

THE MERICAN CLAN

*A Story of
Courage and
Destiny*

Datin Ragayah Eusoff

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Project Editor: Tan Jin Hock
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Times Subang
Lot 46, Subang Hi-Tech Industrial Park
Batu Tiga
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Malaysia
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Foreword

by

Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali
Wife of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

First of all I would like to congratulate the author, Datin Ragayah Eusoff, on her laudable and ambitious attempt to document the history of the Merican clan, in particular her husband's immediate family whom she knows well. With few exceptions biographical works are usually not saleable as the Malaysian public has yet to develop a habit for such reading. Financially unrewarding, this book must have been a labour of love for her.

I can understand the writer's difficulty in documenting a family history that goes back to the 18th century as not many records are available. There may be sceptics who question the usefulness and validity of writing this book on a prominent Malay family whose forefathers migrated from India. But because of the scarcity of books on Malay families, I think this book will be a valuable addition to the Malaysiana collection in libraries.

I know the children of Dr Ali Osman Merican personally. I knew Carleel, Ezanee and Mahmood while at the King Edward VII College of Medicine – especially Ezanee who was my contemporary. Over the years I have come to know more of Mahmood in his involvement with the rehabilitation of the handicapped. I also am acquainted with Malek and Sidique and their shy sister Lylone.

I had the pleasure of meeting their mother, Che Pok Abdullah, a woman worthy of admiration. She had to raise her children after the

death of her husband at the end of the Japanese Occupation. Not having the opportunity and benefit of an English education, she managed to provide for her children in the best way she knew how. Her forte was cooking and she became the caterer for the school canteen.

Her devotion and her faith in her children have not been unfounded. Three sons, Carleel, Ezanee and Mahmood, have become successful doctors; another son, Malek, became a prominent economist and banker and Sidique, an educationist and sportsman par excellence.

Their father, Dr Ali Merican, died early while they were all still studying. With determination and self-reliance and a caring mother, they overcame financial difficulties and postwar hardship. They applied themselves diligently to education and distinguished themselves in their studies as well as in extramural activities.

The story of the Merican family is a success story of surviving against hardship during their growing years in Kelantan, a state that was not as economically and socially developed as the other states. Theirs is a success story which I hope will serve as an inspiration to the young generation of Malaysians to better their lives and to become useful members of society.

Finally, I extend my best wishes to the author and the Merican family.

Preface

It was in the days of my youth that my love of books was kindled by my late father, Dato' Haji Mohamed Eusoff bin Dato' Yusuff. He was a member of the Ipoh Book Club and gave me books after he had read them. I never thought then that one day I would fulfil my dream to be a writer. It is my love for reading and a sense of history that made me turn to writing.

In the 1950s, after completing her Standard IX (equivalent to Form V), a Malay girl would be matched and married off to a boy from a similar social standing and would settle down to a quiet domestic life. This idea did not appeal to me and I am indebted to my father for allowing me to pursue a university education instead. To honour him and repay my debt of gratitude, I wrote his biography entitled *The Lord of Kinta* which was launched in November 1994.

Admittedly, writing about the Merican clan – my husband's family – is not easy. If I am too complimentary I may be accused of boasting and if I am too frank I may tread on sensitivities and may hurt feelings.

Initially, the idea of documenting the family history was not taken seriously or encouraged. Among my husband's siblings, only Sidique was enthusiastic. While Carleel considered it a joke, Ezanee disliked the idea. Malek demurred about being interviewed by me, preferring to write his comments on my draft. My shy sister-in-law Lylone was almost speechless.

My husband was tactful. He was not comfortable with the idea of making their lives public. He advised me not "to blow our own trum-

pets" and suggested I write only about deceased Mericans – advice which I believe to be too restrictive.

But there is no stopping or deterring a writer's urge and beliefs. I sincerely believe that a written record should be made of the Merican family, whose forefather set sail through the stormy waters of the Indian Ocean centuries ago to make a home in Malaya and was responsible for subsequent generations of Mericans.

The wish to write this biography arose during one *Bulan Ramadan* (fasting month) and was strengthened at the first clan gathering in Penang in November 1991.

Apart from the immediate family members, including my husband's siblings and first cousins, the rest of the Mericans I met were strangers. The Mericans, whose forefather landed in Penang in 1770, have branched out to various states in Malaysia and to Singapore. Some have even migrated to Indonesia. It is not surprising then that without regular contact, the younger generations will not know their relatives in the clan.

Fortunately, the Mericans differ from the Malays in retaining their surname, a practice which is no different from the Chinese in Malaysia. Without this, it would be very difficult to trace and compile genealogy charts of the large clan.

Mixing with the Mericans over the years, I have found them to be interesting and achievement-oriented. There are prominent Mericans in the field of sports and almost all professions, ranging from doctors, bankers, accountants, architects and engineers to personalities in the mass media and entertainment world.

My sentiments in recording family history are best described in the following quotation by George Santayana:

"We must welcome the future, remembering that soon it will be the past, and we must respect the past, remembering that it was once all that was humanly possible."

The Author

Datin Ragayah was born in Kuala Lumpur, the third child of Dato' Panglima Kinta Dato' Dr Hj Mohd Eusoff bin Yusuff and Puan Aminah Abdullah. She grew up in Ipoh and had her early education at the Ipoh Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus before proceeding to Sixth Form at St Michael's Institution. Ragayah graduated from the University of Malaya in Singapore in Economics and Philosophy.

Soon after graduation in 1961, Ragayah was married to Dr Mahmood Merican. Later, when her husband was posted to the General Hospital in Kuala Lumpur, she started work in Bank Negara Malaysia as a Library Assistant.

In 1962, they left for England. While her husband trained to be an orthopaedic surgeon, Ragayah completed a course in librarianship at the College of Commerce in Liverpool, now the Liverpool John Moore's University.

Ragayah served in the bank for 30 years. In 1962, when she was appointed Library Assistant, she became the first lady officer in the bank. On her return from England in 1967, she became the bank's Librarian. From 1980 onward, she worked in the Secretary's Department and then the Operational Planning Department before being appointed Manager. During her long service in the bank, she developed the Library and set up the Archives and Money Museum. She also helped to establish the National Automated Clearing House.

For her distinguished service in the nation's premier financial institution, she became the first lady officer in the bank to receive the

AMN (Ahli Mangku Negara), a federal award conferred by the Agong (King).

Ragayah has served on various committees, including the Library Association of Malaysia (holding the post of President from 1979–1980); the Sub-Committee to establish the Library of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; the Asian Ceramic Society, West Malaysian Chapter; and the Society for the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped in Selangor and the Federal Territory. From September 1995 to 1996, she served as the Secretary of the Kuala Lumpur Speakers' Club.

Ragayah's hobbies and pastimes include ballroom dancing, golf, cooking, gardening, collecting antique ceramics, furniture and jewellery, rearing Japanese carps, and reading and writing. She is a keen traveller.

At present, she is a freelance writer and has contributed articles to the *New Straits Times*, the Southern Bank magazine *Sojourn* and *The Star*. Her topics of interest include parenthood, travelogue and commentaries on current social and cultural practices.

Her first book, *The Lord of Kinta*, a biography of her late father, Dato' Panglima Kinta, was launched by the Raja Muda of Perak, DYTM Raja Nazrin Shah (representing his father, the Sultan of Perak), on 24 November 1994. At the launch, Datin Ragayah presented an endowment to the University of Malaya in memory of her late father.

The Merican Clan is her second book.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah, the wife of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, who has done me the singular honour of writing the foreword to this book.

I am indebted to Haji Tamin Merican for his sterling work in compiling comprehensive charts on the Merican clan. The charts served as a springboard for my research.

I also would like to thank many friends and relatives who have contributed by giving me their views and insight into the Merican family. In particular, I owe a debt of gratitude to those Mericans, who despite their busy schedules, cooperated by providing me information and photographs for this book.

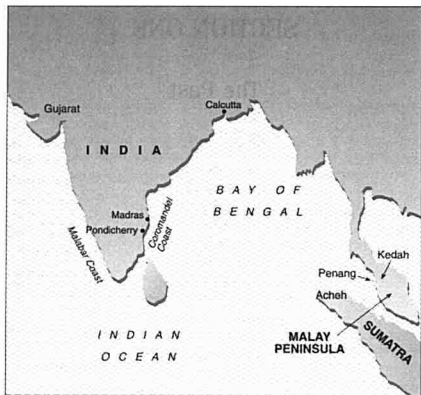
Finally my grateful thanks to my husband, Dato' Dr Mahmood Merican, without whose patience, counsel and friendship this book would not have been possible.

My sentiments on friendship are best described by my favourite poet, Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931):

"... Seek him always with hours to live. For it is his to fill your need, but not your emptiness. And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures. For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning refreshed."

SECTION ONE

The Past



Chapter 1

A Gathering of the Clan

More than 200 years after the first Merican landed in Penang, the Merican clan converged on the island for a historic meet.

The significance of this event was captured in the newspapers. *The Star* (November 1991) headlined its report: "Mericans from Three Countries in Historic Meet". Comprising Malaysians, Indonesians and Singaporeans under the newly-established Merican Friendship Association, these Mericans of Arab-Indian stock were descended from millionaire Kapitan Keling.

The *New Straits Times* (NST) (November 1991) reported the event as "Merican Clan Retraces Their Roots". It recorded that 250 Mericans consisting of eight generations converged in Penang, the oldest member from the fourth generation being 86-year-old Che Zainab Ismail.

The first day of the meet on 23 November started with the registration of members in the Merlin Hotel. After registration, the Mericans attended a tea party which provided a further opportunity for them to socialise. To mark the occasion, Hj Rahim Merican, a fifth-generation Merican and retired headmaster from Kota Bharu, composed a poem "Madah Perhimpunan Ikhwan Merican" as follows:

*"Jika ada jarum yang patah, jangan letak di atas peti,
Jika ada silap dan salah, jangan simpan di dalam hati,
Perhimpunan Ikhwan Merican,
Perhimpunan bersejarah,*

*Dari merata pelusuk rantau negara,
Dengan beranika rupa kenderaan,
Membawa muda, dewasa, miskin, kaya,
Beramai-ramai, berjumpa, berkenalan,
Mengerat silaturahmi."*

On the second day of the programme, the Mericans gathered to perform prayers at the Kapitan Keling Mosque in Malabar Road. Then the members of the clan visited the graves of Kapitan Keling and his wives at Kampong Kolam. The Kapitan's three wives were Pathni Ama, Che Aminah and Tengku Wan Chik Taiboo. The first wife was known as the saintly one and she did not consummate her marriage. The second wife, Che Aminah, gave birth to only one child, Udman Nachar. The third wife, Tengku Wan Chik Taiboo, a Kedah princess, gave birth to six children.

In the evening, a get-together dinner was held at Hotel Merlin. The highlight of the evening festivities was the honouring of the 44 Mericans who had reached 60 years of age or more. During dinner, a presentation of tokens was made to those seniors. The scene is aptly described by Hj Rahim Merican:

*"Carleel, Mami Che Nab, Mami Che Kechik,
Mereka yang meningkat 60 tahun ke atas,
dirai dihormati dengan doa,
Sihat wal'afiat dipanjangkan umur,
Dimurahkan rezeki penuh rahmat.
Menziarahi masjid, makam sejarah,
Datuk-nenek, moyang, saudara-mara.
Bukan lidi menelan naga,
Kata siang, menjumpa malam,
peredaran cakerawala di atas paksinya;
Pelari pecut cepat letih,
Yang perlahan lambat tiba,
Kesederhanan, sebaik jalan."*

On the third day, the organisers arranged for a group photograph to be taken at Penang's historic site, Fort Cornwallis. And the poem continues:

"Berjumpa, berkenalan, berpisah
Mengenang manis peristiwa bersejarah,
Bermesra, menghubungi kembali, talian terputus,
Hormat-menghormati, firman Allah,
Beriman, Bersaudara, lupai segala sengketa,
Tanpa kebesaran, kekayaan, darjat,
Kesombongan, keangkuhan, yang dikutuk,
Ikhwān ke sejarah teraan,
Ke perpaduan ikhlas,
tidak boleh dipotong,
Tidak boleh dicantas,
Tidak boleh diputus,
tidak boleh ditukar-ganti,
Di landasan lurus,
Ke jalan diredhai,
Ya Allah berkatilah,
Perhimpunan Ikhwān Merican ...
Madah Perhimpunan."

To give credit where it is due, Rahim had initiated the meeting of the clan. Preparations for this event started a year before when an organising committee was formed. A representative was appointed in each state to coordinate and encourage attendance at the get-together.

And so the Merican families from all over Malaysia and Singapore gathered for the first time in Penang to commemorate the founding of the Merican clan in Malaysia. More than a hundred Mericans and their spouses attended the three-day celebration which provided a rare opportunity for all Mericans to get to know each other or to renew their bond of friendship and family ties.

At the 1991 clan meeting, my husband's eldest brother, Dato' Dr Carleel Merican, 70 years old and doyen of the clan, arrived at the

dinner accompanied by *kompang* and *bunga mawar* and a ceremonial umbrella was held over his head. Known for his humour and jovial nature, Carleel made a speech at the dinner. With tongue in cheek, he told the gathering about the origin of the names "Keling" and "Merican". He talked of the early days of the 1700s when Indian slaves were conscripted to work on the trading ships plying between India and the Malay peninsula. As the slaves came down the gangway, the chains on their ankles made a "Kling, Kling" sound and the English started calling these people "Keling" (which has since become a derogatory term for the Indians.)

Carleel went on to relate his fictional version of the origin of the family name "Merican". As the boats arrived at the harbour, Indian labourers started unloading the ships. As they came down the gangway, their English masters would give them instructions where to go. With a mixture of English and Malay, the English bosses would say "mari" and when the Indian labourers shook their heads, they would say "can" (meaning that they could do the job). And so began the name "Mari-can" or "Merican".

Non-Malays who are not familiar with the Merican family tend to confuse them with the Maricans who are noted in the book trade business. Actually, the Maricans are Muslim Indians whereas the Mericans are now Malays who have intermarried and assimilated themselves with the local Malay Muslim community.

The Merican clan, proud to show off the many talents of its members, put up the evening's entertainment. Famous television personalities Faridah Merican and Ahmad Daud acted as compere and master of ceremony for the evening. Many English and Malay songs were rendered by members of the Merican clan, which included the young, the not so young and the old. Even the band which provided the music for the occasion was made up of Merican members.

To me the gathering was a fascinating study of the Merican clan and the various shades of complexion from pitch black to very fair resulting from intermarriages of the various races, i.e. Indian, Malay, Chinese, Siamese and European.

The Merican clan is rather similar to the nyonyas of Penang and Malacca whose forefathers came to trade and then settled down in the country. Unlike other Chinese immigrants, the nyonyas adopted the Malay language, dress and customs. While the nyonyas developed a unique language, integrating Chinese with Malay words, the Merican clan married local Malays and integrated with the Malay community. And while the nyonyas retained their original religion, Buddhism, the Mericans were Muslims and adopted the Malay language and customs. Fifty years ago there was discrimination by the Malays towards the Mericans. But after Malaysian Independence, the Federal Constitution defined the Malay as one who embraces Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language and adopts Malay customs. The Mericans are therefore Malays according to the Constitution and are now accepted by the Malay community.

The nyonya dress is an adaptation of the Malay *kebaya*. The nyonyas looked to China and were proud of their origins. The wealthier families ordered their crockery from China and their furniture were made by Chinese craftsmen based on Chinese designs. Unlike the nyonyas, the Merican clan preferred to assimilate totally with the Malay community, adopting their dress – *kebaya* and *batik sarung* with *selendang* – and speaking Malay. They do not retain any allegiance to India, and the only obvious remnant of Indian ways is perhaps their *mamak* food which is a blend of Indian and Malay cuisine.

The programme for the clan meeting also included a tour down memory lane where the group was taken in buses to tour the familiar haunts of Kapitan Keling in Penang. This took place after a picnic lunch at Fort Cornwallis.

My husband and I opted to follow his older brothers Carleel and Ezanee on a brief tour of their own family history. I was shown the family house where Carleel was born and another house where he stayed during his schooldays in Penang. I was also shown the house where Carleel's mother eloped with his father from her relatives' house. It is now occupied by MUI Bank and is not far from the branch building of Bank Negara Malaysia.

One significant event in the programme was the distribution of two books, one by Rahim Merican and more importantly the book compiled by his younger brother, Hj Tamin Merican, consisting of genealogy charts and newspaper cuttings on the clan which took 20 years to compile.

A milestone has been reached in completing the genealogy charts on the Merican clan. However, I find it more interesting to listen to personal events and episodes involving the family members, how they lived in the times governed by the British and what events shaped the course of their lives. This book is intended to add colour and interest to some of the personalities listed in these charts.

Chapter 2

Early Penang – The First Generation

This chapter describes the conditions prevailing in Penang when the early generations of Mericans settled on the island.

Penang was the scene of the last series of migrations from India to Malaya and the archipelago region. As the first port of disembarkation for all Indian immigrants to the Straits Settlements and the Malay peninsula, the island has the largest established community of South Indian Muslims in Malaysia.

Spread of Islam

Abdul Halim Nasir, in his book *Mosques of Peninsular Malaysia*, wrote that Islam came to the Malay peninsula in the early 14th century. By the 15th century, the growth of Islam was accentuated by the establishment of the Malay Sultanate in Malacca. Islam was disseminated to all areas under the Malacca Empire and Malacca became the most important centre of Islamic growth.

The Coming of the British

As early as the 15th century, Penang was ideal not only as a meeting place for traders from Europe, the Middle East and India but as a port of call for ships en route to China. The earliest reference to Penang appeared in Chinese charts when the Chinese envoy Cheng Ho visited Malacca in 1405. In later years, the island was used by ships engaged in the spice trade to replenish their water supply.

In 1592, during the Elizabethan era, a Captain Lancaster watered and rested on the island. He described Penang as being uninhabited but having a good harbour. His ship was loaded with pepper which he had plundered from some Portuguese vessels off Perak. Because of his favourable report, the East India Company (EIC) was formed in 1600 to expand British trade in the Far East. As far back as 1602, the Company had settlements in Sumatra and Java, as well as a firm footing in India. The EIC wanted to compete with the Dutch who controlled most of the trade in the region.

Penang only became a British settlement in 1786. The Company had considered establishing it much earlier but Britain was preoccupied with the American War of Independence and the outbreak of war with France.

The Malays called the island Pulau Pinang after the tall and graceful areca nut trees found on the island. After taking control of the island from the Sultan of Kedah, the British renamed it Prince of Wales Island in honour of their king, King George IV.

The British deceived the Sultan of Kedah, for instead of providing him protection against Siamese and Burmese aggression, they paid him a mere \$10,000. In exchange for this the British could use Penang as a centre of international commerce as well as a port for repairs and supplies of the King's and the Company's ships.

In 1805, Stamford Raffles came to Penang as an employee of the EIC and served as Assistant Secretary to the government. Like Francis Light (the first British Administrative Controller of Penang), he studied Malay and tried to learn the local customs. Although Raffles contributed to the development of Penang, he is best remembered today as the founder of Singapore.

In 1826, Penang became part of the Straits Settlements together with Singapore and Malacca. By the early 19th century, Penang had also developed its own plantations of nutmegs and cloves, thus making Britain less dependent on supplies from the spice islands controlled by the Dutch. In addition, Penang served as an outlet to outside markets for crops in Kedah.

It is interesting to note the architectural scene of 19th century Penang. In 1837, Penang consisted of a large street intersected by several smaller ones. The main buildings were a church, an Armenian chapel, two Roman Catholic chapels, a court house, a jail, a public school, a poor house, government offices, and the civil and military hospitals. The town also had a few European and Chinese shops.

