun Tien, Adrian
Co-opted	Zhou WeiLong, Wellon

Congratulatory Messages

“May the Guild grow from strength to strength and continue its good work supporting the alumni, students and our alma mater.”

Tan Choon Shian

*Chief Executive, Workforce Singapore
(Principal & CEO of SP, 2013-2016)*

“We are grateful for all the time and energy spent to compile this memorable book. I wish to express my admiration and appreciation to all who had helped to make this happen. Congratulations!”

Wee Chwee Heng

Inaugural President, 1971

“Kudos to the Guild for the publication of this excellent and well-documented journal, without which, all that had happened in the last four and a half decades would have become lost memories. Cheers and best wishes.”

S K Bala

2nd Guild President, 1980

“My heartiest congratulations to SPGG for successfully serving your alma mater and the alumni community. May you have many more fruitful years ahead!”

Lim Peng Hun

Deputy Principal (ACAD)

“My heartiest congratulation to SP Graduates’ Guild on their 46th Anniversary. May this publication inspire greater networking, bonding and synergy among the SP alumni community for many years to come.”

Loh Yew Chiong

Senior Director ENGG, SP

"I am proud to be both an ordinary member and a past Ex-co member of SPGG! I recall stories not only of happiness and accomplishments, but tears and setbacks. Yet with its "can-do" character and "gungho" attitude, SPGG has overcome many hurdles and challenges and brought SPGG to what it is today. SPGG is indeed the pride of all SP graduates!"

Henry Yeo Seck Kan

Ex-co member, 2009-2015

SP School of Mechanical and Industrial Management, 1979/80

"What a journey and what a proud moment to record this journey!

For SP alumnus, the journey began with student life in SP. Then there was a sense of freedom and a sense of learning and being responsible for yourself. SP taught us the beginnings of a profession. It's the academic and social environment during the formative years of our adulthood in SP that stayed strongly in our memory and it is this spirit of eagerness and pride that is the impetus for the formation of a Guild.

I am proud to be associated with SP and SPGG. My journey has indeed been enriched by this association."

Dr. Damian Tan Seng Hong

Ex-co, 2013-current

My heartiest congratulations to Jimmy Lim, the President of SPGG, Ex-co members and to all those involved in producing this historical book that traces its humble beginnings to its present lively clubhouse at Dover Road. It is a big achievement. I personally treasure and cherish the good memories of my time in the SP Students' Union and the early Guild days at the Prince Edward Road Campus. Thank you and keep it up!

Bob Fang Swee Peng

Hon. Gen Secretary, 1971

"I am really proud moment of my life to see the birth and establishment formation of SPGG; to know that it has come this far and now, having come this far, to have its long history penned down in this book, "Tested Through Time" – an apt description indeed! I am truly proud of our alma mater and our Guild. SPGG is my villa. Congratulations!"

Tham Choon Kin

Ex-co, 2011- current

“Congratulations on 46 wonderful years of connecting countless young talents in Singapore. SPGG has successfully built an extensive and bonded community through the years. I am proud to be a member of the guild and I wish SPGG continued success in the years ahead.”

Dr Patrick Liew

Ex-co, 1988

Managing Partner, Global Enterprise Exchange Pte Ltd

“前人种树 后人乘凉

Being as young as the Guild, I always feel grateful to those who had sowed the seeds and put in the hard work to make the Guild what it is today. Congratulations! May the Guild continue to be a Club of Distinction!”

Low How Han

Member no. 0100067

Running Interest Group

“I am very pleased that SPGG has served its members and its community for the last forty-five (?) years, reaching amazing milestones such as building its own clubhouse and setting up the SPGG Endowment Fund. I wish SPGG many more years of achievements and success.”

Lee Kum Swee

Ex-co, 1984-1994

“My heartiest congratulations to SPGG for achieving so many milestones in its long history. I look forward to seeing the Guild achieve many more milestones in the years to come.”

Gerald Ng

Exco, 2009-current

“Wind back the clock to the nineties. I am proud to be a member of our pioneer Ex-co team who has taken on the ambitious and challenging project of building our Guild house back in early 1990s and which today is the pride of all our SPGG members. May the Guild continue to grow and expand its networking platform for both local and international graduate.”

Seah Lam Kok

Ex-co, 1989 -1996, 2005-2008

“Against all odds, SPGG has achieved remarkable success. As she proudly celebrates her 46th anniversary, it is an opportune time for her to critically study how she can stay strong in the next 46 years. Three things come to mind: Relevance, Emotion and Value. SPGG must continue to ensure she remains relevant to her stakeholders – her alma mater, members and society at large. Any guild worth its salt must bond and have an emotional relationship with her members. And clearly, members must be able to feel and see value in SPGG.”

Hoe Lye Soon

Ex-co, 1991-2009

“SPGG is the strongest registered alumni body in SP. She has faced many problems but managed to resolve them and pick herself up again. Being in the Ex-co now, I appreciate the work put in by all my colleagues before me. Kudos to all of them!”

Tay Choon Mong

Ex-co 2011-current

“I congratulate SPGG for initiating the research and publication of its early days. I applaud also the pioneering spirit of the early graduates who had the desire to keep alumni connected and relevant even though they were catapulted in different directions in pursuit of their destiny.”

Loke Pak Chee

Pro-tem Chairman, 1970

Honorary Treasurer, 1971

Since its inception, I have watched SPGG grow from strength to strength under inspiring leadership and dedicated staff. My heartiest congratulations to everyone involved. Keep up the good work!

Edward Quah

Deputy Principal, Singapore Polytechnic

My heartiest Congratulations to the Guild in achieving the successful compilation of it's colourful history and to immortalize them in a book that will not only be read but to spur future graduates on to greater heights.”

Victor Lye

Ex-co, 2011-current



The Singapore Polytechnic Graduates' Guild is the only polytechnic alumni association to have built its own guild house from scratch. They had no funds, no place and the only impetus to start and keep going was the founding father of Singapore, Mr Lee Kuan Yew who prodded them to have a guild. On that impetus alone, the members soldiered on, blissfully unaware of the daunting challenges to build a guild and manage it. Fortunately, they had the unstinting support of their alma mater. This book chronicles the Guild's journey from 1971 to 2017. It was a slippery journey to secure land, build their clubhouse and increase membership. They dreamed big, made mistakes and finally overcame the odds...

