

Ruling The Bends and Bending The Rules

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Written by Cheryl Tay
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PHOTOS | CHERYL TAY

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The previous NMC president, Walter Ong, a final-year Civil Engineering student, shares the same sentiments in quashing the sexist label and had no qualms in handing over the reins of the club to her.

But regardless of gender, all eight Presidents of NMC have been plagued by the same issues all these years – the misconception of having to own a car as a prerequisite to join the club and the high dropout rate of its members.

The fallacy of having to own a car is forgivable; I mean, the typical car club is usually a group of enthusiasts who gather because of the car they drive.

This is where NMC is different. Being a student club, members do not necessarily need to own cars. As long as

Cars were considered a luxury then, and parking was aplenty. However, the car population gradually increased and that's when they realised the potential for a motoring club within the school.

"We noticed more interesting cars in school and we wanted to know the owners. But it would be weird if we were to approach them or leave a random note on their cars just like that," said Roger, an Electrical and Electronic Engineering undergrad then, who went on to form the club in 2001, thereby becoming one of the founders of NMC.

Growing up

Over the years, the club has grown from its initial six members to a peak of 70. On an average, membership ranges around 20 to 30.

Also, during Walter's term, he got the club officially registered with the Registrar of Societies Singapore, and initiated and achieved the affiliation to the Singapore Motorsports Association or SMSA.

As for the continually high turnover rate of members, it is inevitable and something that the club has been battling.

"We do want to keep as many members as possible, but ultimately, it is difficult to cater to everyone. The hardcore ones may find us boring, some of the curious ones may decide this is not their interest after all and many will just join us when they can," said Virnice.

"Besides, it is the founder's vision to maintain a close-knit community of like-minded people."

Hanging out

Like all car clubs, members keep in daily contact via an online forum (www.ntu-mc.com). A kopi session is held every month and newcomers are free to come along. Other activities that the club organises include barbeques, karting sessions, and Tour de Singapore, a bi-annual islandwide drivearound. New events like lunchtime talks are in the pipeline.

Unlike other tertiary motoring clubs who organise events on a national level, NMC chooses to remain a cosy family with members-only activities.

Said Roger, "Planning largescale events might dilute the initial objective of the club and take out all the fun; we don't

there is an interest for cars or anything motoring-related, anyone is welcome to be part of the club.

The birth of NMC

Eight years ago, Roger, Boon Tao and Willie – all now 32 years of age – used to meet up in the car park after lessons to discuss about their cars. The trio then extended to a group of six, and started to meet up more regularly, often over a cup of coffee.

Car enthusiasts can be broken down into three main categories – those who think they like cars, those who generally like cars, and the hardcore aficionados.

want to end up forgetting why we gather.”

And it isn't just motoring interest that you'll find in the club.

“Besides meeting others who share the love for cars, you'll be surprised at what else you can find – other common interests like sports, friendship and maybe even love,” said Walter, who met his girlfriend through NMC.

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