Most of Penang's early settlers were Malays and Indian immigrants who were then called Kelings. The Indians from Madras and the Coromandel Coast were mainly traders, shopkeepers, cooks, boatmen and common labourers. They contributed to the development of the island. The Siamese invasion of Kedah in 1821 brought refugees from Kedah and Perlis to Penang. These refugees played an important part in the opening up of the rural districts of the island. They also helped the development of Islam in Penang.

In the early 1830s, the island's population was approximately 40,000, comprising 16,000 Malays, more than 11,000 Indians and Arabs and over 9,000 Chinese. In contrast, Singapore was largely settled by Chinese immigrants.

One of the most important reasons why early experiments to plant various crops in Penang failed was because the European settlers did not understand that agriculture in a tropical climate required special techniques. Soon after the founding of Penang, Europeans began to acquire large pieces of land which they cleared and planted with pepper and other crops including nutmegs and cloves. Pepper was a labour intensive crop and the Chinese were used to cultivate it. However, the closure of European markets in 1805, followed by a plague of insects, resulted in most plantations closing by the mid-1830s. There were also unsuccessful attempts at growing coffee, cotton, tobacco and cinnamon for export.

Although early writers noted that Penang was a healthy place to live, with a good climate and a plentiful supply of fruits, vegetables and fish, the sedentary lifestyle and unsuitable clothing of the British expatriates contributed to their high mortality rate as did malaria and dysentery.

The Chinese Influx

In order to develop Penang, the British Administrative Controller Francis Light encouraged various races including Malays to settle in Penang. Light especially encouraged the immigration of the Chinese. Many of the early leaders of the Chinese community in Penang came from Kedah where there was a thriving population. The first Kapitan Cina appointed by Light was Koh Lay Huan, a wealthy merchant and planter. After his death in 1826, his son continued to develop friendly relations with European merchants and officials.

Kapitan Keling and Penang's Development

Early accounts of business life in Penang as published by the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry focused on the role of the Chinese immigrants. The book fails to do justice to the important role of the Indian immigrants in the development of Penang, though it gives a good background of economic and social life in Penang. No mention is made that Governor George Leith appointed Kapitan Keling as leader of the Indian Muslim community in 1802.

At this time, Kapitan Keling was a wealthy merchant and philanthropist. After successfully obtaining 18 acres of land from the Lt Governor of Penang, he contributed funds to construct a mosque which was named after him. A research document by Noor Ida bt Yang Rashidi in the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Library entitled "The Kapitan Keling Mosque: Its History, Establishment and Ownership Struggle" notes that there are few mosques of architectural beauty apart from the magnificent Kapitan Keling Mosque and the minaret of the old mosque in Acheen Street. As Penang prospered many Muslims settled in the areas between Pitt Street and Chulia Street and in 1801, the Muslim community decided to build a larger mosque to replace the attap mosque built by EIC native troops.

After Kapitan Keling's death, large portions of the land were expropriated to build public roads (including Carnarvon Street), a police station, a market, a vernacular school and private houses. By 1903, only eight acres remained the property of the mosque. According to Noor Ida bt Yang Rashidi, because of wrangling for several years, the

mosque (and its large income of \$2,800) was placed under the authority of the Muslim and Hindu Endowments Board that year.

An account of Penang in the book *Malaysia in Colour* by J David Day notes that the first British trading post in Malaya was in Kedah. No attempt was made to colonise Kedah even though it was a useful trading partner for the British who had bases in Burma and India.

After successfully leasing Penang in 1786 from the Sultan of Kedah for an annual payment and a false promise of military aid, the British obtained another strip of land – Province Wellesley – in 1800. Raffles was then allowed to establish a post in the Riau region so that the British could have a base at the southern end of the Malacca Straits. Raffles replaced the ruler in Johor who was under Dutch control with a rival claimant to the throne. The new Sultan allowed the British to establish themselves in Singapore. The new British territories were then brought together under the EIC and administered from Penang.

Although the British did not actively seek to extend their territory, struggles between the sultans and Malay chiefs in Perak and Selangor as well as Siamese aggression against the northern states changed their minds. To protect British interests, Andrew Clarke, the new Governor of the Straits Settlements, began to control the Malay states through the Pangkor Treaty in 1874. To further develop British investment, he encouraged immigration of labourers from China and India, supplying Chinese labourers to the mines and Indian labourers to the plantations.

Commerce in Penang

The majority of the early Indian immigrants to Penang were involved in trade between the ports of south India and the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

Francis Light recommended that Penang be used as a refuelling centre for the British in order to expand trade with China, using archipelago produce and opium to exchange for tea. Light expected the transfer of the pepper and spice trade to Penang because of the island's potential in the production of spices. He managed to convince the EIC to establish Penang as a centre two years after the fall of Riau.

Unfortunately initial attempts to grow cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon failed although pepper was later grown successfully. Pepper, however, entered a oversupplied market and profits were minimal. Early hopes for the island as a naval station also failed.

Nevertheless, initial development of trade was encouraging. But as Penang was under the control of British India, the revenue that flowed in was insufficient to cover administration costs since there was no dramatic increase in trade. Penang's early free port status emphasised its role as a distribution point for the hinterland and the archipelago. The exports produced and imports consumed were very small compared to the total volume passing through the trading houses on the island. The main imports from Britain were piece goods and opium, steel, gun powder, iron and chinaware. This trade was conducted by European traders and Chinese middlemen. Rice, tin, spice, rattan, gold dust, ivory, ebony and pepper were imported into Penang from north Sumatra, southern Burma and the Malay peninsula in small boats of which a large proportion were manned by South Indian Muslims. Chinese goods such as sandalwood, bird's nests and shark's fins were imported into Penang.

The extension of British control to Burma in 1826 and the restoration of the Sultan of Kedah by the Siamese in 1842 increased trade in the north. The opening of tin mines in Perak and southern Thailand and import of provisions greatly increased Penang's trade with the hinterland, particularly in the latter half of the 19th century.

During the early years of the 19th century, the Indian Muslim population was larger in Penang than in Singapore. Chinese immigration overtook the Indian Muslim population only after the 1850s. During the first half of the 19th century, Indian Muslim and Jawi Peranakan trade was concentrated in the cloth trade of the Coromandel Coast. Most of these traders were involved in trade with Acheh and to a lesser extent with Burma. The most valuable Achenese product imported by Penang was pepper which was widely re-exported, followed by betel nut and rice.

Written records indicate that Kader Mydin Merican, the first Kapitan Keling, was one of the largest textile traders until his death in 1838.

Two other important traders of the Marakayar caste from the Coromandel Coast were Othman Nina and Nina Lebby. From Penang shipping records, a large number of the small ships were captained by the Mericans, members of the Marakayar group. Kadir Merican's influence was surpassed by another of the Marakayar group by the name of Mohamed Noordin Marakayar who started trading in 1820. Like most South Indian Muslim traders, he was not involved in the China trade which was under the control of the British and Chinese in Singapore but instead concentrated on trade with India, Sumatra, Burma and Singapore. His trade was the largest in volume and extent compared with any Muslim trader in Penang.

The administration of trade provided employment to South Indian Muslims and the Jawi Peranakan, most of whom were Mericans or Noordins. The large wholesale trading companies belonging to Indian Muslim-Jawi Peranakan traders such as Mohamed Noordin played an important role in the total South Indian Muslim trade. The larger companies supported the small retail shopkeepers who formed the majority of the South Indian Muslim trading community.

The Penang Chamber of Commerce founded by British merchants in the early 1800s consisted of five Europeans, one Eurasian, and equal numbers of Chinese and Indian Muslim-Jawi Peranakan representatives. The three Muslim representatives were Mohamed Merican Noordin, Syed Abbas and Bapoo Doorie. Towards the latter half of the 19th century, the chamber was dominated entirely by Europeans, reflecting the consolidation of trade with the larger European companies. Thus began the general decline of the South Indian Muslim-Jawi Peranakan trade in Penang.

During this period, Penang trade was dominated by the Chinese and the control of trade and commerce was largely in Chinese hands. The increased competition from Chinese traders led to the establishment of the Muslim Chamber of Commerce as the European-dominated Penang Chamber of Commerce did not provide sufficient protection for the Muslim traders. The office holders in the Muslim Chamber of Commerce were mainly Jawi Peranakan and Indian Muslims whose business was confined to Penang and the Straits Settle-

ments although some had strong business connections with India.

South Indian Muslim-Jawi Peranakan commercial activity was not restricted to trade. South Indian Muslims, particularly the Marakayars, were considered to be general merchants, moneychangers and petty shopkeepers. Some of these retail traders built extensive businesses which ensured that their families enjoyed education and influence in the community. The founder of one such family was Sultan Maidin, who came as a boy from South India and established himself as a cloth merchant in Chulia Street. He married a Jawi Peranakan. It is noteworthy that the business ties in and around Chulia Street were reinforced by continuing intermarriages within the business community.

Another such businessman was Mohamed Yusoff Merican whose father came from Nagore, India as a cloth merchant and subsequently became a moneychanger. The founder's wife was a Penang-born Jawi Peranakan and their son Mohamed Yusoff was educated in Penang and subsequently entered government service. His career in the Resident Chancellor's office and in the Treasury was typical of those Jawi Peranakan who, being English-educated members of the trading families, entered government service or the professions.

In the late 19th century, increasing competition from European and Chinese traders led to the steady decline of the Indian Muslim trading community. Hence, while integration of the Mericans into the Malay community took place, there followed a decline of their commercial influence and fortunes.

Chapter 3

Origin of the Indo-Malay Community

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the origin of the Indo-Malay community. Although Indian Muslims started to settle in Penang in the 18th century, Indian contact with the peninsula goes back to ancient times.

The most important cultural influences in the region were first Hindu and then Buddhist. In the third century, Kedah was an important port in the trade route between India and China. From the 9th century the Hindu kingdom of Srivijaya in Sumatra was the most powerful in the region. By the 11th century, the Srivijaya Empire extended control throughout most of the Malay peninsula until its fall in the 13th century.

From the eighth century until the fall of the Srivijaya Empire, Muslims concentrated more on trade than the spread of Islam. However, with the rise of the Malacca Empire in the 15th century, Islam became the dominant force in the region. From the intermarriages of the South Indian Muslims and the Malays, the Indo-Malay, or Jawi Peranakan community, developed.

While North India was invaded by Persian and Turkish armies, South India was visited by Arab traders from the seventh century. Many Arab traders who came to the Malabar and Coromandel coasts stayed on and married local women. Thus small Muslim communities were established.

The Muslims of the Coromandel Coast (on the east coast of India),

known as Chulians, were divided into several groups, namely the Marakayar, Rawther, Labbai and Kayalar. The grouping was based on occupations. The Marakayars were mainly maritime people such as sailors or merchants. Labbai referred to the educated and religious people while Rawthers were horsetraders or cavalrymen employed by local rulers. The South Indian Muslim immigrants to Malaya were mainly the Marakayar group.

The spread of Islam in the Malay archipelago was linked to the trade routes. From the 14th to 16th century, when Gujarati traders were important in the spread of Islam, traders from the Coromandel concentrated on trade and settlement. During this period, the wealthy and powerful Marakayar group maintained regular trade between the Coromandel ports and Pasai, Aceh, Johor and Malacca in textiles, tin, aromatic woods, elephants and rice.

Besides Penang, another location for the establishment of the Indo-Malay community in the Malay peninsula was Malacca which had become an important trading centre in the 15th century. The community of South Indians consisted mainly of Muslims from the Coromandel Coast. Inter-marriage of Indian Muslims and local Malay women was common. The great Malay scholar Abdullah Munshi bin Abdul Kadir was the product of such a marriage. Trade relations between Malacca and Pasai were strengthened by the marriage of a Muslim princess from the Sumatran kingdom and the Malaccan ruler who became a Muslim and adopted the title Megat Iskandar Shah.

The *Sejarah Melayu* used the term "Keling" to refer to South Indian merchants in general. The Portuguese used the term to refer to both Hindus and Muslims. It was not until the Muslims took over the Hindu trade that the term was used to refer solely to South Indian Muslims. The South Indian community was one of the most influential communities in Malacca at that time. Of this community, the majority were from the Coromandel Coast. The influence of the community was so strong in the peninsula that Mansur Shah, the third Sultan of Malacca, appointed a South Indian Hindu to be the Controller of the Exchequer.

Among the foreign traders, the most important group were the Gujaratis, followed by the Kelings and the Javanese, Arabs and Bengalis. Arab traders would stop by the port of Gujarat, bringing large quantities of merchandise including cloth. Tomes Pires, a Portuguese writer, noted that the Coromandel merchants sent three to four ships to Malacca each year.

The revenue and thus the power of the Sultan depended on the wealth derived from trade. Therefore many foreign merchants obtained economic and political power from their role as mediators between the Sultan and foreign traders. The fall of Malacca to the Portuguese in 1511 and subsequent capture of the city by the Dutch in 1641 ended Malacca's role as a leading entrepot centre.

By the beginning of the 17th century, Aceh had become the centre for Southeast Asian trade and its importance as a centre of religious learning grew with its trading prosperity. Aceh's importance peaked in 1620 when it controlled the coast of Sumatra as well as the peninsular states of Pahang, Kedah and Perak. In 1629, its power was cut short by the naval defeat by the combined forces of Johor and the Portuguese. The inter-Asian trade route was diverted to Riau which was under the control of the Malacca Sultanate in Johor.

The development of the Indo-Malay community in Malaya was based on the process of migration from Arab countries to India and thence to Malaya, and the mingling of trading activities with the spread of Islam.

The first Indian Muslim settlers in Penang were the Chulians from Kedah. The Chulia community established themselves around Chulia Street in Georgetown, Penang.

S Arasaratnam's book *Islamic Merchant Communities of Indian Sub-continent in Southeast Asia* is a useful reference source on the origin of the Indo-Malay community. It traces the route of 10th century Arab merchants to the Gujarat coast in India after sailing from the Arabian and Persian Gulf ports. Inter-marriages with local Indian women resulted in a strong Muslim merchant community. Important early Arab trading colonies were in Malabar on the southern tip of India and the Coromandel Coast.

Gujarat, annexed by the Sultan of Delhi in the 14th century, became independent in the 15th century and was again annexed by the Moghul Empire under Akbar in 16th century. During this period, Gujarat was a core region in the Indian Ocean trading system, being a strategic location within easy reach of the great textile manufacturing centres of Ahmadabad and Baroda, noted for their silk and cotton and mixed weaves.

Gujarati ports were major centres of shipbuilding which the Arabs, lacking timber, used for ship construction. In the 15th century, Gujarati ships sailed in great numbers to Pasai and Malacca and later to Aceh and Sumatra, bringing back pepper and spices to be reshipped to Aden, Jeddah, Suez and Basra by the Arabs, Persians and Gujaratis themselves.

In return for spices, they brought the most valued Indian textiles desired by the Malay ruling classes. It was the Gujarati merchants who persuaded the Sultan of Malacca to fight the Portuguese fleet in 1509. When Albuquerque attacked the city, Gujarati merchants fought alongside Malaccans and their ships were burnt by the Portuguese.

After the fall of Malacca, Muslim merchants went to other ports in the Straits of Malacca and Java. They continued trade with Aceh and exerted a strong presence till the mid-17th century when they ceased to sail in Southeast Asia.

Another important trading group in Malacca were the Bengalese. Bengal came under Islamic rule in the 13th century and under powerful moguls, they prospered as merchants.

The Siamese also participated in world trade. In the 17th century Ayutha was a powerful kingdom. The four major communities in the Thai capital were the Chinese, Moors, Malays and Portuguese. Their valuable products were tin, ivory, elephants, timber, hides and rice. The Chinese also traded their silk and porcelain. Under King Narai, the Muslim colony in Ayutha expanded with strong Persian influence. In 1670, in trying to get rid of Indo-Muslim influence, the king encouraged European trade. With their trade disrupted, the Muslims withdrew from Siamese ports.

In the 17th century, the Chulians took advantage of Portuguese-Dutch conflict. By the 18th century, they outnumbered their Hindu compatriots in trade. When the Dutch controlled the trading centres of Southeast Asia, the Chulians moved their trade to Perak, Kedah and Johor. They penetrated the political system by getting close to the ruling group. With their influence in these states, they were able initially to resist European penetration. But when the British founded Fort Cornwallis in Penang in 1786, they cooperated with the British in commerce and became a wealthy class.

From the 17th century the Marakayar group of Indian Muslims in India settled and concentrated in Penang. Belonging to this group, the first ancestor of the Merican clan was Kader Mydin Merican. His life story will be given in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Kapitan Keling

*"In a dim distant unrecorded age
we had met, thou and I,
When my speech became tangled in thine
and my life in thy life.
The East Wind had carried thy beckoning call
through an unseen path of the air
to a distant sun-lit shore
fanned by the coconut leaves.
It blended with the conch-shell sound ...*

*"Make ready the boat, carry the rites of our
worship across the unknown sea.
The Ganges stretched her arm to the eastern ocean
in a flow of majestic gesture ...
urging me to bear along the waves
their epic lines to the eastern islands,
and the heart of my land murmured to me its hope
that it might build its nest of love
in a faraway land of its dream ..."*

– Rabindranath Tagore

This poem speaks eloquently of the migration of the Indians to other lands. The poet refers in particular to the Hindus but the sentiments are relevant to other Indian emigrants too.

At the outset, knowing very little of the history of the Merican clan, I started by studying the genealogy charts compiled by Tamin Merican. After that, I embarked on my research in Kuala Lumpur and then in Penang where it all began. But unlike Western countries, very few records are kept or preserved in our part of the world. Consequently, I only found very brief references to the founding father of the Mericans even though the mosque named after him has become a national monument.

Kapitan Keling (1759–1838):

Background/Early Childhood

Kader Mydin Merican, the founder of the Merican clan in Malaysia, was of Arab-Indian descent. It was recorded that his ancestors originated from Samarkand, now the capital of the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, and later migrated to the Arab peninsula, then to the Indian subcontinent.

There is no consistency in the spellings of names of the early Mericans. Cauder Moheedin @ Kader Mydin Merican was born in 1759 in Pondicherry, India and came from a port village called Pamanggi Pettai, now known as Porto Novo, on the east coast of India.

Migration

In 1770 Fatma/Fatimah left India with her 11-year-old son Kader Mydin and his 7-year-old brother Muhammad Nordin Merican on a sailing boat. Her destination was Penang. Fatimah wanted to seek a better life for her family.

The boat landed in Tanjung Pudukarai, a place considered safe from attacks by the sea pirates of the region. "Tanjung" refers to the present area around Kampong Kolam, a part of Chulia Street and Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling. In Tamil, "pudu" means "new" and "karai" means "beach". From this historic landing, the Merican clan began.

Trader/Merchant

According to family historian Haji Ismail Merican, the two young boys worked very hard helping their mother in petty trading. Before they attained adulthood, they had already travelled to Kedah Tua, Kota Kuala Muda, Aceh and other ports. They made huge profits from trading in such commodities as *kain kapas*, *kayu gaharu*, beads and precious stones of various types and colour. The two brothers were successful businessmen and Kader became very prosperous.

Arrival of the British

On 11 August 1786, Captain Francis Light was officially appointed as the British Administrative Controller of Penang following an agreement made between the Sultan of Kedah, Sultan Abdullah Mukarram Shah, and the East India Company (EIC).

From then onward, Penang developed rapidly from a village into a sea port. Francis Light managed to turn Penang into a free port. Hordes of traders and merchants from India (especially from Chulia and Malabar), China, Burma, Aceh, Siam and other countries were attracted there. Following this, Francis Light encouraged settlers to Penang with the granting of free land.

During the first half of the 19th century, the Indian and Jawi Peranakan trade was concentrated on the traditional cloth trade of the Coromandel Coast. At this time, there was considerable trade between Penang and Aceh. The Indian traders imported piece goods and opium from Indian ports and re-exported to Aceh. The valuable export products of Aceh were pepper, betel nut and rice.

