

“Yeong Tow Foo Scissors”

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I like to share this story of the "Yeong Tow Foo Scissors". The team spirit and bonding among our Singapore Poly Marine Engineering Graduates is amazingly powerful and apparent when we studied together. It has remained so even until now. It comes from a sense of unity when we were studying and coping with many kinds of pressures in the campus.

Looking Cool

I will remember my first ever poly lecture that you (Cheng Huang Leng) conducted for our marine group of 120 students in 1978. There were promises of a great future in the marine industry, which some of us has remained to date. But I always remember the good behaviour that you expect out of us from day one.

While the rest of Poly Students could keep long hair and wear flip flops, the marine boys were an exception. Compelled to be very compliant, we all had to look cool with short hair, and strictly with proper footwear. That was quite hard for many of us in the rock and roll days of the 70s.

Eventually, we were warned to avoid being barred from taking our final exams, unless we can meet your "long hair compliant length". You took some of us with long hair by surprise one exam morning. I remember it was the last exam paper. Many long haired classmates were 'selected' by you to exit the exam. It meant instant doom for some if they fail that paper. But marine guys can be quite resourceful.

Showing great teamwork, and sharing information among the senior marine boys quickly, we found some new skills using a borrowed pair of scissors from the canteen's 'Yeong Tow Foo' vendor. And for free.

The problem was swiftly sniped away, the senior boys were there to manage and help. All was well because nobody got injured. Everyone came back from the canteen to finish the exam paper, each with a ridiculous hairstyle. But the outcome was good. I wish we had thought of keeping the "Yeong Tow Foo Scissors" for good luck. Many trendy hairstyles of our present day could have been inspired by that pair of "Yeong Tow Foo Scissors" ...

As for the Long Hair style... Well... we made up for it by keeping long hair when we all went to sea for our Cadetship! I hope it is not too late to tell this story of the "Yeong Tow Foo Scissors".
