A Different Journey to Success

Andass is one of the EEE graduates in 2005, who despite financial difficulties, persisted and held on to his studies, his life and his dreams……

When Andass was in his year three EEE course in NTU, his Father suffered a stroke attack, unable to work, and require consistent medical attention. Soon after that, his mother's long term illness suffered a relapse and required permanent hospitalization. Unable to afford yet another person's hospitalization bill, his family decided not to treat her illness, but arranged for her to stay at home under the care of his twelve year old niece.

Andass's brother decided to work in order to pay the expenses of the family. He replaced his father's job at the construction site, but was soon sued bankruptcy after being a guarantor for his friend. Even though he was still working, his monthly salary was not enough to pay for the flat's installment, parents' medical expenses and his daughter's education fees.

Sitting back and assessing his current situation, Andass decided to take the greatest gamble of his life; he spent all his remaining money on a set of camera and became a freelance wedding photographer. This job requires less time from him and provided almost enough money for sustenance. Andass started burning midnight oil at night, learning photography and was soon able to produce professional wedding photographs. Within a year, his efforts paid off and his photography works had been published in magazines, books, newspapers, and exhibited in galleries. He also won an award in the world's largest digital photography competition. Andass never forget his passion for teaching. He also designed and setup a photonics lab in Pioneer Junior College, where he gave workshops to their students and teachers.

However, the money was barely enough for the medical expenses. Soon his father had to stop receiving rehabilitation due to financial difficulties. The Adventist Rehabilitation Centre, ARC, knowing of his family's situation, gave his family some food as present. Andass was touched by their concern and volunteered to be their free photographer whenever the centre conducts any community service events. ARC also used Andass's self-designed motivational posters in a fund raising event. Soon, the relationship between ARC and Andass grew. Eventually, as a form of appreciation, the centre allows his Father to receive medical treatment for free, solving a major expense. In late 2004, NTU got to know of Andass's financial situation and gave him a bursary of $3000 and a loan of $3600. These monies helped Andass at the most critical moment, when he almost contemplated quitting his studies.

For the two years, Andass had to juggle between the two part-time jobs and his education in EEE, NTU. He was fortunate and grateful to his friends in NTU who had understood his difficulties, especially to Chan Hong Ni, his FYP partner, Assoc Prof John Ngo, His FYP supervisor, and Asst Prof George Chen, his Optics Engineering lecturer, who assured him that he was not facing the problems alone.

Andass's academic grades dropped tremendously after the crisis started. But when asked about the drop in performance, Andass was satisfied with his performance, as he knows he has scored full mark for his perseverance in times of crisis, and is now more readily to face any further obstacles in life.

Andass has recently been elected the Chairman for Youth Photographer's Network by the National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA). He is currently organizing the Commonwealth Youth Photography competition, where HM Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip will be invited to be the guest of honor. As for his future, he aspires to further his education, as his ultimate dream is to be a lecturer or a researcher.