During this period, the products were carried by local ships belonging to South Indian Muslims, Arabs, Achenese and Chinese. From shipping records, it is interesting to note that the transit trade was dominated by South Indian Muslims, with the Marakayar group forming the majority. The captains of the ships were mainly Mericans, as evident in the following shipping records:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Ship</u>	<u>Captain</u>
1852		
Oct 9	Letchmy	Merican
"	Mydin Bux	Syed Saib
"	Buccaneer	Merican
Oct 23	Dolphin	Merican
"	Caudeer Bux	Sultan Shaw
"	S Letchmy	Cauder
Oct 30	Syed Mydin Bux	Merican
Nov 20	Khoda Cauder Bux	Merican
Nov 27	M Dowlah	Merican
Dec 11	Futteh Mariam	Merican
"	Noombarrah Dowlah	Merican
Dec 25	Dolphin	Merican
1853		
Feb 19	Indian Queen	Merican
"	Mowla Madat	Merican
Mar 19	Mydroose	Merican
Oct 23	Calender Bux	Merican

Appointment as Kapitan Keling

Even though his ancestors were seafaring people, Kader Mydin Merican, the first and only Kapitan Keling in Penang, was not a ship captain. He was one of the biggest textile traders until his death in 1838. The British, recognising him as the leader of the Indian Muslim community, officially appointed him as "Kapitan Keling".

According to a research paper by Noor Ida bt Yang Rashidi, Kader was popularly elected as headman in 1802 by the Muslim community (numbering some 4,000) and appointed by the British as "Kapitan Keling" of the Chulians who occupied Malabar Street and its neighbourhood. His role and functions included religious duties, dealing with minor disputes among the Muslims and general supervision of community affairs.

Another researcher, Helen Fujimoto, wrote that the new Lieutenant General and Governor of Penang, Sir George Leith, appointed leaders or captains from each community. A judiciary was established, consisting of a European magistrate assisted by three captains. The magistrate looked after civil disputes and formed a court of appeal presided by the captains. The subordinate court of the Chulians was held in Kapitan Keling's house.

Kapitan Keling's responsibilities were to settle family matters and community disputes, which also included police duties. He was assisted by five constables who performed beat duty, day and night.

Kapitan Keling was one of the earliest immigrants. He became a wealthy trader who established connections with Kedah even before the settlement of Penang. In 1801, Governor Sir George Leith, on behalf of the East India Company, gave Grant No 367 to the Muslim community. It was a piece of land on South Malabar Street surrounded by lands belonging to Kader Mydin Merican. The Muslim community had no means of building a bigger mosque and so they approached Kapitan Keling to do so. Kapitan Keling built the mosque mainly with his own funds together with a small donation from the public. He brought construction workers and marble stones from India. The mosque, with its rich and beautiful Moorish architecture, stands today as one of the proud historical landmarks of Penang.

A charming history of the mosque has been written by Haji Ismail Merican. In the early days of Penang, the Havildars, Jemadas and Sepoys, who made up the native section of the East India Company troops stationed in Penang, cleared a piece of land and erected a small attap mosque on a part of the land and used another part as a burial ground. As trade developed rapidly, many Muslim traders and mariners settled in Penang and they needed a bigger and more permanent mosque.

In recognition of his great contribution towards the construction of the mosque, Kapitan Keling was made the first *nazir* (superintendent) of the mosque. He was succeeded after his death in September 1838 by his two sons, Udman Naina Merican and Othman Sah Merican. The last *nazir* was Hj Abdul Cauder Merican, the eldest grandson of Kapitan

Keling. Although the appointment of the mosque officials was a prerogative given to the family of Kapitan Keling, the founder, the practice is now discontinued.

As mentioned in Chapter 2 on early Penang, the EIC was formed in 1600 to expand British trade in the Far East. Captain Francis Light was appointed as the British Administrative Controller of Penang. After his death, his successor Major McDonald was not satisfied with the captains. Nothing further is known of the office of Kapitan Keling and no appointment was made after Kader Mydin Merican relinquished his office in 1806. As a "captain", he was given several pieces of land by the East India Company. He was sufficiently wealthy to maintain his eminent position in the community till his death and to ensure the influence of his descendants in the Penang Muslim community.

Because of his extensive business expansion, Kader Merican was considered by 1834 to be the richest man in Penang (according to Noor Ida bt Yang Rashidi). His property was estimated at that time to be 50,000 Spanish dollars. As an officer appointed by the British government, he was empowered to settle petty disputes and quarrels in the Indian Muslim community whose members came from the Coromandel Coast of India. Those of his descendants who are lawyers will find it interesting that Kapitan Keling acted in the capacity of a magistrate.

Marriages

Because of his fame as a rich merchant and an influential community leader, Kader Mydin Merican became a legend in Penang. The legend of Kapitan Keling was embellished in a story that one Friday, he came across a tiger at the *makam* (tomb) of Syed Sultan Sikandar in Bukit Chenana, Air Terjun. Strangely enough, the wild animal did not disturb Kader Mydin Merican and after a while the tiger left the place.

Kader Mydin Merican married three wives. His first wife was Fatimah Nachia but her husband gave her the name of "Pathni" Ama which in Tamil means a loyal, faithful and obedient wife.

As a merchant, Kader Mydin Merican sailed his ship between Tanjung Pudukarai and Sungai Nibung Besar. He befriended Muhamed

Salleh, a Malay merchant of Indian descent (in fact descending from another branch of the Merican family). When the population increased in Sungei Nibung, a small *mahkamah* (court) was established and Muhamed Salleh was appointed a judge; he became known as Tok Hakim Salleh.

Impressed by Kader Mydin, Tok Hakim Salleh wanted him to marry his sister, Fatimah Nachia. She turned out to be a saintly woman and spent most of her time in prayers and meditation. They lived in a large brick house not far from Masjid Keling.

Although not as famous as her husband, Pathni was also a legend. Because she led such a holy life, it was said that her bath water even cured a girl whose leg was infested with large sores. Pathni died in 1830 and was buried in Kampong Kolam. During her burial, it was said that a gentle rain dropped all around the vicinity of her grave. Till today, the Indian community in Penang regard her grave as a sacred *kramat* (shrine).

Because Fatimah Nachia, or Pathni, did not consummate her marriage, she encouraged her husband to marry another wife, Che Aminah, who was her relative. Che Aminah had one son, Udman Nachar, who married his cousin and had five children.

Kader Mydin Merican's third wife was a Malay princess. As a successful and wealthy merchant, Kader Mydin had attracted the attention of the Sultan of Kedah. The Sultan gave him permission to marry a Kedah princess – Tengku Wan Chik Taiboo or Tengku Maheeran.

As a fair-minded Muslim husband, Kapitan Keling built two houses of similar size for his second and third wives. These two houses were situated in Love Lane near Chulia Street, not far from Kampong Kolam.

Kapitan Keling's Descendants

Tengku Wan Chik Taiboo bore Kader Mydin six children: Udman Naina, Othman Sah, Odman Nay, Udman Kandoo, Udman Bebe and Udman Wan Nair. These are the second generation Mericans.

The second son, Othman Sah Merican, married three wives, namely Osman Bee Bee, Nya Siew Soo and Che Ah. Their children belong to

the third generation of Mericans. Othman Sah's second wife, Nya Siew Soo, had two children: Bapoo and Ahmad Osman Merican (nicknamed "Che Teh"). Che Teh was a successful and wealthy merchant and he married three wives: Che Chik (a Chinese), Hajah Wan Aishah and a Siamese woman whose name is not known. Che Chik had four children while the third wife (the Siamese) had a child by the name of Hamidah Merican.

The second wife Hajah Wan Aishah produced nine children. They are:

- 1 Khatijah Nachiar
- 2 Sheik Mohamed Othman Merican ("Pa' Nat")
- 3 Fatimah Nachiar ("Che Dan")
- 4 Sheik Ali Osman Merican ("Oss")
- 5 Sheik Abdul Kadir Othman Merican ("Chik")
- 6 Sheik Hussain Othman Merican ("Bun")
- 7 Habib Othman Merican ("Bib")
- 8 Sheik Kassim Othman Merican ("Johnny")
- 9 Sheik Basha Othman Merican ("Ma' Ba")

Details of the above Mericans can be found in Chapter 9 on Notable Personalities and in the Genealogy Charts at the back of the book.

Public Recognition

P P Lau in his 1996 article "Oh Captain, my Captain" in *The Sun* writes of Kapitan Keling as "a man of many positions and [as] a further tribute to his good works, the government changed Pitt Street to Masjid Kapitan Keling Street two years ago." According to Lau, in the old days in Penang the word "Keling" was not a derogatory term for Indians but mainly indicated that they originated from the kingdom of Kalinga which for centuries covered a wide area of the eastern seaboard of India.

There is a road in Penang called Jalan Merican which is off Jalan Dunlop and Jalan Siam. This road was dedicated to the late Ahmad Osman Merican ("Che Teh") in the 1930s for his philanthropic and public services to the Malays of Penang.

Conclusion

We can conclude that Kapitan Keling was a man of many parts – a born leader, a highly successful businessman and a philanthropist. He started the Merican clan which acquired a very mixed ancestry. There were marriages with Malays, Chinese, Indians and Siamese. Kapitan Keling's name is perpetuated in Penang's history with a mosque and street named in his honour.

Chapter 5

Assimilation with the Malay Community

This chapter on the assimilation of the Mericans into Malay society is based on an important research paper by Helen Fujimoto. Early immigrants to Penang were predominantly Indian Muslims from the Coromandel Coast and Jawi Peranakan merchants and traders from Kedah. Inter-marriage took place between these two groups and they formed the basis of the Jawi Peranakan community.

Indian Muslims who married the Jawi Peranakan or Malays generally registered their children as Jawi Peranakan, but from the third generation they were commonly registered as Malays. During the late 19th century there was a substantial community of registered Jawi Peranakan in Penang and adaptation to Malay culture varied within the community and even within particular families. By the end of the 19th century, the general tendency for Jawi Peranakan to marry into the Malay community was sufficiently predominant for such families to identify themselves with the wider Malay community. This trend predominated through successive generations until the Jawi Peranakan community ceased to exist as a separate entity and became absorbed into the Malay community.

The status of the Jawi Peranakan given by the government administration was not the same as ascribed by themselves and by the wider Malay community. Within the group, varying cultural practices resulted in the ambiguity of their position as perceived by the government. Cultural orientation can be expressed through behaviour in

language, kinship terminology, food, dress, dwelling, marriage customs and religious observance.

Language

Tamil was the native language of the new South Indian immigrants although many spoke Malay. However, among the Jawi Peranakan, Malay was spoken as the mother tongue from the first generation. This was because of intermarriage between Indian Muslim men and Malay women and the mother exerting the strongest influence on the children of such marriages, although the children understood and sometimes spoke Tamil. Later generations of the Jawi Peranakan knew less and less Tamil.

Kinship Terminology

The degree of cultural adaptation can also be indicated by the names given to children of succeeding generations. Those with strong Indian influence tended to use the word "bibi", meaning sister. Kader Mydin's youngest daughter was named Osman Beebee. The term "mami" was used for mother-in-law, while the Malays used "mak". There was also considerable ambiguity over the use of "bin" (son of). For example, Zainal Abidin was registered in his birth certificate as Zainal Abidin bin Sultan Maidin but continued to sign his name in the Indian style as S M Zainal Abidin, with the initials of his father preceding his own name. While he was registered as a Jawi Peranakan, he subsequently registered his children as Malays, using "bin Zainal Abidin" according to Malay custom. Like the Jawi Peranakan community he followed a conscious process of assimilation until 1911 when the Jawi Peranakan was so small in number they required no separate category.

The gradual adoption of Malay customs was practised by the children of Ahmad Osman Merican of the third generation. The given names appeared to be Indian: Sheikh Mohamed Othman, Fatimah Nachiar and Sheikh Abdul Kadir but the nicknames were generally Malay such as Pa' Nat, Che Dan and Chik. The spouses of these children could only be ascertained as Wan Long, Wan Su, Che Pok and Che Kechik. Regardless of whether the spouses were Jawi Peranakan or

Malay, Malay terminology was used. The adoption of such nicknames indicates a strong tendency towards assimilation into the Malay culture within the Jawi Peranakan family structure by the third and fourth generations. The names of the following generations were distinctly more Malay. The title "Sheikh" (or "Shaik") was dropped and only the family name "Merican" indicated Indian descent.

Dwelling

The degree of cultural assimilation was strongly influenced by economic and social position. The difference between the wealthy urban merchants and petty shopkeepers and labourers was emphasised by their respective dwellings. Merchant families such as the Noordins and Mericans built large houses in Western style and in the more fashionable areas of town. The Merican family house in Western Road and the Noordin house in Northam Road were the few "Malay" houses in the expensive areas occupied by the Chinese and Europeans. The shopkeepers and traders had their houses around the Chulia Street area, while the Jawi Peranakan involved in the service industries and working as labourers lived in *kampung*-style community settlements behind the main roads of the town.

Dress

The manner of dressing also emphasised further the economic position. Among the urban merchants, it was common to adopt Western-style dress for formal occasions. Daily wear combined English and Indian styles, but by 1920s Western style had become more common. A photo of Ahmad Osman Merican's family taken in 1922 soon after the death of their father shows the family outside their house in Western Road wearing Western clothes. Shopkeepers and small traders continued to use the Indian *saring* while the women wore an adaptation of the *baju kurung* but with a shorter blouse. The Indian *sari*, even among the Jawi Peranakan of the first generation, was seldom used as it was regarded as an exotic costume rather than daily wear.

Marriage Ceremony

The common Hindu tradition in Indian Muslim and Malay culture was still evident in some aspects of the marriage ceremony. The custom of dyeing the fingers and toes of the bride and groom with henna was carried out by both groups before the *akad nikah* or registration of marriage. For Malays, Indian Muslims and Jawi Peranakan, the *akad nikah* was the most important ceremony, conducted by the males of both families, in which the bride did not participate. Segregation of the sexes was more strictly observed among the Indian Muslims and Jawi Peranakan of the urban merchant community than among their Malay counterparts.

Among the South Indian Muslims, the male and female never met in the festivities. On the other hand, the Malay custom of *bersanding* required the bride and groom to walk together to the dais where they were seated before the assembled relatives and guests. In the second and subsequent generations, *bersanding* became customary among the Jawi Peranakan and the couple appeared together on the dais in public, thus departing from the Indian custom.

In the first generation, when a Malay or Jawi Peranakan married an Indian Muslim, the woman would receive, as did South Indian Muslim women, a string of black and gold beads, equivalent to the *tali* of the Hindu women. However, while the women received the beads, they almost never wore them and in subsequent generations the beads were no longer given.

Religious Observance

The Indian Muslims and Jawi Peranakan offered prayers and flowers at the *kramat*, or tombs, of people considered as saints. This offering was considered idolatrous among the urban merchant class. However, many Malays and *kampung* Jawi Peranakan visited such shrines in defiance of the Islamic concept. The grave of Padma/Pathni, the pious wife of Kapitan Keling, was regarded as one of the *kramats*.

Food

The preponderance of South Indian Muslims in the population had a considerable effect on the culture of Georgetown. Muslim food was generally cooked in the South Indian Muslim style, in contrast to the Malay style in the *kampung* and outskirts of town, such as *ikan bakar* (grilled fish), *assam* (tamarind) and the greater use of coconut with fewer spices and less chilli. With the strong Indian influence, most Penang Malays were able to cook Indian curry.

Eating Customs

As Fujimoto has written, Penang Malays have been more influenced than other Malays by the custom of *Sahan*, an originally Arab custom brought in by the Marakayar Muslims of the Coromandel Coast. During ceremonial occasions, rice was served in four portions, but the side dishes were placed on one tray for four people to eat. The guests, consisting of people of various status in the community, declared their brotherhood in Islam by eating from one plate. This custom was observed by the Chulians of Penang, who were predominantly of the Marakayar group. It has also been adopted by those not originally Marakayar, and by many Malays.

Social & Political Integration

As the British administration expanded, there was an increasing demand for clerks fluent in Malay and English. The British, recognising the Malays as the indigenous people, accepted some of them in the higher rungs of the civil service. However, it was the urban English-educated Jawi Peranakan and not the rural Malays who filled the clerical posts in the civil service.

With increasing competition from European and Chinese traders, Jawi Peranakan trading activities diminished and they turned to education and landownership. The Indian Muslims viewed with disquiet their minority status in the multiracial community.

In casting their lot with the Malay community, the Jawi Peranakan attempted to safeguard their position against Chinese competition and to retain their leadership in the Malay community. Their need for

solidarity grew and was reinforced by the Islamic reformist movement in Egypt and Turkey at the end of the 19th century.

The most important factor in the unity of urban Muslims was a common educational background. The English-educated Muslims, i.e. Jawi Peranakan, Indians and Arabs from the merchant business community, formed a group that was involved in business, the professions and government service. Under this group's leadership, most of the Muslim and Malay clubs were founded in Penang before World War II. The Muslims Recreation Club was the first association formed. After this came the founding of the Peranakan Club for local-born Muslims. This club was open to all Muslims, whether Indian, Arab or Chinese, with the only stipulation being that they should be born in Penang. The purpose of the club was purely recreational and its activities included weekly dinner gatherings for discussions. In 1904, the number of members recorded was 99, with nine office bearers. The club collapsed soon after the founding of the Penang Malays Association in 1926. The more important members of the club were Indian and it was likely that the remaining members of the Peranakan Club dissolved the club to join the Malays Association and thus identify themselves with the Malays.

Leadership of the clubs was in the hands of urban-educated Muslims in the early period, even among "working-class Malays". One such urban Muslim leader was S Ameensahib, an Indian merchant, commission agent and a planter. In 1923, he was the founding president of the Muslim Merchants Club, an active member of the Mohammedan Advisory Board and a Committee Member of the Al-Mansoor School. He was also vice-president of the Indian Association and president of the Mohammedan Football Association. In 1923, he was made a Justice of the Peace and was one of the first Indian Muslims to be so honoured by the government. In a gathering to honour him, most of the speeches of congratulations were in English. Although the Jawi Peranakan as a group officially registered as Malays, they were still closely involved with the South Indian community.

Associations with more sociopolitical aims soon emerged. With an increasing demand for English education among the Malays, the Young

Muslims Union was formed in 1900 by a group of English-educated Jawi Peranakan, Indians and Malays. The original aim of the association was to improve the standard of English among government officers. Several years later, the association turned political by asking the government for the right to establish the association as the spokesman of the Malays in matters concerning Malay rights and employment, and Malay representation in the Federal and Settlement Councils. The government's reply was that the association was Muslim, not Malay, and was not qualified to represent Malay interests. During such a period, questions of leadership and identity arose which were to dominate in the following decades.

In Singapore, leadership of the Muslim community lay with the Arab community and the Malays resented the Arab domination. Malay resentment was first apparent in the Persekutuan Islam Singapura founded around 1900. The leadership was predominantly Arab and many Malay members felt that the interests of the socially and economically disadvantaged Malays were being overlooked. In protest, a small group broke away and in 1921 founded a rival Muslim Institute which concerned itself specifically with Malay interests. Their aims were to further the educational opportunities for Malays and to assist peninsular Malays who came to Singapore to study.

Rivalry between the Malay and Arab associations centred on the appointment of an additional representative on the Straits Settlements Legislative Council. The Malay association supported Eunos Abdullah who was appointed to the Council in 1924. Following this, the Singapore Malay Union was founded in 1926 to support Eunos Abdullah's representation of Malay interests. From the beginning membership was restricted to those of Malay indigenous stock of the Malay peninsula and archipelago.

