

...from the Deputy Director's
(Academic) Desk

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On the 10th of June 2013, I travelled to Ipoh to attend my first Deputy Directors (Academic) meeting. The office car driven by Fauzan Abu Bakar arrived at Syuen Hotel just before 7.00pm. We exited the highway at Jelapang and made our way downtown. Ipoh is always special to me. It was between 1972 till mid 1978 when I spent more than 6 years of my early life there. After completing Year 6 in Sekolah Kebangsaan Tunjang, Jitra, Kedah, I was offered a place at Sekolah Tuanku Abdul Rahman (STAR), a residential school in Ipoh. It was the year that I started to experience piped water and electric lighting. Back home we were still using kerosene lamp and drawing water from the well. Of course there was no flush toilet either!



STAR was situated 6 km away from town, in Lorong Harimau which has now being transformed to dual carriage way. The junction leading to Politeknik Ungku Omar was then known as Jalan Dairy but now Jalan Raja Muda Mahdi. My friends and I used to go on a bus ride from our school to town during weekend outing. The bus station in town was known as Tanjong Rambutan Station. Most people would smile at the mere mentioning of this town for it reminds them of the Psychiatric Hospital. One well known doctor then was Mahadevan. I wonder whether he is still around now. Sometimes the bus would tour Canning Garden and the army camp. By the time we reached town, everyone felt dizzy. In the early of the month, we took taxi which passed the horse racing course which may no longer exist now.

What did we do in town in those days? Sometimes, we went to Jubilee Park to play arcade games like car/bike racing, robotic arm picking up items like watches and numerous games you would normally find at funfairs. More often than not we ended up watching films at the cinema. For western films, we would go to Cathay and Odeon. One of the most memorable films at the time was Earth Quake (1974) which came with "sensurround". It was so realistic that you feel like the explosions really happened in the cinema. Other films were like French Connection II (1975), One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975) and All the President's Men (1976). The Grand Cinema always showed Hindi Film. The film Bobby was a real block buster. I heard they were patrons who watched it numerous times. I myself watched it twice. For Kung Fu films we went to Ruby Theater. The heroes at the time were Bruce Lee, Ti Lung and Fu Sheng. For the next few days we acted like tough guys but broke no furniture in the hostel.



There were no supermarkets in those days. The best Ipoh could offer was an emporium which is equivalent to a mini market today. Sometimes I would buy pirated novels there whenever there was good offer like, "Buy One, Free One". Actually, the real reason why we went to the emporium was to stay away from the heat outside. Once, we were hauled up by the security guards for being suspected of shoplifting. It was nothing for we were no thieves. Close to the bus station, there was Freedom Café (like the current Nasi Kandar restaurant) which served the best fresh milk in town. We always had our "Nasi Campur" lunch at Sumatra Restaurant. In the restaurant there was an altar with deity images, joss sticks and fruits offering. Once, I quietly helped myself to the banana. The Chinese aunty who served us drinks noticed the missing banana but did not ask. I already disposed off the evidence (the banana skin) through the window. Oh, sorry aunty.

I remember a stall selling delicious "goring keladi". Next to it was a stall selling carbonated drink which was freshly prepared. The best "Air Batu Campur" (ABC) in town was near the old hospital. We never missed it whenever we were in the area. Sometimes we would roam Taman Seenivasagam too. I wonder whether the round-shaped building in town selling Tambun Pamelos still exists today. There are so much changes after nearly 40 years.

In the old school system we used to have term breaks. The end of year break was like 7 weeks long. Everyone would go home by train except students from Kelantan and Terengganu. The school would charter Mogah buses to take them home. Our group from Penang, Kedah and Perlis would be sent to Ipoh Train Station. The train scheduled at 12 midnight would always turn up a few hours late. We did not mind. Most often we just sat on the steps all the way up north. It was the most care-free time in our lives. Some of my closest friends were Nasir Ismail, Rosli Ahmad (Lee Kore), Redzuan Lah, Sokhini Hamid and Fikri Abdullah (Yoi). Initially we were given group warrants. One of the senior students would be appointed as the leader. All we had to say was "leader" to the ticket inspector. Later on we were issued individual tickets. It used to cost RM8.20 from Ipoh to my local train station in Tunjang. My late father used to fetch me there. For the return journey, my friends and I would cycle to the station. They would wait until the train left. My best village friends were Omar Mat, Hashim Abu Hassan, Azmi Saud and SobriRodzi who became a prison warden in PengkalanChepa, Kelantan. He settled there after getting married to a local.



