

NCBM OUTREACH



Issue No. 119

April – June 2025

Permit No. PP7594/08/2012(030560)



A quarterly
publication of NCBM

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VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT OF NCBM

To ensure that blind people will receive appropriate training and enjoy quality services regardless of where they live in the country.



EDITORIAL BOARD

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the author/contributor and do not necessarily represent the views of NCBM.



The National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) provides a vital link between the organisations serving the blind in this country by acting as the national coordinating body.

Through NCBM, the organisations for and of the blind have a channel to discuss and formulate national policies and plans and to pioneer new programmes for the benefit of the blind and visually impaired.

It costs NCBM RM30,000 a year to produce the magazine in print and in braille.

Your financial support will, therefore, go a long way in helping to bring about new developments and progress for the blind. All contributions are deeply appreciated.

Donations should be made in the name of:

**NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND, MALAYSIA
OR MAJLIS KEBANGSAAN BAGI ORANG BUTA, MALAYSIA.**

MAYBANK ACCOUNT NUMBER: 514598130410

**All donations are tax exempted.*

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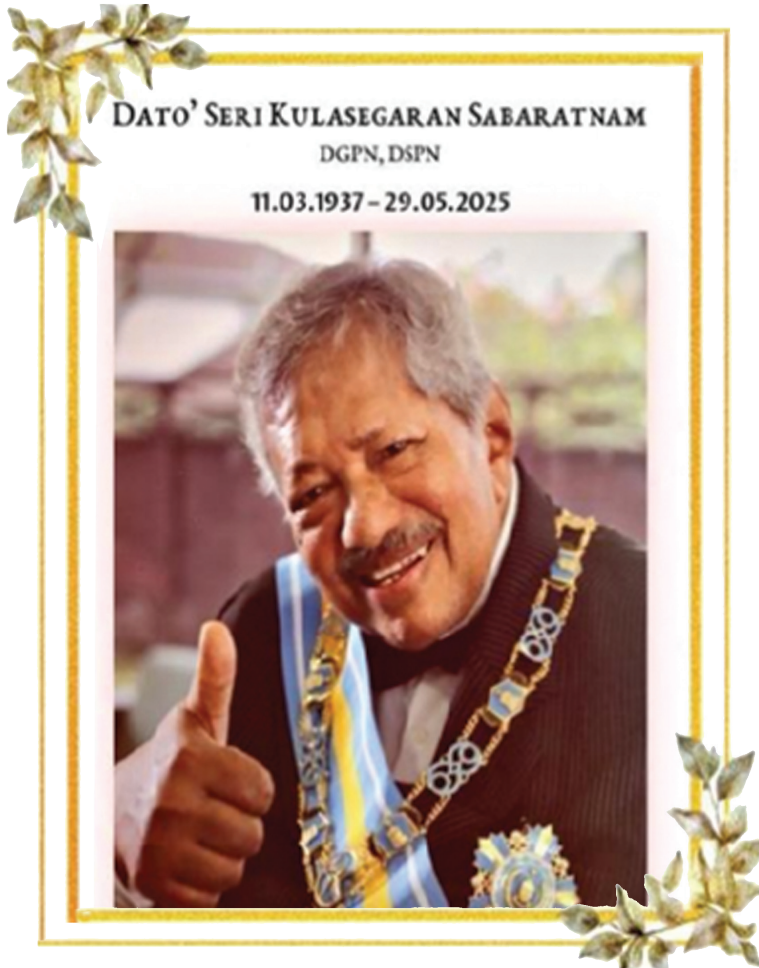
NEWS FROM NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND, MALAYSIA

TRIBUTE TO DATO' SERI KULASEGARAN SABARATNAM DGPN, DSPN

By Wong Yoon Loong

Executive Director

National Council for the Blind, Malaysia



*President- National Council for the Blind, Malaysia
(2004-2012)*

As a lawyer, Dato' S. Kulasegaran more popularly known as Dato' Kula has a very stern and commanding voice. To people who are blind or with visual impairment, his voice can sometimes be intimidating. However, this is not true quoting from Mr. Ivan Ho, 1st Executive Director of NCBM who worked closely with him "Dato' Kula is a reasonable person & I could work with him comfortably."

Dato' Kula had a compassionate heart. He spent most of his years serving the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) since the 1980s, National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM (2004-2012) and the World Blind Union Asia-Pacific (2008-2012).

His main concern was to uplift the lives of the BVIs and ensuring they received equal opportunity to be included in society. He played a pivotal role in the construction of Kompleks MAB where all the services are put under one roof, ensuring that all the 5 member-organisations of NCBM work collaboratively and providing support to the less developed countries in the WBUAP Region.

Dato' Kula was approachable and willing to give a listening ear. If you can provide a convincing argument with facts, he was willing to compromise his decision.

Dato' Kula had his soft spot. In a conversation with me in Cambodia in 2012, with tears in his eyes, he apologised that sometimes he was unable to carry out what he endeavors to do due to unforeseen circumstances. I told him that he need not be sorry as he had tried his best and the BVIs community is appreciative of what he had done.

Dato' Kula! We had fond memories working together through thick and thin. We will cherish the memories. May your soul rest in peace.

Thank you to the family of Dato' Kula for allowing and supporting him to serve the BVIs.

With grateful thanks from the President, Council Members, staff of NCBM and the BVIs community.



Micro-Financing Opportunities for Visually Impaired Entrepreneurs:

“I-Tekad is a micro-financing programme to provide funding for the SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises). The blind and visually impaired people are welcome to take part in this programme.”

This was what the speaker said at the briefing organised by the Strategic and Job Placement Unit of MAB in collaboration with Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd. On 5th March 2025 at the MAB hall in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.

The amount of money to be provided can be up to RM10,000, consisting of a RM5,000 grant and another RM5,000 as a loan for training.

Forty blind persons were in attendance at the briefing.

For more details, you can contact Dr. Lim Tien Hong, Strategic and Job Placement Unit Manager, Tel. 03-22722677.

Brush Strokes that Go by Sight – Visually Impaired Artist is Set to Introduce Malaysians to His Dark Art:

Choo Mok Choon cannot see the world the way most people do. However, that has never stopped him from painting his dark art in all its beauty.

Despite having only 30% of his vision, this 45-year old man, born with congenital cataracts, has never let his visual impairment impede the passion of his art.

“I started dabbling in art when I was about seven years old and over time, I have been able to explore it seriously. I have my parents to thank for as they were the ones who had been encouraging me to pursue my passion and they supported me all the way.

Choo said this when we met him at an arts studio here recently.

After completing his studies, Choo went on to obtain a Diploma in Fine Arts from the Centre of Art Academy in Johor Bahru before pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts at the University of Tasmania in Australia.

"I use a magnifier to help me to see more clearly when I paint. But I still need to squint slightly when I'm working with particularly small details," said Choo.

"When I started taking painting seriously, one of the biggest struggles for me was keeping the colours within the lines because everything looked pretty blurry to me. However, over time, my hands became more stable, allowing me to be more precise," Choo said, adding that he could still see and differentiate colours.

For Choo, even though he is visually impaired, painting is a form of therapy. It is a way for him to express his feelings and thoughts.

Choo said, "Most of my paintings fall under dark art, which means exploring emotions like fear, sadness, anger and other unseen struggles of life. Unfortunately, this style of art is not very popular in Malaysia and it is considered as alternative art. As a result, the majority of my paintings are bought up by people from other countries such as Australia, Norway and Sweden."