The Penang Malays Association was founded in 1926 by a group of Jawi Peranakan. Its main aim was to support the Singapore Malays and Eunos Abdullah. The rapid decision of the Jawi Peranakan to form the association showed that they recognised the threat to their position in the definition of Malay adopted by the Singapore Malay Union. The Penang Malays Association differed from the Singapore Union whose

members were pure Malays. It was largely composed of Jawi Peranakan and it adopted a more liberal definition of "Malay" as a "person professing the Muslim religion and habitually speaking the Malay language, of whose parents one at least is a person of Malayan race". After Malaya obtained independence, our Federal Constitution defined the Malay as follows:

"Malay means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay customs and

(a) was before Merdeka Day born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore;

or

(b) is the issue of such person."

Therefore, as recognised by the Federal Constitution, the Mericans from the third generation onward are Malays and have integrated into the Malay community.

Chapter 6

Dr Ali Osman Merican

*"But be not afraid of greatness: some men are born great,
some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them."*

– William Shakespeare, from *Twelfth Night*

Childhood

Ahmad Osman Merican (or "Che Teh") was the son of Othman Sah Merican and Nya Siew Soo, and the grandson of Kapitan Keling. Following in the tradition of Kapitan Keling, Che Teh became a wealthy merchant and landowner. It was he who started the family home at No 130 Western Road in Penang.

Ali Osman Merican (or "Oss"), the fourth child of Che Teh, was born in Penang in December 1889. He started the fifth generation of Mericans.

Education

According to Sidique, his father Dr Ali Osman Merican studied at the Penang Free School. He then proceeded to take up medicine at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore but had to leave after he was involved in a students' strike. This was the only local medical college under the British colonial system and in those days it was not common to go overseas. But Ali Osman Merican's family was rich enough to send him to continue his medical course at Hong Kong University from which he graduated with a medical degree.

From a family photograph, Dr Ali Osman Merican appears to me to be a stocky, attractive and fashionable man. He was a man of many talents. At university, he excelled in sports and was chosen for the university football team. He broke his leg once while playing football.

Career

Dr Ali had the distinction of being the first Malay doctor in Penang. After completing his medical course in Hong Kong, he returned to Penang to practise medicine. He named his clinic Anglo-Muslim Pharmacy. At the age of 35, he became a prominent member of society and was cited in the *Who's Who in Malaya* 1925.

Dr Ali discovered that private practice in Penang was far from lucrative as most of his patients belonged to the Merican clan and thus qualified for free medical treatment. Consequently, he decided to accept the post of Medical Officer in the government service in Sungei Petani, Kedah. When the post of Senior Medical Officer fell vacant, the Kedah Medical Department promoted him to fill the job as he was suitably qualified. Unfortunately, the colonial administration later rescinded this decision as he was not British. Malaysians, even if qualified, were not accorded the same status by the administration.

True to his spirit, he resigned in disgust. It was a point of principle and not because he was hot-tempered or impetuous. He returned to Penang to resume his private practice before he made one of the most important decisions of his life to migrate to Kelantan.

Social Influence

In the prewar Georgetown, the Penang Malays formed several clubs and associations to cater to their social and recreational needs. As could be expected, under the British colonial rule no political organisations were allowed. The various clubs acted as representative bodies to air legitimate grievances of the *rakyat* (people) within the boundaries of bureaucratic tolerance. Carleel recalls that his father was a member of the Penang Volunteer Corps, holding the post of Lieutenant.

One important Malay association was the Kesatuan Melayu Pulau Pinang, or the Penang Malays Association (PMA). It was established by an elite group of Penang Malays in 1926. Enjoying the respect and confidence of his peers, Dr Ali had the distinction of being its first president.

The Crescent Star Sports Club (CSSC), located along Perak Road near the Datok Keramat Road junction, was established in 1907. It was mainly a social club offering recreational facilities to members and their families. Members of the Crescent Star Sports Club were also members of the PMA. Dr Ali also had the honour of being the president of the CSSC. The Young Muslims Union, located on Anson Road opposite Pahang Road, was more educational in its approach, focusing on Islamic *dakwah* amongst its members and immediate circles. A long-serving secretary of the Union was M Y Merican, senior assistant of the Resident Councillor's office. His son is Datuk Dr Hj Ismail Merican who is a Consultant Physician at the General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur.

Even in those days, football was a favourite sport in Penang. Several sports clubs were established. The Muthibul Ahsan Football Club (MAFC) was located in Kampong Jawa (off Datok Keramat Road), the home ground of the boy who later grew up to become the famous Tan Sri P Ramlee. The club played both in the Penang Football Association and the Mohammedan Football Association leagues. MAFC was well known for hosting the annual "free" *boria* performances. The expensive silver cups awarded to the best *boria* groups were highly regarded and were keenly contested.

Another well-respected football club was the Darul Ahsan Football Club (DAFC) located in Kampong Kolam. Among its "star players" were Abdul Rahman (a teacher at Francis Light School) and O G Mydin (who was such a good player that he earned the nickname of "Mydina Kolam"). The annual football match between DAFC and the Chinese Recreation Club was well attended. Often the game turned into a "footbrawl" with spectators participating in a free-for-all.

The Bahrul Alam Football Club (BAFC) was located on River Road near the Sungai Pinang Road junction. It was within the Sungai Pinang enclave where *boria* comedies reigned supreme.

Marriage

Che Teh (Ahmad Osman Merican) had three wives, namely Che Chik (a Chinese), Hajah Wan Aishah and a Siamese woman. His marriage to Hajah Wan Aishah binti Abdul Kader produced nine children, one of whom was Ali Osman Merican.

Names can be rather confusing with the Merican clan as there is no consistency in the spellings, for example, Osman or Othman. Ali Osman Merican was also known as Sheik Ally Othman Merican and his nickname was "Oss".

While working in Penang, the dashing Dr Ali Osman Merican fell in love with the fashionable and outgoing Khoo Phaik Suat. She was then living with her relatives, a rich Penang Chinese family. As to be expected, her family strongly objected to her marrying a non-Chinese. The young couple impetuously decided to elope. It was a classic romantic story of the maiden escaping from her relatives' house by climbing out of her bedroom window down the ladder into the waiting arms of her lover.

Upon marriage, Khoo Phaik Suat took the Muslim name of Fatimah. She had only one son, Carleel. Now at the age of 75, Carleel still speaks of his mother with love and admiration.

Che Fatimah was one of the most progressive women of her time. She ranked among the first batch of women to complete the Senior Cambridge examination. With her usual high spirits and vigour, she learnt to drive a car – a rare feat in those unenlightened days. When her enterprising husband went up a small plane for a ride, she also took a turn going up in the plane. In the 1920s, flying was high adventure. There is still a photograph of the young doctor and his wife, toggged up like astronauts with large goggles, posing with the pilot beside the propeller of the double-winged, kite-like contraption.

A self-assured and educated woman, Che Fatimah had a fiery streak in her personality. Once, when she found out that her husband had a girlfriend, as was and still is common among philandering husbands, she was so outraged that she started throwing and smashing dinner plates. When she had progressively depleted the supply of plates, Carleel remembered that he was sent off to get more plates for her to smash!

Unfortunately, the exuberant Fatimah suffered from poor health in her later years. When she was very ill and unable to carry out her conjugal duties to her husband, she encouraged her husband to take a second wife. But Che Fatimah was not a person to let her husband bring another wife to her home without her blessing. She wisely chose a family friend, Che Pok, to be the second wife. This was an acceptable practice in the old days as it was believed that a relative or close friend would be kinder to one's children.

In Sungei Petani, Che Pok's and Che Fatimah's families were close friends and, in fact, related to each other. Che Pok Abdullah was considered a suitable match for the doctor. According to Carleel and Lylone (Mak Pok's only daughter), Mak Pok must have been 17 years old when she married Dr Ali, who was nearly 40. Sidique thought she was younger. Certainly Mak Pok was a very young bride to assume the duties of a wife in charge of the household.

Far from resenting Mak Pok as his stepmother, Carleel loved and respected her. He was used to seeing her as a family friend and had been calling her "Kak Pok" (elder sister) during the two families' social visits. She remained "Kak Pok" to Carleel from the time she married into family until her death in 1982.

In Carleel's own words, "Kak Pok was a wonderful stepmother – gentle, caring and devoted." Carleel could not have wished for a better stepmother. They were on the best of terms: when Carleel studied in Penang, he returned to Kota Bharu every school holiday and grew up with his four brothers and one sister. The siblings formed a close-knit and happy family.

Che Pok came from an interesting background and more details of her will be given in Chapter 8.

Migration to Kelantan

Apart from his busy practice and social activities, Dr Ali was imbued with the business instinct and pioneering spirit of his forefathers. He was very knowledgeable about precious stones and ran a small jewellery business. Fired with imagination by the yellow metal – gold – Dr Ali decided to leave Penang in 1927. It was a daring venture as Kelantan

in the old days was largely unknown territory to the people in Penang. He brought along Che Pok and his 40-day-old son Ezanee to settle in Kota Bharu and to prospect for gold or iron in southern Thailand during his spare time.

Dr Ali did not grow rich from gold mining but he established a very successful family clinic in the centre of town opposite the market. The clinic, now 70 years old, is managed by Ezanee.

With a distinctive Malay dialect and culture, Kelantan is very different from other states. Anyone not originally a Kelantanese is considered a foreigner even though he may have lived there for many years. When he first started his clinic, Dr Ali placed only four rattan chairs for his patients as he was unsure whether the Kelantanese would accept him.

Dr Ali had no cause for worry. He soon established a name as a skilful and caring doctor. He was also gifted with languages and conversed not only in Malay but various Chinese dialects (he had learnt to speak Hokkien in Penang and Cantonese in Hong Kong). For many years, Dr Ali was the only private medical practitioner in Kota Bharu.

When Dr Ali started his clinic in 1927, the scene in Kota Bharu was very different from today. The clinic, located in the town centre, was opposite the wet market which was a landmark in Kota Bharu. Both Carleel and Sidique recall nostalgically the quaint market of the old days. There was no piped water supply and small boys were hired by the hawkers to carry buckets of water to the market.

Kelantan women are also a contrast to their sisters in other states. Apart from their beauty and fabled charms, they are also very business-minded. Even in those days, they were the ones in charge of business in the market while their husbands tilled the fields or rested at home. The women would carry their vegetables and fruits on their heads. In contrast to the Muslim austere *tudung* (head dressing) to cover the *aurat* from head to toe, they were dressed in off-shoulder *sarungs* tied at the chest. It was only after the war that they began wearing *baju* and *kebaya*.

The wet market was a paradise for housewives: almost every household item could be obtained and fruits and vegetables were sold cheaply

for a few cents. As mentioned earlier there was no water supply in the wet market and so young boys were employed by the fish sellers to carry water from an earth well at the back of the Merican Dispensary. At the end of the day, after the fish sellers had counted their takings, they would pay the water carriers a few cents. The boys saved enough money to buy a football. Carleel told me that his father encouraged him to play football with the boys. In the evening, the road was their football field and they would play till as late as 10 at night.

When Dr Merican left Penang to settle in Kota Bharu, he was a stranger in a remote town which had only one row of brick houses. Fortunately, he had some friends in Tumpat. They were Encik Johari (who worked in a rice mill) and Encik Ismail (who worked in Boustead). Sociable by nature, he soon made many other friends; among the prominent ones were Tengku Hamzah (Tengku Razaleigh's father who became Kelantan State Secretary), Nik Ahmad Kamil (Chief Minister of Kelantan and later a Federal Minister) and Mahmood Hashim who became a judge there.

Family

In the beginning, Dr Ali Merican's family lived on the first floor of their dispensary for many years. Except for Ezanee, all of Mak Pok's children (Sidique, Lylone, Malek and Mahmood) were born there. Later they moved to the present family house at Jalan Teliput. Che Fatimah, Carleel's mother, died in the same house above the dispensary.

It was then quite common for rich families to adopt children. Dr Ali and Mak Pok had several adopted daughters. One of them was Maimunah, known to all as Mona. Just before World War II broke out, Mona was married to a teacher, Yusoff, and subsequently gave birth to her eldest daughter Marina (once a prominent lawyer and politician, now a property developer and owner of the huge Marinara complex at Jalan Tun Razak in Kuala Lumpur). Mona gave birth to a total of 12 children. They are Mohd Ariff (deceased), Zulkifli, Marina, Kamarudin, Aziza, Rogayah (deceased), Rohani, Citi Zeleha, Onn, Johari, Nuridah and Hishamuddin. (While attending a 100th-day *kenduri* for Mona who had passed away, I was told that she had 17 grandchildren).

Personality

While Che Pok was patient and calm, her husband was fiery and hot-tempered. Like most boys, my husband hero-worshipped his father. Mahmood told me that as a boy he greatly admired his father for buying the best durians. He thought his father was clever in choosing durians but later discovered that the hawkers were so scared of Dr Ali that they gave him the best durians!

Sidique related to me an incident in which his father lost his temper and punched a trishaw man. In their early years in Kota Bharu, the family lived on the upper floor above the dispensary and trishaws used to park outside the dispensary waiting for customers. One afternoon, Dr Ali Merican wanted to have an afternoon nap and from his window he asked the trishaw men to quiet down as they were talking loudly. One of them was particularly noisy and ignored his request. Dr Merican was so tired and angry in not getting his needed rest that he came down and punched the man. However, Dr Ali was kind hearted and he later treated the trishaw man for his cut.

Dr Ali had several interesting hobbies. During the war, his clinic was open only in the afternoon. He loved gambling games such as Napoleon and mahjong and spent many happy hours gambling with friends in his new home in Jalan Teliput.

Apart from dealing in jewellery, he also kept two bulls named "Dogo" (bald) and "Debok" (fat) for bullfighting which was a fashionable sport in Kelantan then. This sport continued during the Japanese Occupation.

Sidique told me that during the coronation of King George VI, radio was introduced to Kota Bharu. It must have created great excitement among the Kelantanese. Dr Ali was active in the Malay Chamber of Commerce and the association was asked to erect an arch to commemorate King George VI's coronation.

I can see the same sense of adventure and fondness for new gadgets displayed by Dr Ali's sons and grandsons. During the prewar period when a car was a rarity in Kelantan, Dr Ali was among the first to purchase one in Kota Bharu. He was also among the first few to buy a radiogram – a combination of a radio and a record player. Very proud

of this new gadget, he would walk out of the house with Carleel to the market and exclaim that they could still hear clearly the sounds of the record player.

It is no exaggeration to say that Dr Ali Merican's family made a mark in Kelantanese society. They came to be regarded as Kelantanese and yet they did not truly belong there. In the old days, the rather laid-back Kelantanese were impressed by and respected the Mericans' prowess in sports and studies.

Dr Ali also found favour with the Kelantan Royal Family and he became the Personal Physician to the late Sultan Ismail. When Dr Ali died in 1945, the family was given the honour to bury his body in the compound of the royal cemetery. Later in 1982, when Che Pok died, the family was also allowed to bury her alongside her husband.

According to Sidique, his father looked authoritative and forbidding. Typical of fathers of the last generation, Dr Ali Merican was very much a figure of authority. He was rather distant to his children who preferred to approach their mother for all their needs and requests. Sidique said if he wanted to go to the cinema, he would turn to his mother.

Stern fathers in the old days only revealed their soft spot to the youngest child in the family. Especially among Malay families, the *anak bongsu* is often pampered and coddled by the rest of the family, as in the case of Marina Yusoff, their adopted daughter. Mahmood, as the youngest among his siblings, often accompanied his father when he made house visits to his patients. Unlike Sidique, Mahmood remembers him with nostalgia bordering on adoration.

During the Japanese Occupation, with the family car confiscated by the Japanese, Mahmood and his father went about in a rickshaw. Kelantan was then rather backward and infrastructure such as roads and bridges was not well-developed. According to Mahmood, visits to the rural places could be very rough and uncomfortable, going by boat and walking into the *kampung*.

I interviewed a retired teacher, the 75-year-old Hussein Mohamad, in April 1992 as he knew the family well. As a teacher he had taught all the Merican boys in school, except Carleel. He was full of admira-

tion and respect for Dr Ali Merican. He said that Dr Ali was a disciplined man. While strict, he also had a kind heart and would not charge patients from the villages if they were poor and could not afford to pay for the medicine.

In 1939, Dr Merican made a wise decision to buy a piece of land of about one and a half acres to build the family house, Pondok K'Seena. He paid \$2,500, considered a princely sum in those days. At that time, the area was surrounded by *padi* land.

Japanese Occupation

Dr Ali was far-sighted. Just before the Japanese landed in Kota Bharu, he was given a picture of Emperor Hirohito by his Japanese friend Baba-san. When the Japanese arrived in Kota Bharu, they began raping women and ransacking houses to confiscate cars, radios and any items they fancied. To protect his house and family, Dr Ali framed the picture of the Japanese Emperor and placed it at the entrance to the house. This ingenious idea deterred the soldiers from disturbing the house and family as the Emperor was regarded as sacred by the Japanese.

The Japanese landed in Kota Bharu in December 1941, striking terror in the hearts of the Kelantanese. During the Occupation, the kind-hearted doctor gave refuge to several teacher friends; among them were Hussain, Rahmat, Ahmad Zakaria, Bapoo Hashim, Mona and her husband Yusoff. Their Chinese friends also stayed in their house, wearing *sarung* and *songkok* to escape persecution by the Japanese. Dr Ali and Mak Pok did not like to see idle people and their boarders were asked to help out in the garden and in the dispensary during the war years. Together with the family members, they worked during the day and prayed at night. Sidique recalled that most of their friends stayed with them until after news of the fall of Singapore was received.

Dr Ali was feared by many because of his temper; he seldom lost his temper but when he did he was not worried about the consequences of his actions. During the Japanese Occupation, Carleel remembered that he even had the audacity to punch a Japanese soldier. Despite repeated requests not to demand from the clinic staff distilled water for

his car battery, the soldier continued to harass the staff. Dr Ali had already explained to the soldier that the distilled water, which took a long time to produce, was solely meant to mix medicines for patients. One day, when the soldier physically abused his clinic staff while demanding distilled water, Dr Ali lost his temper and punched the soldier. Confronted with the angry doctor, the soldier timidly left the dispensary in haste. If such an action had been taken by any normal citizen, the consequences would have been dire for him and his whole family. But fortunately Dr Ali had the support and backing of his friend Baba-san who held a senior position in the Japanese Military Administration.

Dr Ali was known as an Anglophile and supporter of the British but this did not mean that he liked the colonial system. However, one can easily argue that the British administration was better than the cruel Japanese Military Administration.

Tan Sri Yacoob bin Mohamed, a family friend, recalled that Dr Ali passed away in June 1945, one month before the British Army landed on the beach of Sabak, about four miles from Kota Bharu. The Allied planes flew over Kota Bharu on a bombing raid the day he was taken ill. He died with the happy assurance that the British were returning to free Malaya from the Japanese. Sorely missed by his family, friends and patients, his sudden death left his widow Che Pok alone to raise and educate her children.

Public Recognition

Dr Ali Osman Merican's services to the state of Kelantan did not go unrecognised as after his death, a road next to Pondok K'Seena was named after him in the 1950s.

Concluding Remarks

To sum up, Dr Ali Osman Merican was a man of many talents who was naturally gifted with intelligence, energy and a sense of adventure. In those days, Kelantan was a remote place and Dr Ali had the pioneering spirit to uproot himself and his family to migrate there. Although he dabbled in gold and iron-ore mining, his forte was his medical practice.

He got along well with people, friends and patients alike. As such, he was an extremely successful private medical practitioner and was appointed as Royal Physician to the Kelantan Royal Family. In appreciation of his services to Kelantan, the Sultan honoured him by allowing him a special burial plot and a road posthumously named after him.

Chapter 7

The War Years

*"How far a little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world."*
– William Shakespeare

The Merican family did not suffer much during the Japanese Occupation of Malaya. In fact, they were able to help their friends, especially the Chinese, by giving them refuge in their house.

