



PHOTOS: ST FILE, DIOS VINCOY JR FOR THE STRAITS TIMES
 Clifford Pier in 1950 (above), and under reconstruction in 2009 (below) with Marina Bay Financial Centre also under construction in the background.

"I can't remember how long we waited, but there was no boat schedule and we did not have mobile phones then."

MR WONG HIONG BOON (left), 81, a part-time art teacher who, as a six-year-old in the late 1930s, spent hours at Clifford Pier waiting for his father to return from his job working on ships out at sea



A Pier into the past and future

A new exhibition will trace how Clifford Pier has changed from a humble pier into an upscale venue



Cheryl Faith Wee

As a six-year-old in the late 1930s, Mr Wong Hiong Boon would head to Clifford Pier at least once every two weeks on Saturday mornings.

There, he would spend hours waiting for his father Wong Seet Lin to return from his job working on ships out at sea.

The 81-year-old part-time art teacher recalls standing on a platform near the water's edge with his older brother and late mother, who were then nine and 30-something respectively, anticipating his father's

return on a sampan.

He says: "We would get there early. I can't remember how long we waited, but there was no boat schedule and we did not have mobile phones then."

Clifford Pier, which opened in 1933, was then a bustling landing and departure point for passengers commuting to ships out at sea. It was nicknamed Ang Teng Beh Tao (red lamp pier in Hokkien) because of the lights used to direct sea vessels.

Today, boats no longer arrive and depart at the art deco-style pier. It closed in 2006, and was converted into an upscale dining complex in 2008.

An exhibition next month in celebration of the pier's 80th anniversary will take a look at its past. It is organised by The Fullerton Heritage, a dining and hospitality group which runs the building.

On display are about 60 photographs of the pier, donated by the public and government agencies. Mr Wong's memories of the place, along with 13 other personal accounts of the pier, will also be featured. They consist of first-hand accounts gathered by The Fullerton Heritage, as well as

memories submitted to the irememberCliffordPier campaign of the National Library Board's Singapore Memory Project.

The president of Singapore Management University, Mr Arnoud De Meyer, 59, who has lived here for about eight years and is originally from Belgium, contributed his memories to The Fullerton Heritage.

He made trips here about three to four times a year from 1984 to teach operations management to executives from developing countries. He visited Clifford Pier in 1987 when he took a wooden boat from the pier for a day-trip to the Southern Islands.

Mr Meyer, who is single, says: "I came out of the clean high-tech world in Orchard Road, where my hotel was, into an older part of Singapore – it was a lot messier back then. There were the old Indonesian boatmen who were quite loud."

Clifford Pier was given conservation status by the Urban Redevelopment Authority in 2007.

The 26,000 sq ft space currently serves as the entrance to The Fullerton Bay Hotel, which opened in 2010. It also houses the



One On The Bund (left) at Clifford Pier serves contemporary Chinese cuisine. Some architectural features have been retained in the makeover because the pier has been designated a conservation building.

five-year-old Chinese fine-dining restaurant One On The Bund.

A chandelier now hangs from the distinct arched concrete trusses that hold up the former pier, designed by the late British architect Frank Dorrington Ward. He was also responsible for the former Supreme Court building on St Andrew's Road.

Ms Susan Leong, an administration assistant in her 30s, recalls going to Clifford Pier with her mother when she was seven years old. They were en route to the Central Business District to run errands and spent several minutes at the pier just enjoying the sea breeze.

She says: "It used to look very dark from the outside. Now it is all lit up. The high arched roof looks the same but it is now a place that is more for tourists."

Likewise, Mr Wayne Lim, 28, an operations executive in the maritime industry, says he can barely recognise the pier.

From 2003 to 2006, he went to Clifford Pier almost every day as part of his job, to take small speed crafts to big ships. Sometimes, he arrived at the pier in the wee hours of the morning at 4am.

He recalls: "Some of the people who worked there would be sleeping on the floor on mattresses. In the past, it was a very simple place but it is so high-class now. It is such a big change."

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The exhibition Clifford Pier – A Place In Our Hearts will run from June 4 to Aug 31 at One On The Bund restaurant at 80 Collyer Quay.