To expose more people to alternative art, Choo plans to hold a three-week exhibition at an arts studio in Taman Desa Cemerlang, Ulu Tiram, Johor.

He concluded, "I want people to learn more about dark art and I want to provide opportunities for local artists to gain more attention and support for their work."



REMEMBERING DATO' SERI KULASEGARAN SABARATNAM

By Ivan Ho Tuck Choy, AMN

Although it was told to me that Dato' Kulasegaran had joined the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) Executive Council back in the 1980s, strangely enough I did not hear of his name being mentioned anywhere until he and Mr. Loh Yoon Kwai, both lawyers by profession, were appointed by their council as the two representatives to attend the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) Biennial General Meeting in April 2000. I was then working as the Executive Director of NCBM, having taken up the full-time position in 1996.

When Mr. Loh contested and was elected as the Treasurer at the BGM, I thought I would have a tough time with them as some people in the MAB Council at the time were not in favour over the formation of NCBM and they had spread misleading information about me. However, being the new Hon. Treasurer and naturally wanting to know the workings of NCBM, Mr. Loh sought clarifications and explanations regarding the various budget allocations. But his line of questioning felt more like the cross-examining of witnesses in a court case. At one point of the questioning, he asked about the use of the office car that had been assigned to me as fringe benefit and he wanted to know who the driver was and why no provision had been made for his salary, who was paying for the maintenance, and where the car was parked each night and during the week-ends, and what proofs did I have that the vehicle was meant for my use.

I must have sounded rather annoyed when Dato' Kula signalled to him not to be so hard on me and he suggested that I produce the relevant part of the Minutes concerning the decision which was made three years back. At that instance, I sensed that Dato' Kula was not so harsh and that he was a reasonable person with whom I could work quite comfortably. From that time on, however, I made sure that I recorded all the Minutes in detail, which meant that the Minutes would be rather long-winded. Later on, I learned from reliable sources that indeed some people in MAB had been spreading wrong information about my work in NCBM. Hence, there was the confrontational attitude being displayed at the AGM.

I was proven correct in the ensuing years when Dato' Kula was elected as President of NCBM (in the year 2004) and of the World Blind Union Asia-Pacific (WBUAP) in 2008, of which NCBM was an active affiliate. Thus, we travelled together extensively in implementing the decisions and resolutions taken at the respective meetings of these two bodies.

Indeed, Dato' Kula was a very busy and no-nonsense man and once he had trusted you or he had assigned you to do something, then he expected perfect execution. If you lived up to his expectations, he had great respect for you and he trusted you. I am, therefore, proud to say that Dato' Kula had high regards for blind people who exercised proper decorum. For instance, he held in high regard both me and Moses Choo, who was the Deputy Executive Director of NCBM when we went to his office for meetings or to review the progress on decisions made. He would tell his staff to make us feel at home and his Secretary, Josephine, would personally come and serve us tea and refreshments. More refreshments would be served, especially when the start of such sessions was delayed.

Sometimes it could be over two hours late as Dato' Kula could have been held up in traffic jams or his previous appointments could have taken longer than he had anticipated. Indeed, it must be pointed out that finding a free spot for such appointments was not easy for Dato' Kula as his diary was almost always full – with court appearances, Government appointments, or meetings with members of other associations to which he belonged.

Also, when Mr. Kua Cheng Hock, a blind Singaporean and a former President of WBUAP, requested to meet Dato' Kula in Kuala Lumpur for discussions, Dato' Kula would make arrangements for a Chinese dinner at the Crystal Crown Hotel in order to welcome Cheng Hock. Dato' Kula would even go out of his way to request the Management to grant permission for Mr. Kua's guide dog to be allowed into the dining room even though it was not their policy to permit animals into their premises. In fact, Dato' Kula would try on a few occasions to get permission and he did succeed once. In subsequent attempts, however, Dato' Kula was informed that their patrons were very unhappy over the relaxation of the rule.

Having travelled with Dato' Kula for some years, Jill, who was the Fund-Raising Officer of NCBM and my escort on these overseas trips, observed that Dato' Kula had some peculiar preferences and habits. For instance,

at dinners Dato' Kula would insist that his seating position must face the entrance and his hotel rooms had to be on the highest floor of the building.

On these trips, Dato' Kula would try his very best to ensure our comfort, particularly at the airports when the waiting time for the next flight could mean waiting for hours. Then he would, for instance, request for us to be allowed to join him in the VIP lounges. However, this was not always possible as some of the lounges were rather strict and they would only allow the entitled passenger in. At such times, Dato' Kula would feel quite uneasy and he would even apologise to us over such failures and he would then invite us to have something to eat with him at one of the other outlets. At some airports where there were no such facilities, then Dato' Kula would order tea for us.

Arriving on one such trip to Timor Leste in the late evening, in the late evening, Dato' Kula enquired from Jill where his room was located. When told that it was just one floor up as reserved by the Travel Agent, he was not satisfied and he went personally to the receptionist. "I need my room on the highest floor," he insisted.

"Sorry sir," the lady replied. "This hotel has only two levels – ground and upstairs."

In transit on another occasion, Dato' Kula went off for a while. Then, after a few minutes, to our surprise he appeared with two cups of expensive ice cream as he could not persuade The Lounge to let us in.

Then on a trip to Myanmar in 2007 for the purpose of visiting a school for the blind in the interior of the country, we flew to Mandalay. Then we had to travel for another three hours by road to Meiktila. Dato' Kula had been forewarned of the rough terrain and the discomfort of having to go by an old jeep but he still wanted to make the trip. Indeed, it was a rundown vehicle with wooden benches and a leaking tarpaulin. Sure enough, after an hour's drive the rain came pouring down and the road began to be flooded and the dirty water was splashing into the jeep.

We began to get worried in case the vehicle should break down but Dato' Kula bravely decided to proceed before it got too dark as the road had no lighting and we could be stranded in the middle of nowhere.

As was his usual request when we arrived at the rest house in Meiktila late in the evening, he tried a lake nearby and when checking in, he requested for his room to be on the highest floor (a double-storey buildup) and to have the windows facing the lake. Next morning he discovered that the lake was actually a waste water retention pond and Dato' Kula immediately requested to have the room changed.

Another side of Dato' Kula's character was that he was a sporting person, joining in all the activities organised by the hosts, be it singing "Rasa Sayang", when each country was asked to present an item, or participating in their festive celebrations, such as having water sprinkled on him during the Thai Songkran festival.

Frankly, Dato' Kula was very passionate in his involvement with the work for the blind, and he paid great attention in carrying out the decisions that were made. For example, as President of NCBM, he tried his best to motivate the leaders for the five member-organisations to adopt the good programmes of each other by holding annual dialogues at their respective premises. By doing this, he was hoping that the leaders would be able to see for themselves the progress of each other's programmes, and that the ideas generated by the discussions could inspire them to make the necessary improvements or to introduce new services. Unfortunately, some people saw these dialogues as being mere "talk shop" and so they disregarded the good that could emerge from these sessions.

Thus, as Chairman of the WBUAP South-East Asia Regional Committee, Dato' Kula had spent a considerable amount of time and effort in trying to help the disputing parties in Myanmar and Timor Leste in resolving their differences and in using their energies to concentrate on developing their organisations. Despite repeated attempts and long discussions, while showing polite and respectful on-the-spot receptions, they refused to sink their differences which sadly resulted in the rejection of their application for membership or having their membership terminated.