In 1931–32, the Japanese army invaded Manchuria and set up a puppet kingdom in the country. This act of aggression shocked the world and stirred anti-Japanese feelings in Malaya, especially among the Chinese population. In Singapore, the overseas Chinese angry with the aggression organised a boycott of all Japanese goods and enterprise. In Malaya, the Chinese community united to raise funds to help their mother country.

Suddenly, towards the end of 1941, the local press reported that all Japanese residents in Singapore had been ordered by the Japanese government to return to Japan. This was an ominous sign which Malaysians did not take seriously enough.

On the night of 7 December 1941, bombs were dropped on Singapore. The next day the shocking news was received that the pride of the British navy in the Far East, HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse, had been attacked by Japanese daredevil pilots. Both battleships were sunk.

The Japanese had studied shrewdly the defences of Singapore and knew that the entire northern part of Singapore was unfortified and open to a surprise attack from the mainland. The British had wrongly assumed that invasion must come from the seaward side of the island.

The first landing of the Japanese in the north of Malaya was at Kota Bharu on 11 November 1941. The Japanese troops rapidly advanced southward towards Singapore. The British forces were unable to cope with the enemy forces trained in jungle warfare. Ipoh, the capital of Perak, fell around Christmas Day. Then Kuala Lumpur, the administrative capital of Malaya, fell and the British forces retreated further southward. European and Asians alike began to feel real fear. Malaysians became panic-stricken and started applying for passports and booking reservations on ships to Australia, India, Europe and the Dutch East Indies.

How did the war affect the Merican family? The people in Kelantan went through hard times though to a lesser degree than in other states. Where food was concerned they were not so badly off, being a rural economy; the Kelantanese were used to growing the staple crop of rice and planting vegetables.

Despite the usual war hardships, the Merican family had sufficient food and supplemented it by planting *ubi kayu* and other vegetables in the compound. My husband likes to boast that he was once a "cowboy" (more accurately described as a cowherd!). Mak Pok had decided to keep several cows in their large compound. Together with their gardener Pak Kadir, her sons not only looked after the cows, but helped to milk them for her to make condensed milk. Condensed milk was a rare food item during the war. Their resourceful mother made condensed milk herself, not only to feed her family but to sell to undernourished families, pregnant women and mothers nursing their babies. This also provided Mak Pok with a welcomed income of her own.

Carleel was then a medical student in the King Edward VII College in Singapore. My husband told me the amazing story of how he struggled back to Kota Bharu by car, bicycle and on foot. It must have been a hazardous and tiring journey home. (More of this in a later chapter.)

When the Japanese planes started to bomb Malaya and Singapore

repeatedly, many who could not escape by sea went to the countryside to avoid the bombing. My family in Kuala Lumpur did that. The British government tried to evacuate as many people as it could, mostly European civilians. There was hope that the Americans were on the way to help us but it turned out to be a false rumour. At the time we did not even know about the disastrous attack by the Japanese on the American navy at Pearl Harbor.

By the end of the January, the British forces had retreated towards Johor Bahru, the last town on the mainland. By 2 February, the British forces had withdrawn completely from Johor Bahru and had blown up the Causeway to try to prevent the Japanese from making an overland attack on Singapore. The blowing up of the Causeway meant cutting off the island from its main water supply in Johor. Hence, there was only a limited supply of water in Singapore from the two reservoirs on the island. On Sunday, 15 February, there was a slackening of enemy gunfire. The Japanese planes seemed to be taking a short rest. Then came the shocking news that the British had surrendered. Thus began the Japanese Occupation of Malaya and Singapore which is likened to a reign of terror.

In early 1942, Japan's navy, army and air forces appeared to have won in the Pacific and occupied their new territories of Syonan (Singapore), Malai (Malaya) and the Dutch East Indies. The Japanese civilian administration functioned side by side with the military authorities. The Japanese military administration brought terror to the people. Many stories circulated of those who were slapped and physically abused for not bowing and showing respect every time they passed Japanese sentry points. Those who were suspected of being loyal to the British or listened to English broadcasts on the radio were apprehended, tortured and imprisoned. Many people, including the father of our next door neighbour in Ipoh, only returned from prison at the end of the Occupation and he was considered lucky to be alive. Apparently, spies had informed the Japanese that he had been listening to the English news.

The Japanese civil administration reopened schools in Malaya and Singapore. Mahmood, born in 1935 and the youngest in the family, was

old enough to attend school with his brothers and sister in Kota Bharu. Apart from being made to memorise Japanese songs by their teachers, they did not learn much. Each day started with a school assembly. The principal, the staff and students lined up in the compound, facing the Japanese flag of the Rising Sun. They had to bow very low until their bodies were at right angles to their legs. This was repeated twice. Then they had to sing the Japanese national anthem. Finally the whole school would sing the solemn Japanese song of dedication to the Emperor.

Knowing that some of their friends and others were suffering in Japanese concentration camps, the Merican family, especially their father, longed for the day of liberation from the Japanese. As all cars had been confiscated by the Japanese, most people had to walk or cycle out of sheer necessity. During this time my family lived in Kuala Lumpur and my father, who had been appointed a food-controller, was fortunately allowed to continue using his car. We had sufficient food which was supplemented by growing our own *ubi kayu*.

The local Chinese were especially harshly treated by the Japanese. In the early days of the invasion, many Chinese teachers and family friends took refuge in the Merican home. They disguised themselves as Malays, wearing *songkok* and *sarung*. Being born and bred in Kelantan, it was not difficult for them to converse in Kelantanese Malay fluently.

As the Japanese Occupation dragged on, the shortage of rice became increasingly acute. Wheat flour was no longer available as the Japanese authorities took the entire supply for their own use. Bread was made from tapioca or corn flour and the loaves on sale were as hard as bricks. They had to be steamed before they could be sliced. Similarly with noodles, which, formerly made of wheat, were now made of tapioca or sago flour. Beef and poultry were sold at exorbitant prices.

In August 1945, news came that the Americans had dropped atom bombs on two Japanese cities and that the Japanese Emperor had ordered his army to surrender. This news brought relief to Malaysians but the hardship did not end even with the liberation. Many people who had sold their land and houses to survive had only Japanese notes which were not redeemed by the British government. These notes were

useless paper money, called "banana notes" because during the latter part of the Occupation, food and other commodities had become so expensive that the Japanese money could purchase very little.

Looking back over the war, the Merican family did not suffer too much during the Japanese Occupation. They were not harmed or molested by Japanese soldiers because their house was protected by a letter their father received from his Japanese friend. The family had sufficient food to eat; like others they supplemented bought food items by growing vegetables and potatoes on their land.

Deprived of his car, Dr Merican arranged with a trishaw man to fetch him daily to and from work. He also used the trishaw to visit his patients, often accompanied by his youngest son Mahmood.

With every cloud, there is a silver lining. During the Japanese Occupation the Merican boys did not idle away their time. When the villagers ransacked the houses vacated by British families fleeing from Kota Bharu, they brought the books they found to the house in exchange for food. With their normal schooling interrupted, the boys spent much of their time reading the books. Consequently they developed a good command of the English language which became an asset in the later years of their schooling.

In 1945 Dr Ali Merican received the joyful news that the Japanese Occupation would end soon with the victorious return of the British. Sadly he did not live to see this day as he died of cardiac arrest as British planes flew over Kota Bharu. Mak Pok was thus left with the task of raising her children as a single parent which she did admirably as the following chapter reveals.

Chapter 8

Che Pok Abdullah

*"... If children live with tolerance
They learn to be patient,
If children live with encouragement
They learn confidence,
If children live with praise
They learn to appreciate,
If children live with fairness
They learn justice,
If children live with security
They learn to have faith,
If children live with approval
They learn to like themselves."*

– Dorothy Law Nolte

Background

A year after I met Mahmood, I had the opportunity to meet his mother, popularly called Mak Pok. Apparently she would occasionally visit her son in Johor Bahru where he worked as a houseman in the General Hospital. With very fair complexion, she looked Chinese to me but in other ways she was Malay. She spoke Malay with a Penang accent in a slow, deliberate fashion, wore a *kebaya* with a set of *kerongsang* and had her hair tied up neatly into a *sangul* (bun). She struck me as someone very refined, disciplined, gentle and calm.

In appearance and speech, Mak Pok appeared in every respect a Malay. Actually, both her parents were Chinese but she was brought up as a Malay when her mother Tok Teh left her first husband and married Junid, her second husband. When her mother left Penang to live in Kedah, she took along her children, Tan Cheng Guan, Tan Swee Nee (Che Pok) and Che Din.

I learnt about the family scandal from the Merican brothers. Meeting Tok Teh and seeing her so tall and dignified with her white hair combed into a neat knot, it was hard to imagine that she was capricious enough to elope. The family members can only speculate on the reason for her elopement. According to one source, she was not well treated by her in-laws and so she decided to run away with her Malay admirer.

Another story was that she was seen by the dashing Malay Prison Officer, Encik Junid, sweeping the verandah of her house every day. Junid was so strongly attracted to Tok Teh that he decided to persuade her to elope with him. Yet another source reveals that Tok Teh was an independent-minded woman who did not get along with her husband. Details of Junid's courtship are not known.

I cannot ascertain whether it was hypnotism, the use of Malay charms or plain falling in love which explains Tok Teh's impetuous decision to leave her Chinese husband. But like any mother, she could not leave her offspring behind. She brought along her son Cheng Guan and her daughter Swee Nee (Che Pok) when she eloped with Junid. Upon marriage, she converted to Islam and brought up her Che Pok as a Muslim. Typical of Chinese families, boys are highly valued compared to girls and Tok Teh's husband immediately came to reclaim his son Cheng Guan, allowing her to keep her daughter. Consequently, Cheng Guan lived and grew up as a Chinese while his sister Che Pok grew up as a Malay Muslim in Kedah. Che Pok spoke Hokkien and Malay with a Penang accent.

When I married Mahmood, his grandmother, whom he referred to as Tok Teh, was still alive and robust in her 70s. She struck me as a handsome, fierce and independent-minded woman. It was unusual in those days to see a woman smoking publicly, let alone smoking a cigar or "cheroot". I was thus surprised when Mahmood told me one day in

Singapore where I was a university undergraduate that he was buying some cigars to take home to Kelantan for his grandmother.

Tok Teh was more than 80 when she died. In fact, she was still strong and healthy – unfortunately, one day she fell down the stairs in her *kampung* house after taking ablutions before performing her prayers. The bathroom in the *kampung* was located outside the house and the stairs were wet and slippery. Mahmood and I attended her funeral in Alor Setar.

To this day, I can still picture her standing tall and erect, dressed in a *nyonya kebaya* top and a *batik sarung* with her white hair combed into a small bun. She used to shock me with her unique habit of *latah*, a trait not uncommon then among elderly women, who, when startled, began uttering a series of unsavoury words.

Childhood

Tok Teh gave birth to four children while she was married to her first husband. The eldest daughter died while very young. Her second child was Cheng Guan (now deceased), followed by Che Pok (died in 1982) and Che Din (deceased). Her marriage to her second husband Junid produced two children – Fatimah (popularly called Mummy Kechik) and Ismail (deceased) who was so keen on football that he was nicknamed “kaki bola”. The family lived in Sungei Petani where Junid was working as the Chief Prisons Officer. Upon his retirement, the family moved to Alor Setar. Junid died shortly after that.

Like her mother before her, Mak Pok lived a long and fruitful life. According to Sidique, her age seemed stuck at 47 for a long time. Without a birth certificate to indicate her exact age, her sister Fatimah assumes that she must have been over 70 when she died in 1982 in Kota Bharu. Luckily, when I contacted her in April 1992, Fatimah Junid could still clearly remember Mak Pok, her elder half-sister.

Modern working girls like my daughter will bridle with anger to learn that in the old days girls were not allowed to attend school. They were supposed to stay at home to acquire domestic skills such as cooking and sewing. Her sons remember Mak Pok sewing beaded and embroidered slippers which were fashionable then. Sidique told me

that when their adopted sisters got married, Mak Pok sewed these slippers for herself and for his sisters to wear at their weddings. As in all aspects of her work, she was very meticulous and painstaking to a high standard of domestic skills seldom seen nowadays.

Unlike Fatimah, Mak Pok was more interested in cooking than sewing although she learnt both skills. Her flair for cooking proved very useful in later life after her husband died. To help support her children, she did what she was good at – by catering food to the school canteen opposite the family home.

Marriage

Marriage in those days had nothing to do with romantic courtship and falling in love. As there was no such practice as dating, a marriage between a boy and a girl was carefully arranged by interested parties or a matchmaker. The marriage of Che Pok to Dr Ali Merican was interestingly arranged by the first wife.

Che Fatimah (Khoo Phaik Suat), Dr Ali's first wife, gave birth to only one child, Carleel. An active and modern woman for her time, she learned to drive a motorcar which was a daring thing for a woman to do in those days. When she was pregnant with her second child, she met with a car accident and lost her child. Soon after she suffered from poor health and could not conceive. She decided to encourage her husband to marry one of her family friends, believing that a friend-cum-relative would be kinder to her child than a total stranger. She was right for as Carleel himself said, he could not have wished for a more caring stepmother. He addressed her as Kak (elder sister) Pok and she treated him as both brother and son.

In those days arranged marriages were the norm. The first wife Fatimah went to see Tok Teh and Tok Junid to ask for the hand of Che Pok as her husband's second wife. Initially Che Pok's parents were not keen to let her become a second wife but they finally relented after seven or eight visits. Fatimah attended the wedding of her husband to Che Pok and personally went up to the new bride to put the symbolic gold chain round her neck. Modern women will find that hard to do as we cannot even contemplate the idea of sharing our husbands with

another wife, let alone bless the marriage. Either it was the accepted custom then or she was a stoic woman who accepted the reality that since she could not fulfill her husband's needs, it was preferable that her husband married a woman of her choice.

Family

Unlike the first wife, Che Fatimah, who was fiery by nature, Che Pok was patient and tolerant. She exercised great patience with her handsome husband who had a roving eye. Soon after their marriage in Sungei Petani, Dr Ali Merican married a Penang girl by the name of Alif Fabee, daughter of Bulan Sawa. He had also two Thai girlfriends. When Dr Merican decided to leave Penang for good to settle down in Kota Bharu, Mak Pok was the only wife prepared to follow him. Considering that she had been married off at the tender age of 17, she must have been very brave to agree to set up house with her husband in a new and unfamiliar town on the remote east coast.

Soon after settling down in Kota Bharu, Dr Ali Merican returned to Penang to fetch Carleel's mother to Kota Bharu and divorce Alif Fabee. They brought along two adopted daughters, Mona (a Malay) and Bibi (a Chinese), and lived above the dispensary. Both Mona and Bibi have since passed away.

Although calm and patient, Mak Pok could be very firm and was determined to ensure that her husband toe the line and remain faithful to her. From the time they migrated to Kelantan until he died in 1945, Dr Merican did not marry any other woman.

In those days, a husband would take a second wife on the excuse that his wife was lacking in some way. Dr Ali Merican had no such excuse. Mak Pok was by all counts a good wife. Not only was she a loyal wife and a devoted mother, she was also intelligent and resourceful. On her own initiative, she passed the St John's Ambulance test without being able to read English. With some coaching from her husband on first aid, she practised bandaging on her sons.

From her upbringing she learned to speak Hokkien and Malay. She learned English on her own and could understand conversation well though she did not speak the language. I was surprised to learn that

Mak Pok and her husband used to quarrel in Hokkien; perhaps they did not want their children to be a party to their occasional friction.

Knowing that her husband was very sociable, Mak Pok joined him and his friends, Jackie Khoo's parents, in learning ballroom dancing and playing badminton. Surprisingly, according to Sidique, Ezanee was their dance instructor!

She was an excellent cook and pampered her children with an array of dishes. As a good hostess, she was used to her husband's and sons' friends dropping by the house for meals. She was a confident housewife with a flair for supervising her servants. According to a family friend, Che Wan Nor Hashim, Mak Pok was extremely organised. Not only did she arrange her provisions neatly in the store, she also devised a system of food menu for the week.

Achievements

Che Pok's reputation in Kelantan as an exemplary mother preceded her. In 1958, prior to my engagement to Mahmood, I was naturally nervous at my first meeting with her as my prospective mother-in-law. Hearing about her virtues as an exemplary mother, I was at first intimidated but on closer acquaintance, she proved to be a caring, wise and understanding mother-in-law.

Nowadays, we tend to view a person's value by the kind of job or profession she holds. However in the old days when women did not, as a rule, go out to work, a woman's worth was measured by the way she managed her home and children and by her ingenuity in earning and managing her own income.

Mak Pok was certainly skilful in managing her children without having to resort to threats or bribes. She had implicit faith in her children and they never let her down. I have never heard her criticise any of her children. This is probably one of the secrets of her success as a mother. She was patient and gentle with her children and guided them firmly in their behaviour and motivated them in their studies. As long as her sons attended school, she left them to decide when to complete their homework. In fact, Sidique said that they used to do their homework at night at the kitchen table but not much work was

done as they were busy discussing sports and scouting. She never complained about the long absences of her children from home, either for education, sports or travel.

All her children remember her with fondness and gratitude. Carleel has every reason to be grateful to Mak Pok. After the Japanese Occupation, she insisted he continued his medical studies when he was undecided about his future. He was in his first year at the King Edward VII College of Medicine when the Japanese attacked Malaya. After the war, he toyed with the idea of doing business or opening a restaurant. It is fortunate for the medical profession that Carleel heeded the advice of Mak Pok and returned to Singapore to complete his medical course.

Mak Pok could be very stubborn and determined once she was set on a course of action. This trait is also noticeable in her children. Once she had made up her mind it was difficult to influence her otherwise. After her husband's death, she was determined to provide her sons with a good education and to keep the property intact even though the family lawyer advised that according to Syariah law it must be subdivided.

Mak Pok was highly regarded in the Kelantan circles; friends and relatives extol her virtues as a loving and dedicated mother. Before I married Mahmood, Mak Pok used to visit him when he was working in the General Hospital in Johor Bahru. During her visits, she would take all his trousers and shirts out of his cupboard to sew back the missing buttons or mend any tears. It is difficult for any modern woman to emulate her. I am often reminded by my husband that she never nagged or scolded her husband or children.

Mak Pok may appear initially to be cold and distant for she was not a demonstrative person. However, her children knew that she loved them deeply. A family friend, Puan Esah bt Hamzah, recalled visiting the house and finding Mak Pok dressing Malek's fingers. She had assigned Malek and Mahmood to take care of some cows and Malek had cut his fingers while cutting grass to feed the cows.

In the difficult postwar period Mak Pok's resourcefulness and business instinct surfaced. During the Japanese Occupation, there was a

food shortage in Kelantan and her husband was worried that pregnant mothers were not getting enough nourishment. Mak Pok decided to rear some cows so that she could make condensed milk to feed her family as well as to sell at the clinic. Her husband allowed her to keep the proceeds from the sale of the condensed milk which was a popular food item during the Occupation.

Although outwardly undemonstrative, Mak Pok was very sentimental about the old family house, Pondok K'Seena (which she partially helped to finance from her savings). When I came to know her well, I could see that she also loved jewellery and took great pleasure in matching the pieces with her dresses. According to Sidique there were difficult times when she had to take her jewellery quietly to their family friend Mrs Phang who owned a pawnshop near the river. When her finances improved she would redeem them. Her children never knew or were told of her financial problems until they became adults. A stoic woman, she was prepared to sacrifice for her much-loved family. Sidique said that it was only in the 1960s that Mak Pok felt financially well off and secure.

Mak Pok also had other ways of earning her own money. When they first settled in Kota Bharu, they noticed that many people were suffering from skin diseases. Dr Ali encouraged his wife to sell *ubat paru-paru* at his dispensary. She also mobilised her sons to help her scrape coconuts to make coconut oil to sell at the dispensary.

