

Celebration of a Golden Decade of Teaching- 23rd June 2012

Sometime in February 2012, David tasked me to help him get the gang together for a meal. His treat, the occasion – his 50th year as a teacher. Goodness, how long can one teach and still have that same intensity and passion? He started his teaching career in the Alor Gajah School in 1961 and was appointed to ACS Seremban in 1971. He was the Class Teacher to the insolent and audacious Form 5C. He also taught Geography and English in the other classes.

No matter how much society is modernising, there is no denying the impact teachers had in our lives. Teachers who have remained in touch with us - David, Lee Chee Ping, Chung Wai Foo, Yeoh Teng San, Chiang Hing Jin, Mrs Gunaratnam and the late Cikgu Manaf came from a generation of teachers who set a firm grounding and played a vital role in our character building. From what I read in the news in recent times, I wish there were more teachers like them who had embarked us on a mind-boggling re-learning process.

After some email interactions we selected 23 June as the choice date. It was only much later I found it was also the day of the Chinese dumpling festival. Phooi Fun helped confer the food and location. Wing Kwong sent out the preliminary email to get various people to pen a date in their diaries

Soon my own work datelines surpassed planning for the party. Suddenly in May, I realised the party was fast approaching and I has yet to sort out the guests. A flurry broadcast of SMS and back came a trickle of replies. Sigh...no new surprises. Meantime I had no clue as to what I want to do that evening. David entrusted me to organise an evening of merriment and fun; ME...fun? It's like chalk and cheese because I am rather predictable and humdrum.

Organising this party came along with its complications and it is certainly not helpful when you get RVSP responses which remained rather discouraging - see first (*see what first?*), not sure (*can come or cannot that's all I want to know!*), how much must pay first, (*if free, call whole family ah?*) that place food not nice one (*go away!*)

OK (*hello, ok means you come or not coming*), let you know later (*how much later - your diary so packed or you coming because you got nothing better to do*). Subconsciously, Lulu's hit in the late 60s 'To Sir with Love' kept buzzing in my ears and prompted me to get on with it.

"But how do you thank someone who have taken you from crayons to perfume, it isn't easy but I'll try. If you wanted the moon, I will try to reach the skies in a ladder ..."

I roped in a team to help. General Balan flashed some viewpoints. Felicia was asked with getting the facts from the Missus, Evelyn while David was at work, getting portraits of the old photos for a power point presentation and pick up a bouquet of flowers. Her other half, Chiew Lim was assigned official photographer for the evening. Wing Kwong had to arrange an appropriate song list, Peter Lingam was to serenade a special number for the evening. Sathia volunteered to arrange the cake with the ACS emblem and Chee Keong was sent to chauffeur David and Evelyn to the dinner in his sparkling Mercedes.

That did not leave me with much to do except chase up for RSVP and turning down the spouses, reminded the overseas classmates for a message and confronted my inadequate IT skills by attending on a crash PowerPoint course over lunch with my IT savvy colleagues – just enough to formulate the PowerPoint presentation for that evening. It was challenging trying to animate a sequence with over 100 photos. It was strenuous to my poor eyes but my IT skills have certainly improved.

As David was going to pick up the tab for the banquet, we had the privilege of picking him a befitting present. There was a plethora of stuff to choose, choosing the right one was perplexing. There was a toss between a personalised Monte Blanc wallet which came with a 4 digit price tag and a little less expensive exclusive Guy Larose leather wallet. I applied what David had imparted to us – don't look at the external – what is important is what is inside; so I took this literally. My practical side nudged me to stick being sensible; get the branded one and lined the inside with a 4 digit amount. (*Thanks folks for the generous contributions*)

The chairs in the private room that night were decked with golden bows and most guests arrived in good time. It was nice to see some of the juniors from other years at the dinner; Winnie Wong,

Swee Lan, Lawrence Nyeo, Peter Lingam and Michael Ng. Besides indulging everyone to some lovely homemade cupcakes, we were enthralled and captivated when Swee Lan disclosed her memoirs of David. It took us back into time to the wonderful moments we shared in school. It certainly brought the camaraderie atmosphere in the room to another exhilarating level.

David was flabbergasted with some of the sneak shots we had in the PowerPoint. Thanks to those who have managed to dispatch a message on time. The mood that evening and the students heartfelt embraces with the teacher struck just a right note of love and respect and affection for a man who had devoted 50 years of his life to his students.

When Peter Lingam sang his adaptation of "You lift me up" it said it all.

When in school, you were such a blessing
When problems arose, you were there for us
A friend indeed, a teacher of affection
You saw us through our golden days at school

You raised us up so we can stand on mountains
You raised us up to face the storms of life
We are strong when you are there beside us
You raised us up to what we are today

You raised us up so we can stand on mountains
You raised us up to face the storms of life
We are strong when you are there beside us
(We thank you Sir for who you are to us)

Angie Yen
June 2012

[Read "A Tribute to Mr Madhavan on his 50th Teaching Anniversary" under Friends -> Teachers section](#)