As the President of WBUAP, Dato' Kula was actively involved in helping to strengthen the organisations in Mongolia, Laos and Myanmar which were then under the sponsorship of the Danish International Development Agency by giving them advice and by monitoring the progress of their project implementation in person and by their progress reports which they were required to produce.

Also, Dato' Kula had participated most actively in the discussions with UNESCAP, South Korea and Japan in formulating the INCHEON Strategic goals that took him to Thailand and South Korea in the process.

Actually, much more progress could have been achieved in NCBM under his help if not for the disruptive actions of one of the arrogant representatives. As the Secretary-General of WBUAP and the E.D. of NCBM, I had the responsibility to implement and interpret the constitutions of these two bodies accordingly, and sometimes in the course of work, I had disagreed with Dato' Kula over their interpretations. But on the whole, we have worked closely with one another and we have had a very cordial relationship.

One afternoon in December 2019, I happened to go to the NCBM office to hand over an item for the newsletter and I was waiting in front of Menara Sentral Vista for my transport to arrive. Coincidentally, returning from lunch after a meeting of NCBM, Dato' Kula, who was in a wheelchair, saw me and he asked his caregiver to wheel him to meet me. While still in control of all his senses, I took the opportunity to apologise to him for any wrong that I might have done in the course of my work. He said that he had no ill feelings against me and if I did, it was in the course of duty for which I need not feel guilty. That was the last time I had been able to speak with Dato' Kula.

The next encounter was in January 2023 at the launching ceremony of the book on blind achievers compiled by his brother, Mr. Santhi Segaran, at the MAB headquarters, but Dato' Kula was already unresponsive to what I was saying to him.

Indeed, I am most grateful and honoured to have known, worked and travelled with Dato' Kula who had guided and stood by me when the above-mentioned representative created a crisis for me and wasted the precious time of NCBM which could have been used more productively.

Personally, I too have no ill feelings now against anyone who did try to bring me down for time has healed all hurts and erased all unpleasant memories.

May his soul rest in eternal peace – Dato' Kula.



MALAYSIAN CONFEDERATION OF THE DISABLED – THE UNEXPECTED AND UNTIMELY FAREWELL

By Ivan Ho Tuck Choy

(Editor's Note: Ivan Ho Tuck Choy has been blind from early childhood and he received his education at St. Nicholas' School for the Blind in Penang followed by rehabilitation and vocational training at the Gurney Training Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

He got employment as telephonist at Kumpulan Guthrie where he worked for thirty years. While working, Ivan was able to further his own education by taking up the correspondence course from Hadley School for the Blind in USA.

Subsequently, Ivan was actively involved in advocating for inclusion of the blind in the work for the blind and in setting up the blind people's self-help organisation, the Society of the Blind in Malaysia (SBM).

Ivan was also actively involved in establishing the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia and formation of the Malaysian Confederation of the Disabled.

In the following, Ivan continues with the story of MCD's development)

After the Executive Committee Meeting in June 1999 was over and the other members had left, Mr. HRM Storey requested Mdm. Katherine Chong and Mr. Ivan Ho to stay behind for a heart-to-heart talk. Mr. Storey was rather worried over the future of MCD and so he wanted to gauge how long each of them would be prepared to serve as they had been there since the founding days of MCD in 1984.

Mr. Ivan Ho admitted that he was looking forward to stepping aside as there were now younger and more capable people to move the organisation forward to the next level. He also informed them that as the full-time Executive Director of NCBM, and also as the Hon. Secretary-General of the Asia-Pacific chapter of the World Blind Union, the latter especially required him to travel overseas quite frequently. Mr. Ivan Ho said that in view of this, he hardly had the time for other commitments. He felt that it would be most

unfair to MCD if he were to continue holding on to a top position and not be able to devote full attention to carrying out duties. Nevertheless, Mr. Ivan Ho assured them that he would not leave the scene suddenly without ensuring that there would be a smooth transition.

In the ensuing discussions, Mdm. Katherine Chong disclosed that she had been diagnosed with early nasal cancer but she was responding favourably to treatment. Notwithstanding this awful condition and not wanting to cause undue alarm, she said that she would serve out her 1998 – 2000 term as President. Mdm. Katherine Chong also confided that she had left a bequest of RM50,000 in her will should things turn out for the worst.

Mr. HRM Storey also disclosed that he, too had been diagnosed with early colon cancer and he was undergoing treatment. In the meantime, he was looking for a suitable candidate to take over the treasurership or Treasurer's post. At the same time, he was working on something to settle the matter of the friendly loan. Everyone agreed not to make known the information to the others until certain matters had been sorted out.

Then, realising the uncertain medical state that he was in, and not wanting the EXCO to be troubled over the financial status of MCD, Mr. Storey, at the August 1999 meeting of the EXCO, made an astounding offer to MCD. He would offer a friendly interest-free loan of RM 500,000 to be repaid within ten years.

The money would be used in the following manner: To further strengthen the financial position of MCD, an amount of RM300,000 would be deposited with the Amanah Raya Trust Fund in order to generate interest averaging five plus percent per annum. The remaining sum would be used to settle the interest-free loan taken from Mdm. Katherine Chong. In this way, it would simplify the matter by having to service one loan.

The offer was gladly accepted and the necessary legal documentations were executed. The Agreement on the interest-free loan of RM 500,000 was stamped on 17th September 1999 and a copy was deposited with the Amanah Raya Trustees.

Towards mid-September 1999, Mdm. Katherine's health condition deteriorated rapidly. Her family members admitted her to the Damansara Medical Specialist Centre where she passed away on Monday, 4th October 1999, at the age of 60. She was survived by two children, Rosemary and

Joshua. Several of the Exco members, among them the Principal Office-Bearers, were present at the funeral service held at her house to pay their last respects. Mdm. Katherine Chong's ex-husband, Tan Sri Tan Koon Swan, was in attendance to receive the condolences of the mourners.



By Ooi Hock Tiam

I had the opportunity to meet up with a nice pretty and cheerful lady in St. Nicholas' Home on the 16th of August 2024. After having some discussion with her, I discovered that she had something in common with the blind and so she had her story to share.

Loh Siew Lee was born in Taiping in the year of 1956. She attended the Convent Taiping in Perak for both her primary and secondary education and she completed her form five studies in the year of 1973.

After leaving school in 1973, Loh Siew Lee first worked in a factory in Butterworth. After a short stint, however, she joined the Perak State Civil Service and she worked there until her retirement in 2010.

In the year of 1981, she got married to a loving and caring teacher husband. She gave birth to three children and they in turn have given her some grandchildren.

It was in school when Loh Siew Lee first became aware that she had something in common with the blind. This was because there was an integrated programme for blind students at the Taiping Convent School in the mid-1970s. The resource teacher at the Taiping Integrated Programme was Miss Tan Choo Hoon. Later on, Miss Tan Choo Hoon was transferred to Kuala Lumpur and she was posted to the new Setapak School for the Blind. Incidentally, therefore, she also became my teacher at the Setapak School for the Blind.

When Loh Siew Lee was at the Taiping Convent School, she can remember that there were some blind students studying in her class. She can still remember the names of some of the blind students like Hasnah Hussein and the late Lian Sim. She remembers helping to take them to the resource room and back to their classroom. She can also remember the teacher, Miss Tan Choo Hoon. Sadly, the Taiping Integrated Programme for the blind was closed after 1975 when the teacher, Miss Tan, was transferred to Kuala Lumpur.

In fact, Loh Siew Lee was born sighted but she was later diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa in 2008. However, as a low vision person, she could still see quite a lot and she could, therefore, walk around independently.