Kak (elder sister) Esah, a close family friend, described Mak Pok as a thrifty person and said that she used to set aside her money as savings. Apparently she used her income to buy jewellery and partially paid for Pondok K'Seena. The wooden house was dismantled and taken from Tumpat to where it stands now at Jalan Teliput in Kota Bharu.

Mak Pok's managerial qualities surfaced when her husband died and their estate administrator tried to take advantage of them. Without formal education or literacy, she took over the administration of the estate. She was determined that her husband's property would remain intact. She continued the dispensary by employing doctors to manage it until her sons were qualified to take over. Above all she was determined to provide her sons with a university education.

I asked Carleel during a conversation about his impressions of Mak Pok. He agreed that she was very calm and self restrained. He had seldom ever seen her losing her temper or displaying her emotions openly. Upon her husband's death, she exercised the same discipline and restraint. Because Dr Ali had suffered several heart attacks and Carleel had had to prescribe morphine to relieve his pain, they expected that he would not last long. She accepted her husband's death as a matter of course but showed unusual emotion when the hearse left their family house accompanied by the men (the women were not expected at the cemetery). Suddenly leaving the women at the door of the house, she ran to the gate waving a last farewell to her husband's hearse.

It is customary for Muslims to hold a *kenduri* to recite prayers for the dead. As a loyal and devoted wife, she arranged for a *kenduri* for her deceased husband for 40 nights. She personally cooked the food for the 30 to 40 people who came to recite the prayers. In memory of her husband she had a tombstone similar to that of her father-in-law Che Teh's in Penang erected for her husband.

As a caring mother, she was always there for her children. Several years ago, when Ezanee had a heart attack and was warded in the Kota Bharu General Hospital, Mahmood and I went to visit him. There I found Mak Pok busy in the kitchen cooking bird's nest soup for him. Influenced by her Chinese background, she believed in the healing properties of the soup.

Not every woman finds it easy to get along with her mother-in-law. I was lucky with mine. I found her very understanding and tactful. She accepted all her sons' choice of wives. Whenever she visited the homes of her daughters-in-law, she would never criticise or interfere with the management of the house and the servants.

Of all her attributes, I am most impressed by the way she brought up her children, having experienced how hard it is to discipline mine. Once I asked her the secret of her success in bringing up her children. She smiled enigmatically but did not give me a direct answer.

In fact, another typical trait I noticed in Mak Pok was her indirectness. It is typical of the old Malay world where one was trained to be

tactful and to approach an important matter for discussion gradually and delicately. In other words you don't call a spade a spade. It is fascinating to see how this works when a representative is sent to a girl's house to ask for her hand. Flowery and poetic language is employed to raise the matter indirectly, such as saying "I hear that there is a beautiful flower in your garden in which a bee is interested ..." This practice is based on the principle that you do not hurt feelings or let anyone "lose face", hence the use of a representative to convey a proposal for marriage.

I have observed her dealing with my children effectively. She would seldom order them to do something. Instead she would ask them gently and they would react to her positively. She also befriended them by telling them bedside stories. She made me realise that my four children were different and, however difficult they were, we must accept them for what they are.

During his growing years, I found my second son Azhar, in particular, to be rather unmanageable – to me he was very boisterous and rebellious. As a hard-pressed working mother, I wished I had her patience in coping with my young ones. Azhar was intelligent and mischievous too. I will relate one of his childhood pranks.

During one of Mak Pok's visits to Kuala Lumpur, Azhar, then about four years old, was playing at the stairs, placing his face between the bars and using his legs to move a trolley on the other side of the stairs. I was busy entertaining my relatives at lunch and told him to stop but he refused. Suddenly, I heard a cry and found Azhar's head between the bars of the stairs. It was a hilarious scene for my daughter Sarina and niece Soraya and they were laughing and giggling, not the least concerned about the gravity of the situation.

I was frantic but Mak Pok was calm and experienced in dealing with childish pranks. In my frantic state, she appeared slow in offering a solution but this is a typical trait shared by her son Mahmood, who at certain times also appears slow and thorough in deliberating a problem. Finally Mak Pok offered a few suggestions on how to release Azhar's head while waiting for his father to come home. One option was to shave his hair or apply soap to his hair to make it easier to push his

head through the bars. It was extremely difficult for me to think clearly when Azhar was screaming with fright in the background. Before we could decide what best to do, my husband came home. Luckily he was as calm and unruffled as his mother. In the meantime, Azhar was screaming his head off as he knew he was in trouble. He only stopped crying when he saw his father arriving with a jack from the car to prise the bars apart for me to push his head through. We only succeeded after three attempts!

Azhar was so aggressive and belligerent during his childhood years that at one stage I wanted to send him away to a boarding school. Thanks to the patience and wisdom of Mak Pok and my husband I did not do so, otherwise I would have lost the opportunity of seeing him grow and develop. As a grandmother, Mak Pok shared a special bond with Azhar; she found him interesting. Both of them shared a great sense of adventure and curiosity about new things.

She was loyal to her family and they reciprocated fully. She had the special quality of inspiring loyalty from her sons and daughter. I have never heard any of her children criticise her. They have been staunchly loyal, courteous and respectful to her. It is most refreshing to see the way they treat their mother especially today when children tend to ignore or even scold their mothers. Mak Pok's children may have disagreed with her but they were never disagreeable to her. I asked Mummy Kechik, her sister, whether she had any favourites. She replied that Mak Pok treated all of her children equally. She carried out her motherly duties diligently.

The modern working woman may accuse her of pampering her sons in doing so much for them. For example, she would shell crabs for her son Ezanee, who otherwise would not eat them or shell and skin rambutans and chill them in the refrigerator for her children to have their dessert after meals. We must remember that in the old days servants were available and her sons were not required to help with domestic work. Furthermore, in the traditional Asian concept only females are required to perform housework.

I really missed Mak Pok when she passed away after a brief illness. Her success in bringing up her sons to be prominent citizens had earned

the respect of all Kelantanese. On her death in 1982, the Sultan of Kelantan allowed her to be buried beside her husband in the enclosed burial grounds at Langgar which is also the cemetery for the Kelantan Royal Family.

Mak Pok had survived hard times – from the moment when as a child bride she followed her husband to Kelantan to start a new life and through the Japanese Occupation and the postwar period as a widow left with raising her children.

The Speaker of the Senate (Dewan Negara) Tan Sri Yacoob bin Mohamed, who once lived with the family from 1946 to 1948 when he was studying in Kota Bharu, recalls Mak Pok as a role model for mothers. To quote him: "From my observation, Che Pok raised her children with love, kindness and care. The children adored her and we, the temporary residents in Pondok K'Seena, admired and respected her greatly. The children were obedient and brilliant in their studies."

Typical of Che Pok's character, she did what was necessary and desirable for her family without fuss or complaint. She has certainly left a strong and enduring influence on her children; they all possess the old world charm and values of integrity, honesty, industry, courtesy and respect for others.

It is truly said that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.



Che Teh and his seven sons.



Che Teh's family at 130 Western Road, Penang (1922).



Kassim Merican who married my aunt, Che Nengah.



Above: Ahmad Daud with some of his relatives in Penang.



Left: Ahmad Daud's parents.



Above: Bun's eldest son, Rahim Merican.

Right: Bun's second son, Tamin Merican.





Wedding of Dato' Ahmad Merican's parents.



Johnny's wife and children (Dato' Ahmad Merican is in the centre, back row).



Dato' Ahmad Merican and his family.



Left: Basha Merican with his wife and daughter, Zurina.

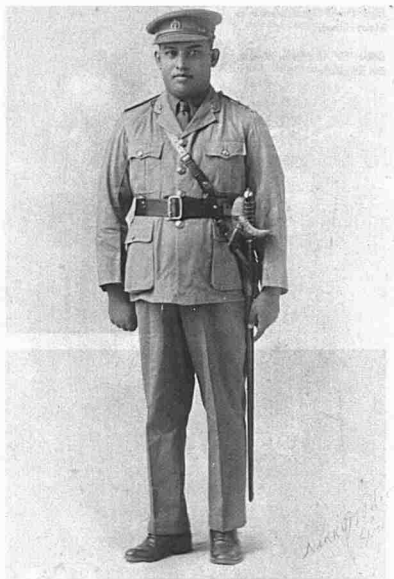
Below: Basha Merican (back row, third from left) and his family.



Right: Dr Ali Osman Merican in Malay costume.

Below: Dr Ali Osman Merican and his friends.





Dr Ali Osman Merican in the uniform of the Volunteer Force before the war.



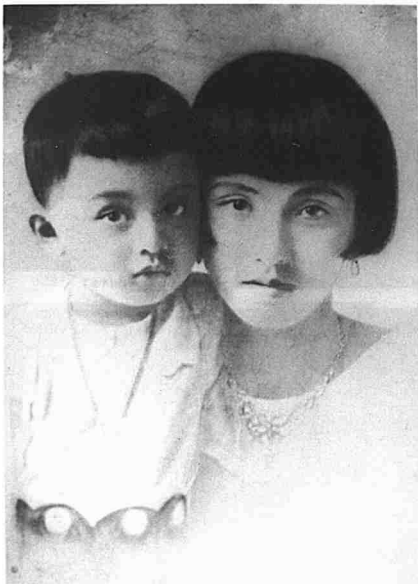
Che Pok Abdullah, wife of Dr Ali Osman Merican.



Left: Che Pok with her mother, Tok Teh.

Below: Che Pok (sitting, third from left) with her children and relatives.





Young Carleel with his mother, Fatimah.



Left: Carleel with his eldest daughter in Kota Bharu.

Below: Dato' Dr Carleel Merican (centre) with his brothers.





The Merican brothers with their sister, and their spouses.



The Merican family at Jalan Merican in Penang (1991).



Left: Wedding of Ezanee Merican and Jeanne.

Below: Ezanee (front row, far left) and his Ismail English School Senior Cambridge Certificate classmates (1947).

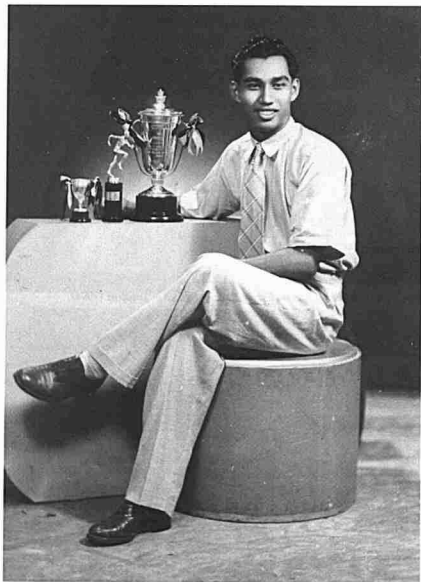




Wedding of Shahrin Ezanee Merican and Siti in Singapore (1994).



Sidique Merican (back row, fifth from left) and other patrol leaders with their scout master, Kota Bharu (1948).



Young Sidique Merican with his trophies, Kota Bharu (1949).

Right: Siddique becomes the fastest man in Malaya (1949).

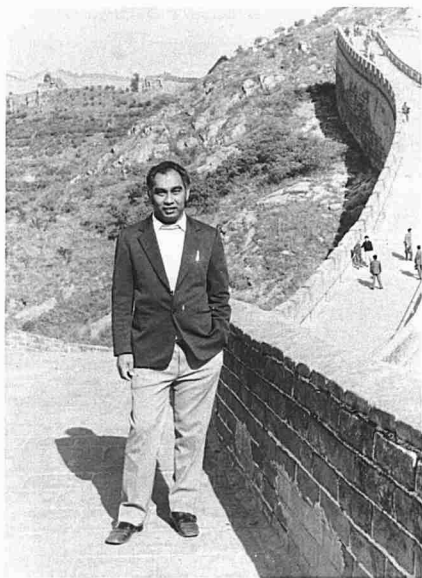
Below: The wedding of Siddique Merican and Fatmah in Penang (1963).

Kelantan's Siddique First



Siddique Merican of Kelantan, winner of the 100 yards race at the Malayan ASA championships.





Sidique visits the Great Wall of China (1972).

Right: Lylone and Malek as toddlers in the Kota Bharu dispensary.

Below: Wedding of Lylone Merican and Roslan Endut in Kota Bharu (1965).





Above: Young Gaik, Malek's wife.

Left: Malek and Mahmood with their mother Che Pok Abdullah in Kota Bharu.



Malek Merican receives the Perfect Boy Award in 1951:



Malek Merican in his Cambridge graduation robes (1956).



Left: Malek receives an award from the Yang diPertuan Agong.

Below: Malek represents the Treasury at a signing ceremony, Kuala Lumpur.



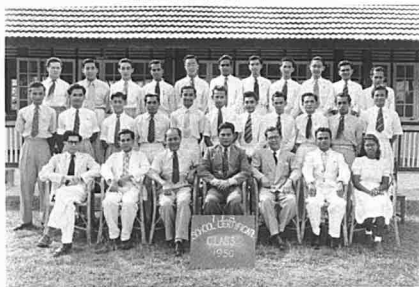
*Right: Mahmood as a small boy in
Kota Bharu (1940).*

*Below: Young Mahmood with his
mother and grandmother.*





Mahmood (front row, second from left) and Malek (standing, far left) with other Ismail English School prefects (1950).



Mahmood (second row, fifth from left) with his School Certificate classmates and teachers, Ismail English School (1950).



Above (left): Mahmood with his Perfect Boy Award (December 1950).

Above (right): Mahmood Merican, in his MBBS graduation robes, with his mother (1958).

Right: Mahmood becomes an Honorary Fellow of the FRCPS, Glasgow.





Above: Mahmood, as Master of the Academy of Medicine in Malaysia, presents the first Prime Minister of Malaysia Tunku Abdul Rahman with an honorary AM (1978).

Left: Mahmood receives his "dato'ship" from the Sultan of Kelantan (1987).



Mahmood, as President of the Association of Private Hospitals, with the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Kuala Lumpur (1993).



Mahmood with the Prime Minister's wife, Dr Siti Hasmah, at the Sports for the Disabled Meet, Shah Alam (1996).

SECTION TWO

The Present



Photo: Carleel Merican, his daughter Nazrillah, two granddaughters and great-grandson, Jake (Kota Bharu, 1997).

Chapter 9

Some Notable Personalities

"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from
the ends of the earth!"

– Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), from *The Ballad of East and West*

I have decided to place this chapter on notable personalities of the clan here before I proceed to relate individual biographies of Dr Ali Osman Merican's children. Descending from the famous and wealthy ancestor Kapitan Keling and his illustrious grandson, Che Teh of Penang, the Merican clan has produced several prominent personalities. This chapter attempts to give a brief description of some of them.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, Ahmad Osman Merican, or Che Teh, was a descendent of Kapitan Keling from his marriage to a Kedah princess. Like his grandfather, Che Teh became a wealthy merchant and landowner in Penang. He had three wives: Che Chik (a Chinese), Wan Aishah Abdul Kader and a Siamese woman.

The union of Che Teh and his second wife Hajah Wan Aishah Abdul Kader produced the following children:

- 1 Khatijah Nachiar (died at age 14)
- 2 Sheik Mohamed Othman ("Pa' Nat")

- 3 Fatimah Nachiar ("Che Dan")
- 4 Dr Ali Osman ("Oss")
- 5 Sheik Abdul Kadir Othman ("Chik")
- 6 Sheik Hussain Othman ("Bun")
- 7 Hj Habib Othman ("Bib")
- 8 Sheik Kassim Othman ("Johnny")
- 9 Sheik Basha Othman ("Ma' Ba")

Sheik Mohamed Othman Merican, "Pa' Nat" **(8 November 1888–December 1982)**

The second child, Sheik Mohamed Othman Merican, or "Pa' Nat", married four wives: Hajah Che Ah, Wan Long bt Mohd Hashim, Wan Su bt Abdul Kadir and Noor Nahar bt Ali. Pa Nat was considered the handsomest son in the family. His marriage to his first wife Che Ah was arranged by his mother. The bride was related to his mother but Pa' Nat did not take to her. Soon after he married the second wife Wan Long. His third wife Wan Su produced nine children, one of whom is Rogayah Merican (born 29 September 1927), or Rusini, who became a popular Malay film actress and who now lives in Medan, Indonesia.

Fatimah Nachiar, "Che Dan" **(1 December 1889–19 July 1982)**

The third child was Fatimah Nachiar, or "Che Dan". Mummy Mariam, Ma' Ba's widow, described Che Dan as "a very modern woman" in those days in her dressing; Che Dan also drove a motor car, rare for women at that time. Despite a rich father, Che Dan was not destined for a happy life. Her first husband was Ariff, a wealthy Indian Muslim who did business in Rangoon. He objected to her adopting a son, and left her. Then Che Dan married her second husband Tajuddin A Chunchie who was a lecturer at Raffles College, Singapore. He met with a cruel death during the Japanese Occupation. He went fishing one day and was arrested by the Japanese who thought he was a spy. He was jailed and tortured, and died in 1945.

Che Dan adopted several children: Ahmed Malvi Othman Merican, Serene Abdullah, Mahani Abdullah and Daulat Tajuddin. In the last

years of her life, she suffered from poor health and when my husband and I visited her at that time, she was no longer mentally lucid. It was sad to see a person bedridden and confused who previously was so strong willed and capable. Prior to her death, she lived in an apartment in Singapore with her youngest daughter Daulat and her husband.

Dr Ali Osman Merican, "Oss" **(29 December 1890–1945)**

Che Teh's fourth child was Dr Ali Osman Merican. Among the siblings, he appeared to have attracted the most attention but more details of him and his children are given in other chapters.

Marina Yusoff Dr Ali Osman had several adopted daughters, one of whom was Mona who was supposed to be the daughter of a relative. Mona's eldest daughter Marina Yusoff is a well-known lawyer and former UMNO politician. She was born in and grew up in Kota Bharu where her teacher father was posted. She obtained her early education in Zainab School in Kota Bharu. She excelled academically and went on to study in Form VI at Victoria Institution in Kuala Lumpur. She married at the age of 19 and persuaded her husband to accompany her to study law in London.

Marina has the distinction of being the second Malay woman lawyer after Siti Norma Yaacob (now an Appeal Court Judge). She qualified as a barrister in 1965, at the Middle Temple, London.

On her return to Malaysia, she joined the Judicial Service and served in various posts, including Senior Assistant Registrar and High Court Magistrate, Kuala Lumpur. She resigned in 1971 to join Bank Bumiputra as a Legal Adviser. Marina has been a member of the Bar Council, a member of the UMNO Supreme Council and has held the post of Deputy President in UMNO Wanita.

Marina has three children from her first marriage which ended in divorce. She remarried and had two more children but sadly this marriage too ended in divorce.

Although she won a seat on the UMNO Supreme Council in 1974, she quit politics a year later, probably due to a lack of support from

UMNO Wanita and criticism over her personal life. But she continued to enjoy immense support from the men and in 1981, she won a UMNO Supreme Council seat even though her nomination was not endorsed by the Wanita wing. Marina later decided to join Semangat 46, the party formed by the group that broke away from UMNO, and became one of its most visible leaders and vocal critics of the resurrected UMNO. Eventually she rejoined UMNO when Semangat 46 lost the national elections. Her commercial interests had suffered when she was in the opposition and only after she left Semangat 46 did her Marinara project finally take off.

I now refer to a NST interview of Marina by Joceline Tan published on 5 January 1997. Budding women politicians may wish to note her comments: "You think all those women politicians are so successful until you go to their homes" (where their houses and children are neglected). She believes women should enter politics only when their children are older and they are more mature to advise and lead.

Except for the youngest, her four children are working. She has also rediscovered Islam following the tragic death of her daughter Selina in a car crash. Her next project now is to begin a religious educational foundation in Selina's name.

