

Tay Eng Soon Award 2008 Recipient - Yap Leong Sun



A man of extraordinary willpower – that is 51 year-old Yap Leong Sun who has literally defied death! A regular in the army, Staff Sergeant Yap was with the elite Special Operations force of Mindef in the 1980s. He had gone through training in many key areas of specialties and was very dedicated to his vocation. However, a mid-air collision with a fellow-trooper while para-jumping during an exercise changed his life forever. The then 28-year old fell from a height of about 20 floors and landed feet first onto hard tarmac. The impact smashed both his ankles and sacrum, fractured his right leg in four different places and a portion of his spine, and ruptured his spleen, requiring him to be hospitalised for six months. Through sheer determination and hard work, he regained the ability to walk three years later.

17 operations later, Leong Sun today requires the aid of a walking stick and suffers from permanent bowel and urinary incontinence. Yet fate has also smiled upon him. He is happily married to a staff nurse with whom he has two sons aged 14 and 15. Ironically, he met his wife when she was a trainee nurse at the hospital where he was admitted immediately after the accident.

Nine years ago, Leong Sun decided to pursue his lifelong dream of continuing his education. He went for a diploma in Computer Studies and later an advanced diploma in Computer Studies classes at Informatics on weekdays, while his weekends were spent pursuing an NTC certification at the ITE. Four years later, Leong Sun enrolled into Temasek Engineering School.

Today, he graduates with a diploma in Electronics with Merit and has bagged 10 distinctions, 15 As, 2 Bs and 1C. A remarkable feat indeed for a man who had to learn Maths from scratch. His lecturers describe him as being highly motivated, very positive and extremely helpful, always willing to share his knowledge with his classmates.

"I am a very stubborn person. When I want to do something, I will go all the way and do it to the best of my ability. I don't like to fail," says Leong Sun. He lives by the maxim "Winners don't quit and quitters don't win". Far from being a quitter, he now intends to pursue a degree programme.

Leong Sun has been offered a place at the Nanyang Technological University to pursue a part-time degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Upon completion of the course, he would like to teach at the ITE because while studying there, he saw many students who were earnest in wanting to upgrade themselves and he would like to make a difference in the lives of such individuals.

Kudos to you Leong Sun! Your amazing life story and steely determination will surely inspire others to work towards similar success.