After retiring as a civil servant in the year of 2010, Loh Siew Lee got involved with her church and at the same time she was busy taking care of her children.

Currently, Loh Siew Lee is staying at St. Nicholas' Home where she is learning some orientation and mobility skills. She hopes to be able to learn some computer and technology skills at St. Nick's later on.

Indeed, Loh Siew Lee is so happy to have come to St. Nicholas' Home. She feels very encouraged and so much cheered up having met up with so many other blind people at the Home.

Miss Loh can be contacted at St. Nicholas Home under the Skills Development Centre.



By Dr. Gordon Tan Tok Shiong

(Editor's Note: Dr. Gordon Tan Tok Shiong has been visually impaired from childhood. He obtained his PH.D. in Economics from the University of Malaya and he lectured on Economics at the university for about twenty years.

After retirement, he loves to spend some of his time observing how the blind in Brickfields live and work.

In the following, he shares his experience with the blind in Brickfields.)

One day while I was walking, I met a construction worker and I asked him this question: "How would you feel if you were to become blind suddenly?"

He answered, "I will immediately take a shotgun and shoot my own head!"

Such a negative perception of blindness is obviously quite unacceptable in the world of today. Sadly, however, this kind of perception still persists. On the contrary, if a newly blinded person views blindness simply as an inconvenience instead of a handicap, then he will be able to accomplish much more in life.

Indeed, the blind in Malaysia, especially those in Brickfields of Kuala Lumpur, are truly great living examples of accomplishment. These blind people have been able to make a success of their lives as businessmen, teachers, telephone operators, Masseurs, musicians, administrative officers, lawyers, and even as psychiatrists in the hospital or as professors in the university.

In my own walk with blindness over the past fifty years or more, I have come across so many astonishing things that the blind can do. Let me share with you four such cases.

1. **Dato' Mah Hassan**, totally Blind, an Excellent Chess Player:

When Mah Hassan was a young student at the law faculty of the University of Malaya, the National Chess Association of Malaysia happened to organise an open chess tournament and the blind were invited to join. Dato' Mah Hassan competed with a sighted national chess player. The national player was shocked when he realised that he had been out manoeuvred and checkmated by Dato' Mah Hassan. People watching the game said that they could see such embarrassment on the national player's face which had turned completely red.

Dato' Mah Hassan later graduated with a law degree from the University of Malaya and subsequently he got a Master's Degree in Law from the University of Southampton.

He then served as a tutor in the Law Faculty of the University of Malaya and he later became a consultant in Bursa Malaysia. He was also the President of the Society of the Blind in Malaysia (SBM) from the year 2000 to 2010.

2. **Terry Chng Hwa Lian**:

Terry was the first blind person to have graduated from the University of Malaya with an Economics Degree. He studied with the help of many volunteers who recorded reading materials on to tape and transcribed all the graphs and mathematical equations into large print.

One day while attending the third-year macro-economics tutorial class, Terry pointed out a mistake that had been made by the tutor on the blackboard. Terry's classmates were all very surprised as they all knew that Terry could not see with his impaired vision.

Then, in the final examination, Terry became the top student among the four hundred classmates and he was awarded the First Class Honours Degree. He was also the recipient of the highly prestigious Bank Negara Gold Medal Award.

3. Ajong Sidim:

Ajong was working as a telephone operator in Sime Darby. To keep his body physically fit, he used to do physical exercises 100 times a day.

Through correspondence, Ajong successfully completed his tertiary education in law. With the new qualification, he was able to gain employment as a legal officer in a private corporation.

One day while walking home after work, a man snatched Ajong's handphone from behind. Despite being totally blind, Ajong was able to wrestle with the thief and grab back the phone. After receiving some kicking and smashing from Ajong, the thief finally left with his accomplice on a motorbike empty-handed.

4. Dr. Makmur Tumin:

Makmur Tumin was visually impaired and he was also a dialysis patient when doing his undergraduate studies as well as post-graduate courses at the University of Malaya. Nevertheless, he succeeded in obtaining the two degrees and he went on to complete his doctorate studies and he became a lecturer at the university.

When Makmur Tumin was a second-year student in the Political Science Department, He was very fond of rewriting the lecture notes into articles and sending them to the mainstream newspapers for publication. His articles appeared almost every week and they were highly sought after by the news editors.

One day the editor of a newspaper paid a visit to Makmur at the department. He was greatly surprised to learn that Makmur was merely an undergraduate and not a professor.

Even his course-mates would refer to the published articles of Makmur in preparing for their examinations.

Views Expressed by the Blind:

While interacting and socialising with the blind in Brickfields, I have learnt much about the life of these people and I have been amazed by the views expressed by them.

Here are some of the views.

Daniel Siow:

He was working as a draftsman before he became blind due to a motor-cycle accident. Then he worked as a masseur and he got married to an accountant and they had two children. Now he is teaching massage at the Gurney Training Centre.

One day Daniel revealed to me, “My friend used to cut off the legs of cockroaches before feeding them to his dragon-fish. One day, however, he regretted his actions when he himself fell down while running and felt a sharp pain in his leg.”

Long Boon Huat:

He was an aircraft mechanic in the Malaysian Airline System (MAS) at the age of nineteen. He became visually impaired at the age of thirty due to Retinitis Pigmentosa and he was retrained as a telephone operator at the Gurney Training Centre for the blind. He is married with two children.

This was what he said to me one day, “I have many dogs in my house. When one of them died, I was surprised to see tears in their eyes. I really could feel that they were sad!”

On another occasion, Long Boon Huat made another very revealing statement. He said, “Don’t hold two keys in your keychain because they will make a lot of noise. Actually, I’m really referring to those people who have two or more wives!”

Larry Teh

Larry Teh, who despite his poor vision, had proved himself to be very capable. He was working as a postmaster in many of the post-offices throughout the Klang Valley.

One day while he was working late in the evening, he accidentally activated the burglar alarm which caused a squad of policemen to rush in with the intent of arresting him. Fortunately, he managed to convince them that he was a blind man.

One day I was having a chat with him when he made this very shrewd statement, “I do believe in honesty and I do believe in telling the truth. Nevertheless, I won’t tell people the real truth.”

So you see, my friend, can you say that the world of the blind is really dark?



By Nicholas Lam Yew Khay

(Editor's Note:

Nicholas Lam Yew Khay has been visually impaired from childhood and he was a student at St. Nicholas' School for the Blind in Penang. It was during the time staying at St. Nicholas when Nicholas learned to appreciate the tradition initiated at St. Nicholas and which came to an end with the transfer of the school to Bukit Mertajam.)

Here is his story:

In my early years at St. Nicholas' Home, two activities in particular have made a deep and lasting impression on me. I remember well the period that we had in the classroom called Nature Study. Our teacher, Miss Mooan, used to take us out into the garden and the surrounding areas to feel, identify and learn to appreciate the many different varieties of flowers and plants.

When we discovered a clump of honey-suckles near the main gate, she said, "Pluck a flower and suck on the stem." We did so, and we were rewarded with a tiny bit of nectar at the end of the stem.

There were two beautiful Flame of the Forest trees and they produced many bunches of tiny red flowers. After blooming, the dying flowers would produce a pod similar to the shape of a French bean. And there was the frangipani tree with thick leaves; it produced clumps of sweet-smelling flowers. I observed that the scent of these flowers came out strongest in the evening. Subsequently, I learned that there were many of these frangipani trees in the Chinese cemetery nearby to St. Nicholas and sometimes they were known as "funeral flowers".