To sum up, Marina was ahead of her time and is a testimony of how much Malay women have achieved in a short span of 30 years. She became a lawyer under her own steam and at a time when the profession was dominated by non-Malay men. Even now she is striding where women still hesitate to venture.

The grandchildren of Dr Ali Merican have done well in their studies and professions. More details about them will be found in the following chapters.

Sheik Abdul Kadir Othman Merican, "Chik"

Che Teh's fifth child was Sheik Abdul Kadir Othman, or "Chik". He married three wives: Mariam Abdul Rahman, Hajah Aminah Bee and Che Esah.

He had a daughter, Fatimah Merican, popularly called Lily. Lily was married to Ahmad Osman bin Nordin who was the Controller of Posts, Northern Region. They had nine children (Hanum, Anwaruddin, Basharuddin, Zaleha, Zainuddin, Zahara, Zariah, Zarina and Zuriah). I came to know a few of Lily's successful children living in Kuala Lumpur. Her second child Anwaruddin is the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of Petronas Dagang. A daughter, Zahara, is a lecturer in the Faculty of Fine Arts, Institut Teknologi MARA and is an established batik artist. Another daughter, Zarina, is the Special Assistant to the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur.

Sheik Hussain Othman Merican, "Bun" (16 January 1896–6 December 1954)

The sixth child, Sheik Hussain Othman Merican, or "Bun", was born on 16 January 1896. He married three wives: Bibi bt O M Nordin, Hajah Zaleha Md Taib and Hajah Che Kechik Md Taib, the second and third wives being sisters. Bun's third wife, Hajah Che Kechik (born on 18 October 1916 in Penang), is popularly called "Mami", or Che Kechik Merican. She produced six children. Che Kechik must be very proud to see how well all her children have turned out.

The eldest son Hj Rahim was born in Penang on 8 September 1931. In 1939, his father took the family to Kelantan and Rahim continued his education in a Malay school and then at Ismail English School (later renamed Sultan Ismail College) from 1941 to 1950, when he obtained his school certificate.

An active student, Rahim was captain of Wong House, Assistant Class Monitor and represented his school in athletics, table tennis, hockey and football. In 1952, he went to Kirkby Teachers' College, Liverpool for a teachers' training course.

In 1961, he was appointed headmaster of the Lower Ismail Petra School, Wakaf Mek Zainab, Kota Bharu and later headmaster of the Lower Sultan Ibrahim Satu School in Pasir Mas.

Rahim has been active in social work and is a good organiser. The following are some of the many posts he has held: Treasurer of the Pasir Mas Town Council; Chairman of the Pasir Mas Hospital Visitors'

Committee; Committee Member of the Welfare Board, Pasir Mas; Patron of the Kelantan Amateur Athletic Association; Assistant Manager of the state contingent to the 1986 Malaysia Games; President of the Kelantan Amateur Athletic Association; Team Manager of the Malaysian Athletics Team to the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games; Vice Chairman of the State School Sports Council; Chairman of the UMNO Division at Limau Manis and Pasir Mas Town; Secretary of the Stadium Committee, Kota Bharu and Deputy Chairman of the Semangat 46 Pasir Mas Division.

For his contribution to society he was awarded the Pingat Bakti (PB), Ahli Kelantan (AK) and the Award for Excellence for the MSSK in 1991. He retired in 1985.

Hj Abdul Rahim is married to Hajah Rahimah bt Abdullah. They are delightfully inventive with the names of their six daughters and only son:

- 1 Rooshida Merican (who is married to Dr Wan Mansbol Wan Zain)
- 2 Dr Rooshaimi Merican (who is married to Mohamed Jaffar Dakim)
- 3 Roobica Merican
- 4 Roowina Merican (who is married to Mohd Isa Ibrahim)
- 5 Rosenina Merican (who is married to Mohd Asri Hj Ahmad)
- 6 Dr Roonaliza Merican (who is married to Dr Mohd Zulkarnain Sinor)
- 7 Rooshihan Merican (who is married to Shuhana Sulaiman)

Bun's second son, Hj Tamin Merican (born 4 January 1933), has been an outstanding sportsman since his schooldays. In the Ismail English School, he played rugby, football and hockey, and was also an athlete. He was awarded the State Trophy for athletics in 1953, 1963, 1967 and 1968. In 1963, he was awarded the Pingat Bakti by the Sultan of Kelantan.

Tamin has also contributed greatly to sports development. He was Assistant Manager/Coach to the Malaysian athletic team to the First Asian Goodwill Track and Field Meet in Seoul, South Korea in 1973. In September 1977, the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports sent him

to accompany the Malaysian contingent to the First ASEAN Schools Under-18 Championships in Jakarta. In April 1977, he was appointed an athletics coach by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. He also served as a coach to the Malaysian team in Perth in 1981 and during the SEAP and SEA Games in 1961, 1973, 1977 and 1983. In 1978, he formed the pro-tem committee to establish the Malaysian Veterans Association and was elected Vice President.

He has won many sporting honours. In 1982, he won three gold medals (100 m, high jump and long jump) in the Singapore Veteran Championships. In 1983, he earned the sobriquet of "sprint king" in the 2nd Asian Veteran Track and Field Meet in New Delhi. He won three golds at an international meet in Hong Kong in 1984 and was awarded another two golds for best overall performance. In 1985, he won two gold and two silver medals at the Asian Veteran Meet in Jakarta. Now in his sixties, he still runs competitively. In 1995, he won nine golds and one silver at the International Veteran Meet in Penang. The same year, he won three golds and one silver at an international meet in Brunei and also established a best time for the 100 m (clocking 13 seconds) in the Jakarta Veteran Asian Games. In 1996, Tamin won six golds at the national meet in Seremban and took third place in the 100 m at the Asian Veteran Athletic Meet in Seoul.

Tamin is married to Naheran Yusof and they have four children:

- 1 Roslan Hussein Merican who is married to Nik Roselina Nik Ibrahim
- 2 Major (B) Azlan Yusof Merican who is married to Rohaya Mohd Said
- 3 Mazlan Merican
- 4 Nazneem Merican

As mentioned in earlier chapters, Tamin is the compiler of the detailed genealogy charts on the Merican clan.

Bun's third child, Hj Ahmad Azlee (born 19 July 1934), rose from the ranks to become a bank officer. He was an active unionist and is now a devout Muslim. Azlee is married to Hajah Asmah Abdullah and they have the following children:

- 1 Shamsuddin (who has three wives: Habsah, Zubaidah Hussain and Asiah Yacoob)
- 2 Zaitoni Merican (married to Mohd Noor)
- 3 Sofiah Merican (married to Hanizah Hj Ismail)
- 4 Anis Merican

Bun's only daughter is Hajah Zaiton (born 19 September 1936 in Penang). She is married to Hj Jamaluddin b Abdul Latif and their children are:

- 1 Ezaddin Hussein Jamalattiff (who married twice: Shahidah Mohd Said and Hamidah Hassan)
- 2 Rithauddin Hussein Jamalattiff (married to Tunku Norella Suraini Tunku Yusoff)
- 3 Jasmin Hussein Jamalattiff (married to Megat Shahrudin Merican)
- 4 Shahrudin Hussein Jamalattiff

Bun's fifth child, Dato' Dr Hj Yaacob (born 20 September 1938, Penang), is a successful lawyer who is married to another well-known lawyer, Datin Dr Hajah Tunku Sofiah bt Tunku Mohammad Jawa. Energetic, enthusiastic and generous, Yaacob spent several successful years in Sabah. Tengku Sofiah taught International Law at University Malaya and recently published a comprehensive book on law.

The couple now partner former Lord President Tun Salleh Abas in the legal firm of Salleh Abas, Yacoob and Sofiah, Advocates and Solicitors, in Kuala Lumpur. Their children are Megat Shahrudin Merican and Megat Suffian Merican.

Bun's youngest child is Mariani Merican (born 2 November 1949, Kelantan). She is married to Hj Hamdan Yacoob and they have four children: Haris Dani, Hisham Dani, Hamida Murni and Hazman Dani.

Habib Othman Merican, "Bib" (died 5 January 1975)

Che Teh's seventh child, Habib Othman Merican, or "Bib", married three wives (Hajah Rohanah bt Hj Jaafar, Rajabi and Che Wan). From conversations with other Mericans, little is known about him except that he was overweight and suffered from diabetes.

Kassim Othman Merican, "Johnny"
(20 January 1899–1 September 1958)

The eighth child, Kassim Othman Merican, or "Johnny", married two wives, Zainab bt Ismail and Che Puteh bt Ismail.

Johnny's first wife, Zainab, produced six children – Ahmad Othman Merican, Mohamed Ismail Merican, Abu Bakar Othman Merican, or "Om", Lt Kol (B) Idris Othman Merican, or "Dick", Aimee Merican (died in infancy) and Khairon Nachiar Merican, or "Hanim". His second wife, Che Puteh bt Ismail, had only one child, Amy Merican.

Dato' Ahmad Othman Merican Kassim Othman Merican's eldest son, Ahmad Merican, is musically talented and has made a name for himself in the field of electronic communication. His whole life has revolved around the mass media. He was a journalist for two years and worked for 20 years in radio and television. He left Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) on optional retirement at the age of 50 to work in Malaysia Airlines as Head of Public Relations and Promotions. Ahmad, who then pioneered the setting up of TV3 in June 1984, worked eight years with Malaysia's first commercial TV network. Ahmad has been dubbed the "Grand Old Man of Malaysian TV" by the press. Among the projects he initiated are the annual Golden Kite World Song Festival, the Muzik Muzik hit parade series and Cerekarama, aimed at promoting local song writing and encouraging production of local TV movies.

He organised the Radio Malaya Orchestra and contributed extensively to the Malaysian music scene. For his contribution and service to the country, Ahmad was honoured with the title "Dato'" by his home state of Penang.

Ahmad is now Vice-President of Operations in NTV Encorp which is setting up another new TV network.

Ahmad Merican's children have also been successful. His eldest son, Lt Kol (U) Haron Merican, was a pilot who died while travelling on duty in a tragic plane crash in East Malaysia in 1986.

Perhaps the most successful of Dato' Ahmad Merican's children is Kamil Merican who studied architecture in the UK. Upon his return, he worked for several years with Booty Edwards Partners, a well-known

architect firm. Then Kamil decided to strike out on his own, opening his own firm called Group Design Partnership (GDP) Architects. Now he manages his highly successful business, employing many architects, not only local but foreign ones as well. Kamil takes on huge projects, developing hotels and condominiums, locally and abroad.

Dato' Ahmad's second oldest daughter, Yasmin Osman Merican, is a Director and Consultant with Ernst and Young.

Another son, Harith Osman Merican, used to manage a motor car sales and service company.

Zainab, his youngest daughter, popularly called Za, qualified as an interior designer from MARA. She worked several years in her brother Kamil's firm before opening her own interior decoration firm.

Two other daughters of Dato' Ahmad, Datin Mimi Osman Merican and Majmin Osman Merican, are a business consultant and a housewife respectively.

Idris Othman Merican Johnny's fourth child is Lt Kol (B) Idris Othman Merican, or "Dick" (born 1 September 1930 in Penang). He took his Cambridge School Certificate in Penang Free School before furthering his education in the Royal Military College, Port Dickson; Eaton Hall, Chester, Cheshire, UK; the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, UK and the Defence Services Staff College, India.

Idris has had a long military career. He joined the Army as an Officer Cadet in 1952 and graduated from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst in 1955. Commissioned in the First Regiment Royal Armoured Corps, he participated in the communist insurgency operations in the Confrontation against Indonesia. He served in the Malayan Special Forces with the United Nations in Congo from 1960 to 1961. He was a Regimental Commander in the Royal Malaysian Armoured Corps from 1970 to 1972. Idris was appointed the first Director of the Armoured Corps but opted for early retirement after four years in 1976 for health reasons. In 1978, he started his own business in commercial and industrial security services in Johor. He is now active in business with branches in Selangor and Perak.

With a long and dedicated service in the defence of his country, Idris has been awarded several honours. He received the General Service Medal (Military), the United Nations Service Medal (Military) as well as the KPK for bravery from the Yang diPertuan Agong in 1971 for special operations related to the elimination of communists in Ulu Kinta, Perak.

Idris Merican and his wife, Siti Rokiah Hj Buyong, are proud parents of six successful children. The eldest, Fadzil, 37, is presently a manager with Sime Darby Plantation.

Their second child, Major Fadzli, 36, is a Staff Officer in the Ministry of Defence.

Also following in the footsteps of his father, the third child, Major Fadzlette, 34, is a Public Relations Officer in the Ministry of Defence.

The fourth child, Fadzal, aged 32, is a Customer Relations Officer with Malaysia Airlines (MAS).

The fifth child, Fadzlena, 30, is a MAS stewardess.

The youngest, Fadzol, 28, is a businessman.

Sheik Basha Othman Merican, "Ma' Ba" **(2 March 1900–11 November 1986)**

The ninth and last child of Che Teh and Hajah Wan Aishah bt Abdul Kader was Sheik Basha Othman Merican, popularly called "Ma' Ba".

Basha Merican was born on 2 May 1900 in Penang and received his early education in Penang Free School. In school, he took part in stage drama, debating, writing and scouting. He was captain of the hockey team, chairman of the debating society and also became the School Head Prefect and editorial adviser to the school magazine. Pamela Ong, writing the biography of her father in *Blood and the Soil*, mentioned Basha Merican who preceded her father as the Head Prefect in the prestigious Penang Free School.

Basha distinguished himself as a schoolteacher from 1923–1952, teaching English, English Literature and Latin. In 1955 he reorganised the Malay schools in Penang. He was appointed Superintendent of Schools for Province Wellesley from 1953 to 1959.

Besides his love for education, he was involved with numerous extramural activities, holding the posts of State Scout Commissioner of Penang (1953–1955) and Adviser of the Juvenile Court (1953–1959). His hobbies included reading novels and books on health and studying the Arabic language through the radio, books and from a religious teacher.

On 1 September 1959, Basha Merican was appointed Supervisor of RIDA Training College. RIDA stands for the Rural and Industrial Development Authority which later became MARA (Majlis Amanah Rakyat). He went on to become Acting Principal of the College before retiring on 1 October 1965.

As was customary in the old days, his marriage to Mariam bt Zainal Abidin was arranged. They had eight children: Idaham Othman Merican, Badlil Othman Merican, Zurina Merican, Mustapha Merican, Abu Bakar Merican, Ahmad Merican, Marina Merican and Faridah Merican.

Before I met Ma' Ba, his reputation preceded him. He was loved and respected by his former students who spoke highly of him. Students of RIDA used to call him "Pa' Basha" affectionately because of his paternal and gentle manners.

Interviewing his daughters Zurina, Marina and Faridah in October 1996, I came away with a picture of a very patient, indulgent and caring father. Even though his father Che Teh had a car, Ma' Ba told his children that he used to hitch a ride on a bullock cart to school as he had to leave home early. Among Che Teh's nine children, it appears that only Ali Osman and Ma' Ba took their studies seriously. Che Teh encouraged all his children to attend school but most of them preferred to do otherwise. Ma' Ba chose the teaching profession, becoming a teacher in the prestigious Penang Free School.

Basha Merican died at the ripe old age of 86 on 11 November 1986. He is much missed by his wife Mariam, his children and especially by his grandchildren with whom he spent much of his retirement years.

In October 1996, when I went to interview Ma' Ba's widow, she was 92 years old and bedridden but still remarkably lucid. She could remember much of her family history. She recalled with nostalgia old

Penang, mentioning the historic occasion in 1922 when the Prince of Wales visited the island. Unfortunately, the joyous event for her was marred by the death of Che Teh, her father-in-law, on the day of the Prince's visit.

With his quiet and undemanding way, Basha Merican successfully brought up highly motivated children. Idaham, his eldest, became an electrical engineer and held a senior post in Telekom Malaysia.

The second son, Badlil, did not enter university but became a cable and wireless operator. Zurina was trained in Kirkby College, UK, and worked as a teacher till her retirement.

Mustapha Basha Merican The fourth child, Mustapha, was born on 9 April 1929 in Penang. He studied at the Wellesley Primary School, Hutchings School and Francis Light School and then at the Penang Free School.

Mustapha became a teacher like his father and studied at the Malayan Teachers Training College, Kirkby, Liverpool from 1952 to 1953, subsequently obtaining his Teacher Trainers Certificate at the same College. He went to the Asian Institute of Teacher Education, UNESCO, University of Philippines for another Teacher Trainers Certificate. He then took a four-month course on the teaching of Science and Mathematics at RECSAM, Penang. Mustapha completed his Master of Education at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, University of Wales.

Mustapha has had long and varied experience as a educationist. A teacher from 1951 to 1964, a lecturer in Teachers Training Colleges in Malaysia from 1964 to 1984, an English Language Lecturer at the Institut Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam from 1984 to 1988, he is now an English Language Teacher at Institut Tadbiran Awam Negara, Malaysia.

Abu Bakar Basha Merican Abu Bakar graduated with a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree, specialising in Botany. He played a prominent role in the Department of Fisheries until his tragic death in the hijacked MAS plane which crashed at Tanjung Kupang, Johor.

Marina Merican Marina had her early education in St George's Girls School and Penang Free School. She proceeded to the University of Malaya (Singapore) where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in 1961.

From 1961 to 1964, Marina worked in Radio Malaya. She accompanied her husband to the UK and from 1965 to 1968 she worked as a Placement Officer with the Malaysian Students Department. During her four-year stay in London, she also worked part-time with the BBC and the Central Office of Information. (Her husband worked full-time with the BBC and studied law part-time).

On returning to Malaysia, she became a lecturer in English at the MARA Institute of Technology from 1972 to 1976 and was appointed Head of the Institute's School of Mass Communications.

She furthered her education in the US, obtaining Master's degrees in Education and Mass Communications from Ohio University and Michigan State University respectively.

Datin Marina joined Esso Malaysia in 1977 as Public Affairs Adviser. She was appointed Communications Manager after six months and assumed the position of Public Affairs Manager in 1984. In 1982 and 1983, she worked at Esso's Head Office at Exxon Corporation in New York on temporary assignment.

Datin Marina is married to Datuk Abdul Samad Yahaya, a lawyer and later a merchant banker. They have three children: Dr Amir, the eldest, works in a computer company while Aida and Aris are studying in the United States.

Faridah Merican The youngest in the family, Faridah, had her early education in St George's Girls School, Penang. Faridah's childhood ambition was to be a teacher. After she obtained her Senior Cambridge School Certificate at 17, she proceeded to the Teachers Training College, Kota Bharu in 1957, and became a teacher from 1960 to 1964. She also completed a special course in physical education. In 1962, she specialised in Physical Education at the STTI (Specialist Teachers Training Institute).

As a student in Penang, Faridah was introduced to the world of the arts. When she was posted to Kuala Lumpur to teach, she started working part-time in Radio Malaysia in the 1960s. There she met men like Syed Alwi, John Sharhadeau and K Das, and threw herself into theatre activities. Her passion for the theatre is revealed in her own words: "It feels absolutely wonderful and very fulfilling ... Just performing on stage is enough. It's the greatest feeling on earth."

Faridah has performed in many roles. Among her favourites are Dara in the musical "Uda and Dara" in 1972. In 1984 she played Uda's mother. At the age of 35, she played a 17-year-old circus girl in "He Who Gets Slapped". In the 1980s, her favourite role was as Sister George in "The Killing of Sister George".

To quote Eng San Lin's interview with Faridah in *Marie Claire* (May 1995): "[Faridah] carves a formidable reputation as the Audio-Visual Director and Director of the Board at the international advertising agency Ogilvy and Mather where she has worked for 26 years. In the world of theatre, she is the reigning queen, commanding respect and admiration from her peers and young theatre enthusiasts."