*Abdul Hashim
Abdul Karim*

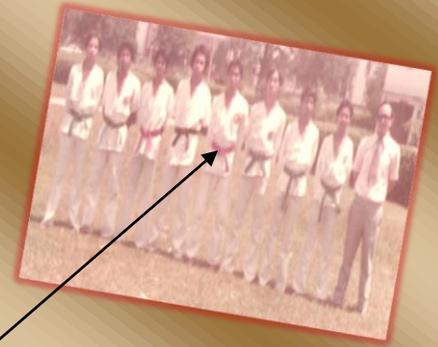
*Dr. Awang Adek
Hussein*



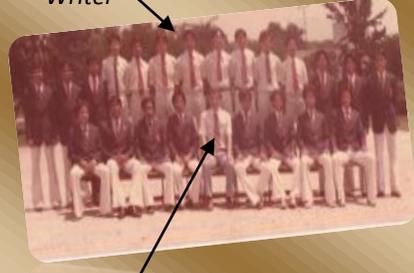
Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh

In the last few years STAR was headed by Abdul Hashim Abdul Karim. He belonged to my batch. We used to call him Hashim Dubai because he looked like an Arab. Hashim was an average student initially. But, he befriended Ahmad Abdul Aziz (known as Mat Magic) and learned a lot from him. A chemistry teacher, Mr Choo declared publicly if Ahmad could not solve a problem, it would never have come out in the examination. Ahmad would score all A's all the time. Many years later I met Ahmad at Shah Alam mosque. He was teaching Mathematics at UiTM. Some of the other wizards were Norbit Bashah who became a professor at UTM at the age of 37 and Wahid Razally, a professor at UTHM. Our top cop goes to Dato' Zulkifli who was Kelantan and Perak Chief Police Officer (CPO). Now, he is serving in KL. Our never-say-die politician is Dato' Zainal Abidin Osman who once won parliamentary seat in NibongTebal, Penang and became a deputy minister but lost in the last 2 elections. Tough luck! Among the notable seniors are Datuk Wira Hj Wan Ahmad (Deputy Chairman, SPR), Dr. Awang Adek Hussein (ex-Deputy Finance Minister), Professor Yusof (Vice Chancellor of UTeM). The latest is of course, Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh (Fiver '73) who is now appointed as Education Minister II. In those days, best students were sent to Australia even before the MCE results were released and Idris was one of them. I hope our alumni will be stronger.

Even though practically STAR is a Malay school, the teachers then were not. Apart from the principal, BM and Agama teachers, the rest were mostly Chinese and a few Indians. I could not recall any case of discrimination, bias or racism on the part of these teachers. Among the teachers I remember most are Chan Teng Hong (English), Lau Hat Yee (Science), Tan Teong Leong (History), Thamby Rajah (History), Stuart Taylor (Mathematics), Miss Koay (Science), Menon (Biology) and Louis Lozarius (English). No one forgets Ustaz Muhammad, Cikgu Amir, Cikgu Rahman, the husband and wife team, Ong Bee Jeng and Pearly Ong whose daughter Canny was brutally murdered on 13 June 2003. I happened to pass Jalan Klang Lama to attend a meeting at Pearl International Hotel when the body was reported to be discovered. No STARian would forgive the murderer. The three principals were Ahmad Dahan, Yahya Shafie (Dato') and Zainal Abidin. Yahya Shafie resigned to be a politician serving Pasir Pinji, if I am not mistaken. He challenged us to keep our toilet clean as he would come to have tea there. Would you believe that Lau Hat Yee whom everyone called Pak Lau dedicated his whole life to STAR? Once, he cried on stage during an assembly because he was transferred out of the school. However, he came back to serve STAR until retirement. Marjohan, our Physical Education (PE) teacher passed away early June 2013. Will his soul rest in peace. Amen.



Writer



Stuart Taylor (Form Teacher)



Datuk Wira Wan Ahmad



Abdul Karim Jaafar



Ahmad Tajudin Jab



Kamaruzzaman Ismail

In the old days, the students were practically from not-so-well off families in the rural areas. A friend from Perlis, Md Akhir (known as Mat Kirk because he looks like Kirk Douglas) revealed a few years ago that he made his own way to STAR using some money gained from his father selling a buffalo. In 1978, the government sent many of my classmates to Australia, USA and UK to further their studies. After a few years everyone came back to serve this beloved country. Among those who serve polytechnics are Ahmad Tajudin Jab (Mat Taj), who came from Koding and is now the Director of Technical and Vocational Education, MOE; Abdul Karim Jaafar (Pokka) whose hometown is Napo in Jitra and is currently one of the top guns in JPP; Mohd Pauzi Ibrahim (Badek), the Director of Mersing Polytechnic and Abdul Jalil Jusoh, a pure son of Terengganu who has just been 'returned' to POLISAS and vowed to die in Kuantan. And of course, Sifu Kamaruzzaman Ismail (Fiver '74) who is the current PSA Director. We regard each other as 'brother'.

The best of all everyone would talk passionately about was the lady who sold us Nasi Lemak at the canteen, Kak Melah and the ever-flamboyant matron, Raja Mas Juita...