Along the fence in the sports field of St. Nicholas' Home, we discovered some varieties of wild plants. There was the wild bamboo from which we obtained its stems to make pop-guns. For our supply of pop-shot, we had no problem finding the big tree guarding the fence near the farm-yard; from its branches, the cicadas sang from dawn to dusk during the period from November to

February, announcing the seemingly luscious berries which were not very tasty to our palates but they made very good bullets for our toy guns. When the berries were not available, then we made our bullets from wet paper.

In the sports field, there was also a strange plant with hairy leaves that produced a small ping pong-like fruit with a waxy texture on its skin. Inside, however, the fruit was quite hollow except for a few tiny seeds. We were told that it was the “buah susu” or the “passion fruit”, although we got no milk from it and we did not feel any passion for the tasteless fruit. We thought it was such a pity, oh what a pity, as the plant gave out quite a lovely fragrance!

In the school garden, there was the bougainvillea with thorns to protect its lovely bunches of flowers from our touch; and there were plants with leaves like elephant ears and they were indeed called by the name, Elephant Ears, and there were lots of Spider Lilies with amazingly shaped flowers that felt so tender and so wonderful to touch. I also enjoyed feeling the many bunches of Blue Bells and Yellow Bells.

The second activity that I loved was Music Appreciation which was usually held as an after-school activity and it was held in the afternoon. I remember the music-room which was equipped with a radio-gramophone and plenty of 78-speed and 33-speed records.

We would sit on the floor and Miss Mooan would play a piece of music. She would then explain what the music was all about and she would tell us the story of the composer. We could also feel the models (known as busts) of the composers such as Beethoven, Mozart and Chopin. Two favourites of mine were “The Happy Farmer” and the “Concerto Number 13” by Mozart. As a result of these appreciation classes, I still enjoy listening to light classical music till this day.

A very popular team game that we used to play was “Rounders”. This was actually a simplified version of the Cricket game. There would be two teams – the batsmen and the fielders. There had to be a referee, and this responsibility was usually taken up by the housemother. Then four persons would be selected as posts and they would stand at the four corners of a big square. The Referee would stand at the centre of the top square which would be the home base. Once the two teams have decided who would do the batting or the fielding, then the game would begin. The person who is going

to bat would be at the home base with a bat and ball which had a bell inside it. The fielders would line up in the centre of the square with the objective of stopping and catching the ball and bringing it back to the home base.

At the blow of the Referee's whistle, the batsman would hit the ball as hard as he can and then start running to the first post. The Referee would keep blowing the whistle in short bursts in order to indicate that the fielders had not yet returned to the home base with the ball; this meant that the runner could still run from post to post and if he managed to reach the fourth post, then he would have won one round. Should the runner think that he is running out of time, then he could choose to remain at post number 2 or 3 and continue the run when the next person bats the ball. Should the runner be caught running half way between two posts, then he is considered to be out of the game. In this way, the team will be losing its batsmen and the game will finish when all of them are caught out.

The teams will then change places. The team with the most number of runs will be the winner.

The pupils were organised into three houses – Braille, Keller and Homer. I was in Braille House and we held the Rounders' championship for a number of years because we had a very powerful batsman called Chee Hong (later known as Matthew Wong). He had the advantage of being partially sighted and he could hit the ball very far away so that the runners had a lot of time to complete the circuit without stopping.

On Wednesday evenings, we had dancing classes conducted by one of the teachers whom we called Miss Cheong. It was compulsory for all the senior boys and girls to take part. Miss Cheong would play the music on a gramophone and she would teach us the steps. Each of us had to take someone from the opposite sex as a partner.

“Step to the right, step to the left, turn around and clap, clap,” Miss Cheong would say in time with the music. Unfortunately, one day the gramophone broke down and so the classes had to stop.

There were also the uniformed groups – the girls first became Brownies and then Girl Guides while the boys started as Cubs and became Boy Scouts. The Scouts were driven to the Teachers' College outside St. Nicholas for their activities. The trainee teachers would act as Scout-masters and even the lady trainee teachers would take on this role.

We went through the first stage of scouting in order to qualify for the Tenderfoot Badge. We had to learn how to tie the various kinds of knots with a piece of string such as the reef knot, the sheepshank, and the fisherman's knot. Indeed, these were very useful things to know because I still use them sometimes today.

After enjoying the camp-fire songs which we learned to sing by heart, the van driver, whom we called Majid, would make a stop at the baker where we could buy freshly baked and delicious coconut buns.

Besides the Annual Sports Day, we also had the Annual Concert which became a great tradition for us. At the beginning of the third term, every class would start preparing for the concert. There were sketches and plays, singing and dancing and the practices would be carried out whenever there was a free period.

The real day of performance would come at the end of the term; donors, well-wishers and the general public would be invited to the show. The demand was so great that the concert was extended for two evenings.

In 1965, Miss Perelle, who was the Matron, composed a play called "The Meaning of Christmas". A number of the boys took part, including Godfrey, Edward, Benjamin and myself. One of the seniors, John Kim, had just started working as telephone operator at the Penang City Council and he was invited to take part. In fact, he was given the role of Uncle John who would come to visit the pupils at St. Nicholas' School. Each of us would tell Uncle John what Christmas meant to us.

I shall never forget one of the evening practices when one of the boys farted and let off a stink-bomb. Miss Perelle was very cross and she said, "Who made that awful smell? We will stop for ten minutes and let the boy go to the toilet!"

Well, no one dared to admit and so, after a while, the practice continued. Most probably, that was my last time taking part in the Annual Concert of St. Nicholas' School. The tradition carried on until the Government took over the school of St. Nicholas. The school then moved out of the premises of St. Nicholas' Home in 1997. Now the school is in Alma, Bukit Mertajam.

Indeed, it was a beautiful tradition that had been initiated and developed at St. Nicholas School for the Blind in Penang. Sadly, now the tradition has ended but it remains with me as a constant memory.

It is my sincere hope that the new authorities may be able to pick up and continue the beautiful tradition that had been initiated and developed at St. Nicholas.



By Daud M. Amin

(Editor's Note: Daud M. Amin has been visually impaired from childhood and he received his education at the Princess Elizabeth School for the Blind in Johor Bahru. Subsequently, he took up rehabilitation and vocational training at the Gurney Training Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

In the following, Daud relates the story of his fascination with elephants.)

In the year of 2021, I went to Bangkok in Thailand for a holiday with my family. When we were there in Bangkok, we visited the Rose Garden and it was there where I saw or came across the elephants.

The elephant handler kindled my interest in the elephants when he allowed me to pat the elephant's trunk even though I was blind. And so in return, I decided to feed the elephants with bananas and some sugar-cane cuttings. After some time, we then made our departure from the place.

Later on, in 2023, we again made a visit to Thailand and this time we went to Chiang Mai. Once more we paid a visit to the flower garden which was in Chiang Mai. At this visit, the elephant handler invited me to take a ride on the back of an elephant for just a small fee. I gladly accepted the invitation just for the sake of gaining such a unique experience. Certainly, I had no regrets at all because I really enjoyed the ride, brief though it may have been.

After the short trip, I treated the elephant with bananas and sugar-cane. Suddenly, I got the fright of my life when I felt something sweeping across my feet several times. Actually, it was the elephant's trunk.

Fortunately, the handler told me to relax and he asked me, "Have you come across an elephant before?"

