

ALUMNI AT LARGE

due NORTH

In November 2008, LSE alumnus **Chris Eglin** (MSc ADMIS 1994) was walking back to his hotel from the office in Stuttgart where he worked as a consultant for a large European bank. It was a journey that ultimately took him to the edge of death, the North Pole and back to London.

That evening Chris was ambushed by a knife-wielding attacker. Instead of handing over his wallet, he fought back. In the struggle that ensued, he was stabbed in the leg and shoulder – before receiving a near fatal stab to the stomach, which lacerated his liver.

“My natural instinct was to put up a fight,” says Chris looking back. “Alas, my commuting regime of the preceding 17 months – over 70 flights and living out of a suitcase – meant I possibly wasn’t in the best shape to do so. I now know that I was in a sort of haze induced by the cumulative fatigue of it all. That said, I’m proud that I managed to run to the nearest hospital – I still had the desire to survive.”

That Chris did survive is a testament to his inner strength, life-saving surgery and no small amount of luck. However, overcoming the physical injuries masked the start of an altogether different ordeal – the less publicised terrors that confront the survivor.

Initially, Chris’s recovery went well. Just eight days after surgery he’d even fulfilled a minor James Bondesque fantasy of strolling back into his hotel in his pyjamas, much to the amusement of the lobby staff and guests. A week later, he flew back to the UK, having learned that 40 metal stitches will comfortably set off the airport security alarms. “The poor security

guy could have done with smelling salts when the Frankenstein-like tapestry that had triggered the sirens was revealed,” recalls Chris.

Meanwhile, the German justice system worked quickly. Police had taken statements (and a pair of headphones Chris had somehow grabbed from his assailant) and an international arrest warrant was issued. Within a week the attacker – a drug addict – was detained in Frankfurt. In a chilling reminder of what took place, a detective also found and returned Chris’s blood-stained watch.

For the next year Chris resumed the commuter life, this time between Amsterdam and London, but all was not well. “I struggled to feel ‘normal’ again. In trying to return to whatever I thought that normality was – the pursuit of happiness and the honourable intention of providing for my family – I eventually came undone.”

Chris was suffering from acute Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The pressures of daily life and his recovery were exacerbated by the later court case to convict his attacker, which inevitably triggered memories of the attack. “One thing after another compounded my suffering. Seeing the guy who nearly killed me in the dock was hard and prior to the court case, I unexpectedly received a letter from him which shook me to the core. Soon after I found

myself crying in the street after receiving a call informing me I had diabetes. I was in a very dark place.”

Respite came via an unlikely route. Chris began volunteering in a soup kitchen in London, through which he learned about the Spitalfields Crypt Trust (SCT), a small charity helping traumatised people to piece their lives back together.

“The SCT staff and service users embraced me,” says Chris. “They cared for and about me, and gave me warmth and love. It was extraordinary. They got me a counsellor with whom I embarked on an incredible ‘inner journey’. SCT probably saved my life a second time.”

Always a keen adventurer – he’d survived a failed parachute and had white water rafted in the past – Chris sought to express his gratitude to SCT through a fundraising challenge that would push him to his very limits. He “did” the Great Wall of China and found that wasn’t the solution, either for the money raised or as part of his own catharsis, but that trekking to the top of the globe pulling a 60kg sled in sub-zero temperatures for eight days was.

With none of the relevant experience, Chris set about training for what would prove to be a



demanding, exhilarating and, ultimately, life affirming journey to the North Pole. Preparation involved pulling a sled around a snow-free Victoria Park in London for hours at a time, being chased by a llama while on a fitness training trip at 14,000 feet in Peru and cycling from Vietnam to Cambodia.

In April this year, five years of pain and uncertainty culminated when Chris and a team of world famous explorers triumphantly reached the North Pole. Further to the anticipated challenges of shifting ice, exhaustion and frostbite, the trek was made harder by his wearing an incorrect ski on one foot and struggling for half a day, wondering why his right leg wanted to go in a completely different direction.

The joy at reaching the pole has been matched by his own personal recovery. "I still want the same things as anyone else: a family, financial security, good health, and a sense of wellbeing, but I consciously remember to take pleasure from the small things now. Where it has changed me is when and how I direct my strengths and efforts to achieve that inner peace," concludes Chris. ■

Chris's trek diary can be found at
www.testyourcore.com/northwhat

You can learn more about the work of the
Spitalfields Crypt Trust at www.sct.org.uk

LSELISA

Chris Eglin is an alumnus of the ADMIS programme, a course which used to sit within the Information Systems (IS) department at LSE in Tower One, moments from Fleet Street and on the doorstep of the City of London, the world's largest financial centre.

In 2007, surrounded by a seemingly impending global financial implosion, a group of recent IS graduates and their professor met in a small Italian restaurant on Kingsway to discuss forming an alumni group. LSE Information Systems Alumni (LISA) was established and in suitable LSE fashion, the first event was at the nearest pub, the Old Bank of England.

Fast forward...

In 2011 ADMIS evolved into the MISI programme, the same year in which the IS Department became the Information Systems and Innovation Group, joined the Department of Management, moved to the New Academic Building and long standing professors retired. A "Farewell ADMIS" event that LISA helped to organise, attended by over 100 alumni from various class years and countries, ushered in a new era for the IS group, and LISA will be part of it.

The LISA committee now comprises three subcommittees that are engaging over 1,200 alumni globally. Chris's harrowing but inspirational story is one of many we've heard from alumni, all wanting to share their post-LSE lives with fellow IS graduates – a formidable pool of tech savvy, interesting and diverse people with a common point of reference: a genuine affinity for their IS days on Houghton Street.

In support of the broader Alumni Association engagement activity, LISA exists as a Special Interest Group officially recognised by the School to create a sense of community and provide mutual support and continuity to a global network of members. We achieve our mission through organising seminars and networking, career, social and cultural events. We also run a quarterly newsletter, and of course, still meet at the Old Bank of England...

Charles Wahab (MSc ADMIS 2007)

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LSE Legacy

*"How a legacy gift
became the lifebuoy
that kept me afloat"*



Interested in learning about Sin Yee's story?

Visit lse.ac.uk/legacygiving to find out more, or request a copy of the story by contacting Viet-Anh Hua in the Office of Development and Alumni Relations on +44 (0)20 7852 3654 or at legacy@lse.ac.uk