

[I REMEMBER: WHEN UNIVERSITY RESULTS WERE PUBLISHED IN THE STRAITS TIMES]

‘Whole world knew how you fared’



Jane Ng

Bernard Tan was 22, a physics major at the University of Singapore and he'd found his final exams in January 1965 "difficult".

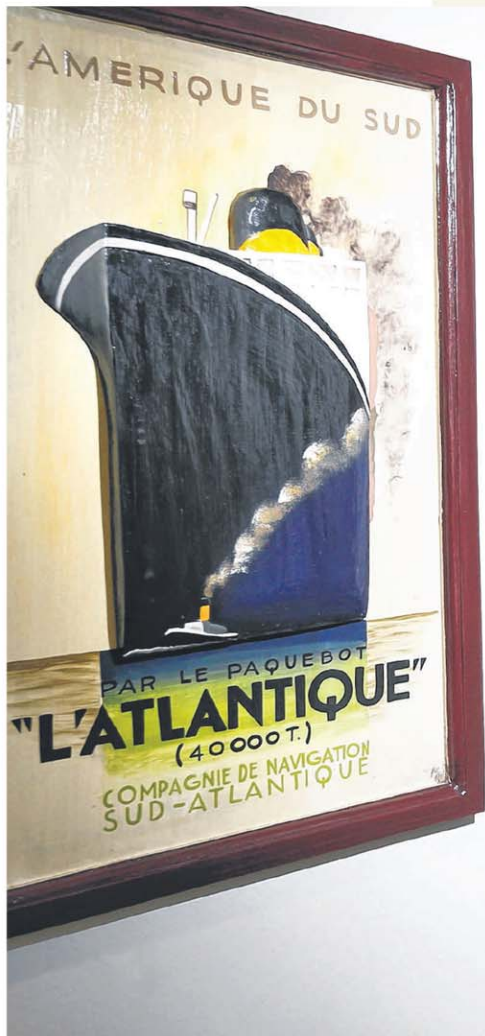
"I remember we had a gruelling six-day practical exam set by Professor Arthur Rajaratnam," he said, recalling the physics professor who died last December.

The young man was hoping to get a second class (upper) honours degree because he wanted to go into research.

At the time, university results were published in *The Straits Times*, and the Bachelor of Science results were out on March 3, 1965. Looking back, he says: "It was terrible. The whole world knew how you did."

Not that he had anything to be embarrassed about. He scored a first class honours degree.

Professor Tan, now 72 and director at the National University of Singapore's Centre for Maritime Studies, went on to do his doctorate at Oxford University, before returning to lecture in the physics department. He has held various appointments in his 47-year career at NUS,



ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Professor Bernard Tan had nothing to be embarrassed about when the results (below) came out on March 3, 1965 – he scored a first class honours degree. He then went on to do his doctorate at Oxford University.

including as head of the science faculty and dean of students.

He said that publishing the exam results used to be "a matter of routine" back in the days when the number of university students was much smaller than today.

Grades first went up on the school notice board before appearing in the next day's newspaper. It exerted a certain amount of pressure on students, he recalled.

"Somewhere along the way, grades became confidential. I'm glad the practice is not done any more," said Prof Tan, who is married to a retired teacher.

They have two sons – one is a computer analyst and the other has just received his doctorate in neuroscience.

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PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BERNARD TAN

Prof Tan at his graduation (far left) with his parents and younger brother Clarence; and (left) with his then girlfriend and future wife Jennie Lim.