I explained to him that I had, in fact, made a visit to Bangkok just a few months ago and I had seen an elephant there.

The man laughed and he assured me that, in fact, this elephant was in Bangkok recently and it must have recognised me. "Oh yes, the elephant must have

remembered you,” he said. Truly, I believed the man must be right as I have been told that elephants do have a long memory.

And so after this wonderful experience, I started reading up about elephants and I have gained very interesting insights regarding the elephant. For example, I learned that some elephants in certain countries do lead a harsh life because they are made to carry heavy loads of timber logs and they have to walk for long distances to deliver the load.

I also learned that elephants can be very temperamental and, therefore, the handler must be able or he must know how to detect their temperament. When this occurs, then the elephant may have to remain in chains, which must be securely tied, for a couple of days.

In Malaysia, the elephants (nicknamed as Jumbo by Walt Disney) have their share of hardships, too. With the rampant clearing of jungles for the purpose of commercial development, the Jumbos have no choice but to come into contact with the villagers when they invade the *kampongs* in search of food. Apparently, the elephant can consume about twenty kilograms of leaves just for one meal. Thus, the crops planted by the farmers are destroyed, resulting in the loss of income.

One such incident was reported in the Baling District of Kedah. It was in the year of 2021 when the villagers tried to confront a herd of Jumbos who were misbehaving in that area.

The elephants stood their ground as though to say, “Mind your own business or else we will attack you!”

However, realising that the elephants were being safeguarded under the Protection Act, the farmers had no choice but to go and seek help from the Member of Parliament, in the Baling constituency. With great courage, the MP gently persuaded the herd of elephants to refrain from their actions.

First, the MP spoke in Malay but the elephants did not respond. Then he switched to Thai and the elephants did show some sign of comprehension. Then, as a last resort, he communicated with the elephants in Tamil, which was the mother tongue of the original country from which the elephants came. Surprisingly, the elephants agreed to back off quietly and they went into the surrounding bushes.

Indeed, this story was narrated in the Malaysian Parliament and it drew enthusiastic applause from the MP's.

Truly, the elephants are so huge, so wild, and so majestic-looking – and yet the elephants can be domesticated and they can live among the human beings!

In fact, the scientists have discovered that the elephants as well as the dinosaurs, the two giant animals on land, ever roamed the earth since time immemorial. However, with time and evolution, the dinosaurs became extinct while the elephants continued to live until today but being confined to certain areas in Africa and Asia.

Currently, the elephant population is dwindling drastically and they may disappear from this earth if no protective measures are taken.

Countries like India, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Kenya, to name a few, can boast of the existence of these animals in their forests. Unfortunately, the indiscriminate felling of trees for economic development is threatening to put the elephants on the endangered list so that our future generations will only be able to view at them in the zoos.

The greatest enemy of the elephants are the poachers whose activities are hard to curtail. Nowadays, equipped with more sophisticated technology weapons like the high-powered rifles and cameras, the poachers are able to detect the animals from hidden positions. These poachers are involved in the lucrative business of gaining certain body parts of the elephant as aphrodisiacs for a ready market, especially in Hong Kong.

The elephant - or *loxodonta*, its scientific name – is indeed a unique creature. While they can be good and obedient servants, they can also be hostile if confronted.

Traditionally, the elephant is the sign of greatness of a ruler. In fact, the elephant is regarded as a military tank.

The life-span of an elephant is between 100 to 120 years. They are very intelligent animals and they possess a long and strong photographic memory.

If you should ever travel along the East-West Highway of Peninsular Malaysia, you will be able to notice many sign-boards stating “ele crossing” in order to warn drivers to be cautious so as to avoid mishaps with the elephant.

Together with some friends, we were very fortunate to have been able to witness an elephant standing alone by the roadside as though it was waiting to cross the road. Instead, he was actually picking up some bananas from the ground. Probably, the bananas must have been placed there by a Good Samaritan.

Then it occurred to my mind, “How thoughtful this person is for the elephants.”

Thus, two days later on my way home to Penang, I bought a whole bunch of bananas for distribution to strangers and friends at various points of the journey home.



By Wong Kow

The other day, I happened to be helping a neighbouring young student with his holiday homework. Amongst other subjects he asked to write an article on was, “Punctuality”.

And so while assisting him in raising some relevant points concerning the importance of punctuality as well as quoting some examples of not being able to be punctual, I was somewhat reminded of the time when I had begun to learn Braille from Mr. Ma Kho, the blind teacher at St. Nicholas’ Home in June 1964. Indeed, this story has required me to observe the importance of punctuality.

Well, I am an adult blind, meaning that I became blind when I was already an adult. And so just two months before my admission to the Gurney Training Centre for the blind (GTC) in Kuala Lumpur, I thought I could first go to St. Nicholas’ Home in Penang in order to obtain some useful knowledge or get some training to equip myself with some skills that would enable me to live a normal and meaningful life more effectively.

Thus, it was at St. Nicholas’ Home where I was introduced to Mr. Ma Kho, the blind teacher there. I found Mr. Ma Kho to be very kind as he spent his time teaching me Braille once a week on Saturday afternoons. The lessons were from 2 to 3.30 p.m. at Mr. Ma’s house which was in the St. Nicholas compound.

At that time, I was actually living in Province Wellesley with my parents and my other siblings. Coincidentally, at this same period of time, my elder brother was teaching in Sungai Bakap and so he had to travel to Penang to attend the special training programme at the Teachers’ Training College every Saturday. I, therefore, could depend on my brother for transport to drop me at Mr. Ma’s house in St. Nicholas’ Home for my Braille lessons.

For my first Braille lesson, I arrived a little late at Mr. Ma Kho’s house.

Mr. Ma sighed as he said, “Oh, you are ten minutes late.”

I was quite puzzled as to how Mr. Ma Kho could know the exact time of the day. This was because I did not know anything about the Braille watch which could help the blind to read the exact time. Initially, I thought that he must have just heard the 2 p.m. news. However, after the first encounter with Mr. Ma Kho, I began to realise that Mr. Ma was a very serious person and I, therefore, could not take things for granted. Thus, among other things, I learned from Mr. Ma that punctuality is and it must be the top priority in life.

And so for the following few Saturday afternoons, I managed to reach Mr. Ma's house exactly on time at 2 p.m. Of course, I knew well enough that I should not be late for the Braille lessons; however, if I had arrived earlier than the appointed time, then I would have caused some inconvenience for Mr. Ma as he could have been busy with something else. If I had arrived early, I could have disturbed his time schedule for the day.

At this juncture, therefore, readers might be left wondering. As I had to depend on my brother's transport for travelling from Sungai Bakap to my destination, how could I have been so punctual in arriving on the dot of 2 p.m.? Indeed, it would seem difficult but, actually, with a little planning, it proved to be quite an easy task for me to fulfil.

Firstly, I would request my brother to drop me at St. Nicholas' Home earlier than 2 p.m. in the afternoon. This could be ten minutes or even half an hour earlier than scheduled. However, under some unforeseen circumstances, as in the case when my brother had to reach his own college much earlier than my scheduled time, then he would just leave me near St. Nicholas' Home and I would linger around for a while watching the students at study or at play with some games.

Concerning Mr. Ma's teaching and treating of me as a beginner of learning Braille, I must admit that he was very strict and he always wanted me to pay full attention. At the first hour-long session, Mr. Ma let me have a Braille writing-board with stylus. In addition, he also got me some short story-books in Grade I Braille for me to practice reading at home.

Later, Mr. Ma wanted me to pick up the knowledge of Grade II Braille, including the abbreviations, contractions, punctuations, and so on. Indeed, he was most happy when he realised that I was learning very hard. He then lent me a few more books and he guided me to understand and familiarise myself with Grade II Braille as quickly as possible.

True enough, therefore, after the third lesson, I was able to communicate with Mr. Ma by writing him letters in Grade II Braille. After some practice, I realised that it was actually not too difficult for an adult blind person to learn and to use Braille. In Spite of this, Nonetheless, I have remained helplessly slow in my reading. Even until today, after more than sixty years, I still cannot pick up my reading speed. I guess that it probably true that I do need to be slow and steady in order to reach my destination, No matter how many years it may take.

In my opinion, while Mr. Ma appeared to be very stern and strict when I first met him, I had the feeling that he was a very kind and interesting person. When I could complete my homework and I had shown considerable progress, we were able to relax and to spend some time chit-chatting on a great variety of subjects such as world history, geography, human relations and much more.

At my last lesson with Mr. Ma, when he knew that I had studied in a Chinese school, he wrote for me an illustrative paper to show me the Taiwan Chinese Braille system and to briefly explain the combination of Braille dots in order to form the Chinese Mandarin Braille language. In fact, it was, therefore, this that had aroused my great interest in learning Chinese Braille. Later on, I was able to consult an old blind friend of mine, Mr. Lai Kok Keong, concerning the Chinese Braille system and it was he who helped me by lending me some Chinese Braille magazines so that I could widen my knowledge by reading the Chinese Braille materials.

Indeed, it was this that had motivated me and it was this that ultimately led me to become a strong believer in life-long learning. Nevertheless, I am quite sure that it was Mr. Ma Kho's words, "You are ten minutes late", that had given me the invaluable lesson on being punctual.

Undoubtedly, therefore, I have truly come to realise that "Punctuality" can really help us to succeed in many ways throughout our journey in life.



BLIND IN MY CHILDHOOD DAYS

By Radzimah Mat Yasin

I was born in Parit, Perak in the year of 1951. At the age of two I became blind due to a high fever. Actually, I was the only girl amongst three brothers in the family.

When I was a little older, I remembered that my brothers would go out and play and I would be left alone in the house. As I had nothing to do, this was the time when I started noticing that there were many chickens staying under our house, which was built on stilts. However, I did not seem to hear the sound of the mother hen and so I thought that those chicks must be ducklings. This was because I had been told that ducks would lay their eggs everywhere but they will not hatch them. Instead, they will leave their eggs to be hatched by the mother hen.

And so the ducklings will not know their mother and they will follow the mother hen around instead. After a certain time, however, the ducklings will not even follow the mother hen and they will start going their own way and fend for themselves.

In fact, this is why the grown-ups will say, “Ducks are very natural. Even when they are small, they won’t drown in the water.”

And so I went down under the house and I heard the ducklings chirping away. I stretched out my hands in front of the ducklings and so many of them came chirping towards my palm and began pecking at my fingers.

I touched the ducklings – Wow! They were so small and very cute! I caught hold of two of the ducklings and I took them to the well. There I squatted down to touch the well and I found that it was full of water, very cold water indeed, and there were so many plants.

It was there where I let go of the two ducklings. Suddenly, the ducklings were very quiet and I could not hear any chirping. I got very scared as I feared that the ducklings had disappeared. Should my mother find out what I had done, she would surely give me such a terrible scolding! And so I remained squatting down by the well, feeling very scared, just waiting, and waiting, hoping that the ducklings will appear again.

Then I began to realise that this was a disused well and that I would be in much greater danger if I should fall into the well. And so I just remained squatting down, feeling most scared, waiting and waiting, hoping that the ducklings will appear again. But I could not hear any sound; I thought that the ducklings must have drowned.

Then suddenly, I heard the two ducklings chirping as they approached my hand and they climbed on to my palm. I quickly took them up, walked back to the house, and I put the ducklings back under the house.

Wow! It was so lucky for me that I did not fall into the well!

It was then when I went back into the house and I pretended that nothing had happened at all! If my mother knew what I had done, she would surely have given me such a terrible scolding! Could I have fallen into the water as I had gone so near to the edge of the well! But I was so young at the time that I did not know how to be scared of danger.

Later, when I was a little bit older, I myself, together with my two brothers, would follow my mother to the river every day. One brother was older than me and the other brother was younger than me. When it was low tide, my brothers would enjoy playing in the river while I would play on the sand which was like an island surrounded by the water. Then when I began to wander all over the place, my mother would keep on reminding me, “Don’t go there, don’t go there!” I kept wondering why people would tell me, “You can go anywhere, but don’t go there!” I did not understand the danger at the time and nobody, not even my mother, would explain to me what danger I was in.

Thus, on one evening I went along with my father and my two brothers to the river to play and I really enjoyed wandering around here and there. Suddenly, I felt the current of water snatching me away and I screamed as loudly as I could. My father came and caught me and he scolded me as he threw me into the shallow water.

Fortunately for me, my father did not tell my mother what had happened or else I would have got a severe scolding from her. Now at last I understood what danger I could have got into – the water was so deep and the current was very fast moving so that it could have carried me away. So now I understood why my mother had kept on saying, “Don’t go there, don’t go there

Nevertheless, in spite of the near danger to my life, I still used to be a stubborn little girl and I loved to climb trees. At the back of our house, there was a mangosteen tree which usually bore lots of fruits.

So one day I told my brother to climb the mangosteen tree and I said that I would bring the knife to cut off the fruits.

As we were on the tree, we suddenly heard mother calling but we did not answer. Mother sounded very angry as she called out, “You all just wait! I will bring the *kayu* and beat you all! Come down, come down!”

However, we kept very quiet as we waited and we felt very scared. We knew that mother was busy weaving mats at the time. When everything was quiet, we started climbing down slowly. We then walked quietly and very slowly without slippers to the front of the house where we started playing with our friends on the main road.

As my mother was so busy weaving mats, she probably did not notice us coming down the tree and going to the front area. And so later when we entered the house, mother did not say anything. In the end, however, we also did not manage to pluck the ripe mangosteens to eat.

One day in the year of 1959 when I was age seven, an officer from the Welfare Department came to our *kampung* and asked the Head of the village whether there were any handicapped children in the *kampung*. As I was playing with the other children, my father called me and introduced me to the Welfare Officer.

The officer asked me whether I would like to go to school so that I could learn to read and write and I would also learn how to move about like sighted people.

In great excitement, I told the officer that I could hear my brothers every day reading and spelling and I would love to go to school so that I could read and spell like them.

So the Welfare Officer told my father to send me for medical checkup and then they will come and give my father a voucher to send me to Kuala Lumpur. From there, they will send me to the Princess Elizabeth School in Johor Bahru.

And so when we arrived in Kuala Lumpur by train, my parents took me to the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) as we were supposed to stay there for about one week. At the MAB, I had to go through an interview and undergo various tests.

At the interview, they asked me various questions like “What is money” or “What is a ball” and I was asked to identify various objects by touch or by their sound. For example, they shook a ball with bells inside and I was asked to identify the object.

At the end of the sessions, I was told of the good news that I had passed the test. They said that they were very happy with me because I did not cry during the sessions and that I answered the questions very well. They said that if I had cried, I would have failed the test and they would have sent me home instead of going to school.

Then I heard the Welfare Officer saying that the overaged children will be sent to the school in Johor Bahru while the younger ones would be sent to the school in Penang. And so I was put on the train accompanied by the Welfare Officer. When I arrived at the school, I was so happy to meet the other blind children there. One of them was Aishah Abdullah and we became very good friends.

Then when it came to the first school holidays, all the blind children were sent home to spend the time with their own families. When I arrived at the train station, my father was there to receive me and take me home.

Then, to my surprise, my father asked, “Why you go to Penang? I thought you go to Johor!”

Only then did I realise that I had been sent to St. Nicholas’ School for the Blind in Penang and not the Princess Elizabeth School for the Blind in Johor Bahru.

Well, to whatever school I was sent, I felt very happy about it. And so it was thus that I had my education at St. Nicholas’ School for the Blind in Penang.



BLINDLY DANCING



By Hng Tek Hing

(Editor's Note: Hng Tek Hing has been totally blind from childhood and he received his education at St. Nicholas' School for the Blind in Penang.

Subsequently, he had his Rehabilitation and vocational training at the Gurney Training Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

In the following story, Tek Hing tells how he came to learn dancing)

In my younger days, I was already blind but I used to enjoy mixing around with my neighbours' children. In fact, we were very cooperative in doing some things. In those days, most of the children, including my sister, were only in Standard Two or Standard Three.

And so one day when I was already nine or ten years of age, I felt an inspiration to dance and I was wondering to myself how I could dance as a blind person. Then an idea came to my head – I thought I could organise a dancing programme which would involve the children in my neighbourhood. Thus, I started asking my neighbours' children whether they would consider joining me in a dancing session. I told them that I could hold the dancing programme in my mother's house.

To my pleasant surprise, all the children had no objection at all. In fact, they were very keen and they all agreed to come to my mother's house for the dancing. The children really enjoyed the dancing very much but they were amazed to see that I could dance because none of them believed that a blind person could dance.

When the music came on, we all held hands and we began swinging about and stamping our feet on the ground according to the beat and rhythm that burst forth. At one time, as we were dancing, my father happened to be asleep in the room after his work – he was having his afternoon nap. He was so surprised to hear some noise and the sound of music outside in the hall. Then, in amazement, he saw me holding hands with the other children as we were jumping and swinging and stamping along with our feet to the music that was bursting forth.

Calmly, my father said that our dancing had woken him up from his sleep. He asked whether we could stop for a while and carry on the dancing later. Of course, we had no choice but to comply and so we had to stop the dancing. Amazingly, my father did not get angry and so we could all have a good laugh as we all departed from the hall.

Soon after this, I was admitted into St. Nicholas' School for the Blind in Penang when I was about age twelve. However, when I returned home for the school holidays, my neighbours' children would approach me and they would ask whether we could resume our dancing of the old days. Of course, I never refused them and so some of the children, especially some of the girls, became very close friends with me.

Well, even some of the parents began looking up to me as they saw me to be a capable young man in spite of my blindness. This was because they knew that I had gone to secondary school and that I was doing well in my studies.

Thus, one day came when one of the parents began to ask whether I would consider marrying her daughter by the name of Penny Luang. I told the mother that I was still not ready for marriage as I had still not yet undergone vocational training and, therefore, I had not yet been able to secure any job. The mother tried to persuade me by saying that her daughter would be willing to wait for me. I told her that I was not yet ready to make such a decision at this time.

Subsequently, it was later on when I had gained employment as Telephone Operator in a legal firm and Penny Luang still remained single when her mother again approached me and asked whether I could now consider marrying her daughter as I was already working. Indeed, I thought very hard and I began to realise that actually this girl would not be very suitable for me. And so I told her mother that I could not accept the proposal to marry her daughter, Penny Luang.

Then, some years later, I got news that Penny Luang was suffering from some depressive illness and her parents were very upset because she was their only biological daughter. Even though they had another daughter by adoption, the mother had the feeling that this girl was not as caring as Penny Luang.

Eventually, Penny Luang must have been cured of her illness because at last, there was a man who was keen to take Penny Luang as his wife. Later, when I met Penny Luang again, I told her that it would be a very good idea for her to accept the proposal if she was keen to start and raise a family. And so they did get married and subsequently they had two children. Truly, I really felt very happy for Penny Luang.

Then, it was a few years later when I met Penny Luang again. I congratulated her on her success as a family and I told her that life can be very rosy or it could be the other way around. I said that not everything that we plan would work out according to our wishes.

At this time, Penny Luang sounded very shy in her conversation with me. I had the feeling that this was because she was recalling the time when she made her proposal to me and I had rejected her. Anyway, I was truly glad to have been able to reconcile with her.

Truly, I must say that I was really blindly dancing in my life but, fortunately, I did not blindly marry in my lifetime!



Maria Runyan:

Don't listen to negative influences. Believe in yourself and show others what you can do.

Only you can find your potential.

Tunku Abdul Rahman, in his 1963 September 16 Malaysia Day Speech:

Let every Malaysian in all the states of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah, ensure that our Malaysia is truly worthy of the aims and hopes we have shared, the trials and stress we have endured, in working together to achieve our common destiny.

The Dalai Lama's Unique Qualities:

His penetrating intelligence but without artifice; a kindness but without excessive sentimentality; great humour but without sentimentality; the ability to inspire rather than awe; the art of how to live with a sense of fulfilment and serenity not seen in other people.

What are the principles that enable him to achieve this? Can we identify the practices that could be directly applied to our lives to simply help us become happier, stronger and perhaps less afraid?

Anonymous:

Judging Others: No one has the right to judge you because no one really knows what you have been through. They might have heard the stories, but they did not feel what you felt in your heart.

Anonymous:

Liking and Loving: To the question concerning the difference between “I like you” and “I love you”, Gautama Buddha had a beautiful answer.

He said, “When you like a flower, you just pluck it. But when you love a flower, you water it daily.”

Indeed, one who understands this truly understands life.



Caesare Pavese:

We do not remember days; we remember moments.

Robert A. Heinlein:

Being a mother is an attitude. It is not necessarily a biological relation.

Anonymous:

Live simply; but don't simply live.

Anonymous:

A bend in the road is not the end of the road.

Elbert Hubbard:

No one ever gets far unless he accomplishes the possible at least once a day.

Charlie Chaplin:

A day without laughter is a day wasted.

Anonymous:

Be happy, not because everything is good, but because you can see the good side of everything.

John Galsworth:

Idealism increases in direct proportion to one's distance from the problem.

Anonymous:

Wise men speak because they have something to say. Fools speak because they have to say something.

Political Philosophy:

There are no permanent enemies and no permanent friends.

David Simson:

The beauty of love is that in giving it away, you are left with more than you had before.

Helen Keller:

Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.



Readers are invited to write for our publication, NCBM Outreach. For articles published, payments are as follows:

1. Original articles on the achievements of blind people or of an inspirational nature – (about 500 words) – RM80
2. Articles containing ideas and suggestions for the improvement of NCBM or its member-organisations (about 500 words) – RM80
3. Articles on funny or unusual experiences (250/500 words) RM40/RM80. Poems which are personal compositions depicting experiences of a blind person (50/100 words) – RM 40/RM 80
4. Articles of an informative nature written in your own words – (About 500 words) – RM80
5. Poems which are personal compositions depicting experiences of a blind person (About 50/100 words) – RM 40/RM 80
6. Interesting tidbits jokes or other information taken from magazines or other sources of limited circulation – RM15

Note: For all articles, other news and reports, submitted by anyone, including officials in the organisations serving the blind, payment will be made.