For her contribution as a pioneer in modern Malaysian theatre, she was conferred an AMN, a federal award. Together with her second husband Joe Hasham, she set up the Actors Studio in 1989, her own school for drama and acting. Together they hope to do meaningful theatre. Their first play, which delved into racism, was "Norm and Ahmad", written by an Australian. Their aim is to produce plays which "trigger people's thinking and start them on the road to intellectual stimulation". Dedicated to improving the theatre industry, they have started training workshops for theatre enthusiasts. Faridah plans to vigorously continue theatrical activities, spending her time in acting and producing and directing plays.

Kassim Merican

As mentioned earlier, Othman Sah Merican's marriage to Nya Siew Soo produced two children: Bapoo and Ahmad Osman Merican (alias Che Teh). Bapoo Merican had one child, Nor Mohamed Merican.

Nor Mohamed Merican married a Chinese wife and had two children, one of whom was Kassim Merican. Kassim Merican married three wives: the first wife's name is not available, the second wife was Che Nengah bt Dato' Panglima Kinta Yusoff and a third wife bore three children. For me it is interesting to note that the Merican family is linked to the Yusoff family by the marriage of Kassim Merican with my father's sister, Che Nengah bt Dato' Panglima Kinta Yusoff. Kassim Merican worked in the Civil Service and his last appointment was as Superintendent of Mines in Kedah. In the article "History of the Chinese Recreation Club Penang 1892-1952" by Toh Hooi Choon, mention was made of Kassim Merican. Apart from being one of the founders of the Club, he was the only non-Chinese member. When the club decided to make cricket one of its sporting activities, Kassim not only played for them but also captained the side for several years. Kassim was an honorary member and keen supporter of the club until his death in 1927.

Kassim Merican's 11 children are my cousins. They are Khairon, Nachar, Mohd Ezaddin, Sharipah, Ayshah, Mohd Masharudin ("Na Kan"), Mohd Noordin, Dato' Mohd Mohiyadin, Mohd Wahiduddin ("Che Puteh"), Hj Mohd Zainal Abidin ("Che Lat") and Hajah Suran Mardiah ("Bibi").

Dato' Mohiyadin Merican Among these 11 cousins, I got to know Dato' Mohd Mohiyadin well during my childhood as he used to visit our house in Kuala Lumpur often. My family used to call him Na Din. He is divorced from his first wife Kak Jah and is now married to Datin Wan Tam bt Majid (popularly called Datin Aminah).

Na Din was born in 1926 and was educated in Ipoh: in the Malay School, Anderson School and the Government Trade School (on a British Royal Air Force Scholarship). Na Din is highly motivated to succeed and he used to pattern his life after his uncle and my father, the late Dato' Panglima Kinta Yusoff.

After completing his Cambridge Overseas School Certificate, he continued his education in the Government Trade School, Ipoh. On passing the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) Laws Parts I to III, he

became an Associate Member of the Industrial Transport Association, London. He completed a Trade Promotion Officers Course (on a Colombo Plan Scholarship) and obtained a Certificate in Export Promotion on a United Nations Scholarship.

Na Din has had an colourful career. The following information on his life in the Royal Air Force and as a Prisoner of War is based on an interview in *The Star* (14 November 1984). In 1941, he enlisted in the Royal Air Force, Singapore. He volunteered to remain with the Air Force when war broke out, when most of the men opted out.

In 1942, he served in Singapore and then Java and was taken as a Prisoner of War in Central Java. He was interned in several camps in Java before being taken on board the "hell ship" Singapore Maru to Changi Prison in Singapore.

In October 1942, officer Din and other captives were shipped to Nagasaki to begin their detention proper. Prison conditions were harsh; beatings and starvation of prisoners were common. In August 1945, leaflets announcing that the war was over in Europe were air-dropped, bringing exultation to the prisoners. Left on the loose for two weeks before their official release, Din, his brother Puteh, Ken Harrison (an Australian who later wrote a book *The Brave Japanese*) and another Malaysian, Khaw Kok Teen, took a train to see the effects of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Hiroshima had a population of 400,000 before it was completely destroyed by the bomb. They were among the first non-Japanese to reach Hiroshima just after the bomb was dropped but they, in Din's words, "felt no sense of either history or triumph. Our brother men were crippled and burnt and we knew only shame and guilt." As they left Hiroshima, their hatred of the Japanese was shed. From Hiroshima, they proceeded to Nagasaki to visit their old camp. There they witnessed again "wilderness and debris". In September 1945, they were liberated by American forces and Din was discharged from the Royal Air Force in March 1946.

From 1946 to 1973, Dato' Din served in various government departments: the Public Works Department, Ipoh; the Road Transport Department (as Technical Adviser and Chief Inspector); and the Ministry

of Commerce and Industry (now Ministry of Trade and Industry). His stint in the ministry took him to many countries, acting as Commercial Attaché to France and Switzerland and then as Trade Commissioner to Spain, Portugal, Austria and Czechoslovakia. He was also the Commercial Counsellor to Hungary and Yugoslavia. Finally, he was appointed the Malaysian Representative in the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

He opted to retire from government service in 1973. Since retirement, he has been a company director in several private and public-listed companies in Malaysia and Singapore. He also served as company director in several private companies in Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong and Canada.

For his service and contribution to society, Dato' Mohiyadin has received many honours, including four medals for bravery and service in World War II. From the Sultan of Kelantan he received the Ahli Kelantan (AK) in 1959; the Kelantan Coronation Medal in 1961; Orang Besar Negeri Kelantan (with the title of Dato') in 1963; Dato' Paduka Setia Mahkota Kelantan (DPSK); the Kelantan Coronation Medal in 1980 and the Seri Paduka Jiwa Mahkota Kelantan (SJMKG) in 1987.

Mohamed Wahiduddin Merican Dato' Din's brother, Mohamed Wahiduddin Merican, or popularly called Puteh, now 70, was also a POW with Din in Japan. Though born in Ipoh, he considers himself an *anak Pulau Pinang* (Penangite). He feels akin to men like the late Datuk Zainal Alam and Ahmad Daud who, he says, usually take things easy and have a relaxed attitude. His temperament is such that he remained cheerful even in the seemingly hopeless situation of a POW. However, he admits to feelings of bitterness on their return home from Japan: "We had suffered so much but we were let down by the British government. When we arrived in Singapore, we were simply dispersed. Nobody cared ... and there was no compensation."

Puteh picked up the pieces of his life and worked as a mechanic at the Shell aviation station in Sungei Besi for a few months before

joining the Malaya Volunteer Forces Record Office in KL as a clerk. The following year he joined the Welfare Department and served in various states including Kedah, Penang, Malacca, Selangor and Pahang. He retired as Welfare Officer of the Larut, Matang and Selama districts in 1978.

All his six children have grown up and live in Kuala Lumpur; he and his wife, however, live in Taiping. With retirement, besides visiting his children in KL, he spends most of his time reading and pottering in his garden.

Ahmad Daud Bai Fans of the world of music and the performing arts will be interested to note that Kassim Merican's daughter Fatimah Bee, who married Hashim Bai, produced the popular vocal personality Ahmad Daud. Ahmad Daud married well-known film actress Saadiah and produced an equally famous TV personality and singer – Fauziah "Ogy".

Datin Sri Khatijah Kassim Ahmad Osman Merican's marriage to his first wife Che Chik produced four children. They are Rahima Nachiar, Ayeshah Nachiar, Che Wan and Udman Sa Merican. Their second daughter Ayeshah Nachiar married Aboo Kassim. They had four children, one of whom was Khatijah (later Datin Sri) who became a well-known social welfare officer in Kuala Kangsar. She was a member of the Perak Welfare Council and a member of the Malayan Welfare Council in pre-Independence Malaya. She married Raja Haniff Shah, nephew of the Sultan of Perak and they lived in Kuala Kangsar.

The above are some of the notable personalities of the Merican clan. I apologise to those I have inadvertently and unknowingly left out.

Chapter 10

Dato' Dr Carleel Merican

*"... And let your best be for your friend ...
And in the sweetness of friendship, let there be laughter
and sharing of pleasures ..."*

– Khalil Gibran on Friendship

Childhood

Carleel, the only child from the marriage of Dr Ali Osman Merican with his first wife Fatimah, was born in Penang on 24 January 1922. As was the practice in the old days, he was not delivered in the hospital but at home.

The Merican family house was in a prestigious residential area along Western Road in Penang. The house was built by Carleel's grandfather Che Teh. According to Carleel, he was the apple of his grandfather's eye. When he was 40 days old, his grandfather had a cradle made for him in the shape of an airplane.

Despite the early death of his mother when he was very young, Carleel had a happy and contented childhood. Meal times were special for Carleel. As was the custom then, his father had the first choice of chicken pieces followed by Carleel as the eldest son in the family. Lylone being a girl was the last to help herself to the dishes. The exalted family status of Carleel and his father was distinguished by Mak Pok who placed larger water glasses for her husband and his eldest son at meal times.

Carleel remembers the building of the family home, Pondok K'Seena. Dr Ali bought the imposing building in Tumpat, had it dismantled and then re-assembled in Jalan Teliput in Kota Bharu. Built entirely of hardy cengal wood, the house is destined to stand a long time. Although now owned by Ezanee (Dr Ali's second son) it is still regarded as a family heritage. Ezanee now proposes to move the house again – this time to Kuang near Kuala Lumpur.

In the old days, Singapore appeared extremely distant to residents in Kelantan. To get there one had to travel a long and arduous journey by car and train across several rivers.

Before the house was completed, the parents decided to make a historic journey to Singapore to buy furniture for the house. Carleel, as the eldest child, was instructed by his father to write a daily progress report on the building of the house for his father to read on his return home.

Education

Carleel began his primary education in Wellesley Primary School, Penang. He then studied at the Francis Light School. When his father moved to Kota Bharu in 1927, Carleel was only 5 years old. He was left in Penang to continue his studies, living in the house of a family friend.

Intelligent and self-assured, Carleel excelled in his studies in school. He was also active in extracurricular activities, playing badminton, tennis, hockey, cricket and rugby. In addition, he was a scout patrol leader and a school prefect. When he completed schooling at the age of 16, scholarships were scarce. He had to wait a year to get a state scholarship. At the time, he was the first boy in the state of Kelantan to receive a scholarship to the university.

In 1940, at the age of 18, Carleel went to Singapore to enter the King Edward VII College of Medicine. His studies were suddenly disrupted during his first year when war struck Malaya and Singapore in 1941.

Personality

Carleel is a born storyteller and can keep his audience spellbound with his tales delivered in a slow, leisurely style. His epic story of how he

escaped from Singapore at the time of the Japanese invasion and found his way to Kota Bharu could fill up an entire book. For the sake of brevity, I will summarise this episode.

He and 12 friends (including one woman) stole four cars to make their epic journey. His car was a Buick and six friends sat with him. To know how to drive and have a driving license was a rare accomplishment in those days. In the group those who could drive were Carleel, Aziz (who later became a doctor), Raja Kamarulzaman and Sutan. The first part of the dangerous journey was to Taiping as there was no direct route to Kota Bharu. From there, Carleel would then have to go on to Kedah and then cross southern Thailand.

Petrol was scarce and thus became the crucial problem. They resorted to draining petrol from cars abandoned by others along the way. When they reached Taiping, they lived in a vacant house belonging to Raja Kamarulzaman's father and had to depend on the family for food. They then waited in vain on a false promise of petrol. When they realised they were outstaying their welcome from Kamarulzaman's family, they decided to leave their cars behind. The cars served to compensate Kamarulzaman's family for their hospitality.

They proceeded by a goods train to Bukit Mertajam and waited for the night train to Alor Setar to meet Che Pok's relatives. Like the typical escape story on TV, the goods train was loaded with all types of goods such as rubber sheets as well as goats and chickens. Carleel related the amusing story of how he found Mak Din (Che Pok's brother) working in the Alor Setar Hospital and they both undertook to cycle 47 miles on a single bicycle to Sungei Petani. They were supposed to take turns cycling but because Carleel was too overweight he could not be a pillion rider and therefore had to pedal all the way to Sungei Merbok. Carleel travelled light with a small sling bag containing a change of shirt and a pair of pants. He must have presented a sorry sight for on arrival at Sungei Petani, his grandfather (Che Pok's stepfather) Tok Junid called his tailor and fitted him with a new shirt and pants.

Carleel had to cycle again to Penang to see his paternal grandmother Hajah Wan Aishah, and to arrange for news to be sent to Kota Bharu that he was alive and well. From Penang, he made another

bicycle journey to Alor Setar (someone should have had the foresight to keep this bicycle for posterity and place it in a museum!). Finally, Mak Din was able to obtain a permit for Carleel to travel on a goods train to Kota Bharu.

During the Japanese Occupation, travelling interstate was strictly controlled by the Japanese Administration. In those days, roads and other infrastructure were very underdeveloped and because bridges had not been constructed over many rivers, one had to drive one's vehicle on a floating raft. It took Carleel 20 days to reach Kota Bharu.

Sidique was old enough to recall vividly the day Carleel returned. Their father Dr Ali had returned home earlier than usual. His rickshaw, which was usually parked near the dispensary, brought Carleel home. Che Pok was so overjoyed by Carleel's safe return that she cooked *nasi kunyit* (saffron rice) as thanksgiving every Friday (the Muslim holy day) for seven weeks.

Born on 24 January, Carleel is an Aquarius according to the English astrological horoscope. Kindly and jovial by nature, he enjoys being the live wire at parties. He gets along easily and comfortably with everyone, both young and old. According to Sidique, Carleel's generosity was often demonstrated during his student days. On his return home to Kota Bharu to spend his school holidays with the family, Sidique recalled Carleel opening his bag and bringing out presents for everyone.

With the differences in their age, Carleel used to play the role of "Nana", or big brother in Tamil, to his siblings. Imbued with strong family sentiments and loyalty, he treats his stepbrothers and sister as his own family. Carleel likes to tell me how he used to carry his youngest brother Mahmood around when he was a toddler by sandwiching him between two pillows, especially to take Mahmood to his bath.

Heavily built, Carleel must have been one of the fattest boys in school and in university. In university, the good-natured Carleel made many friends. At the time, ragging was permitted and he ragged many younger students. He is proud to claim that a certain Mahathir Mohamad, who later went on to become the Prime Minister of Malaysia, was ragged by him. However, his ragging was not sadistic and the students he ragged remained his friends long after they had all graduated.

Career/Achievements

With his studies interrupted by the Japanese Occupation, Carleel entered a new chapter in his life and helped his father in his clinic. One of the responsibilities assigned by his father was to prepare the clinic's accounts. Medical charges were very low at that time. Fees ranged from 50 cents for a child to \$2.50 for an adult. There were only about a dozen patients a day. Carleel recalls that their total monthly income from the clinic was about \$360.

Carleel also helped his father in his practice. In place of formal studies, his father would give him detailed notes on the diagnosis of each medical ailment. Carleel, with his imposing figure and confident bedside manners, was regarded by the patients as a doctor and they were puzzled when he later went back to medical school to complete his medical training before finally graduating in 1952.

Carleel is a linguist and can speak fluent Malay, English, Hokkien and Tamil. He also learnt Japanese as he had to treat Japanese soldiers, many of whom had contracted venereal disease. Dr Ali was already developing a heart problem and during his last two years he had to rest at home and was only called by Carleel to treat difficult cases.

In 1996, I went to Malacca to interview Carleel. Not many of us knew that Carleel did his housemanship in Penang in 1952. At the time he had three children with him, Fadillah, Nazrillah ("Gee") and Harith. He joined the Royal Malayan Navy and held the post of Sub-Lieutenant. After 11 months, he resigned in 1953 to return to Kota Bharu.

With the death of his father Dr Ali, a doctor had to be found to run the clinic. The first doctor to be employed was Dr Phips, a pleasant Eurasian. He died about two years later. Then the family employed Dr Aziz and when he left to set up his own clinic, it fell on Carleel to continue the Merican Dispensary.

Prior to the Japanese Occupation, Dr Ali's brother ("Bun"), who suffered from ill health, came to Kota Bharu to join the Merican Dispensary. His job was to help manage the clinic. By this time, Dr Ali's family had moved to better accommodation – the house at Jalan Teliput. Thus Bun and his family settled in the house above the dispensary.

After Dr Ali's death in June 1945, Bun continued to help manage the dispensary with a succession of employed doctors. He and his family also continued to live on the first floor above the dispensary. Carleel had qualified as a doctor and was working at the dispensary when Bun passed away on 6 December 1954. Bun's family later moved to their own house in Jalan Hamzah, Kota Bharu.

Marriage

At 22, looking the dashing and skilful "doctor", Carleel attracted the attention of Tengku Noor Zakiah Tengku Ismail. At the time, she had just left school. Her father and Dr Ali were good friends and neighbours. Carleel was assisting his father at the dispensary, and though not qualified yet, was regarded by many patients as a doctor. Tengku Noor went to consult Carleel for an eye infection and from then on their relationship developed romantically until they decided to marry. Tengku Noor's father, however, was strongly opposed to the marriage as he had promised her hand to a man of royal descent.

Repeating his father's history, Carleel and Tengku Noor decided to elope. According to Carleel, it must have been the easiest elopement that any couple has ever experienced. Tengku Noor's mother helped to pack her bags and opened the door of their house for their escape. A Japanese family friend, Baba-san, helped by lending them a car to drive to town. They crossed the river by boat to Palekbang to board the train to Alor Setar. Bun's wife, Mami Kechik, went along as a chaperone on their trip. When they arrived at Alor Setar, they were properly married by a *kathi* and they then went on a honeymoon to Haadyai. After two weeks, the couple returned to Kota Bharu and was welcomed with open arms by everyone including the bride's father.

Immediately after the Japanese Occupation Carleel was undecided about continuing with his medical studies. He thought about starting a business or opening a restaurant. It was fortunate that he took Kak Pok's sterling advice to complete his medical course as Carleel had all the makings of a good medical practitioner: affable, relaxed, cheerful and a manner that inspired confidence in his patients. But however beneficial the decision was to his career, it exacted a toll on his

marriage as it incurred frequent separations from his wife and family who stayed in Kota Bharu while he continued his studies in Singapore.

At first their marriage was a happy one. Tengku Noor had a very charming and warm personality, and mixed easily with friends and acquaintances. Having a strong inclination for business, she took up courses in hairdressing and dressmaking while she was in Singapore. On her return to Kota Bharu, she opened a clothes boutique and then a hairdressing salon. She enjoyed managing her business. (Today Tengku Noor is a major shareholder of a large stockbroking firm.)

Their marriage sadly ended in a divorce and Carleel received custody of all five children. His eldest daughter Fadillah was only 10 years old when his marriage broke up.

It was not easy for Carleel to raise his children and manage his busy clinic. Many friends sympathised with his predicament, including Sara Shah, a close friend of Tengku Noor. Sara was originally from Singapore and was posted to Kota Bharu as a lecturer in the Teachers Training College. The family was happy when Carleel decided to marry Sara. Because Sara had taught in Malacca before, she suggested that they start their married life in Malacca. Moreover, Malacca was nearer Singapore, where her family lived.

Carleel and Sara enjoyed many happy years of married life until her sudden death in 1989. Sara was a born organiser and homemaker. She was an excellent cook renowned for her many recipes including her seaweed agar-agar and fruit cake in which she used local fruits specially prepared by her instead of fruit mixtures bought from the shops. She was so organised and capable that she not only helped Carleel in his dispensary, raised and disciplined his children but also participated actively in many women's associations and other organisations in Malacca. In playing his role as one of the prominent personalities in Malacca, Carleel used to entertain often at home, supported by Sara who was a capable hostess.

In November 1989, Carleel asked Mahmood and Ezanee to join them on a trip to China which was organised by the Private Medical Practitioners Association. We agreed immediately and looked forward to a family holiday.

On the second day of our trip, Sara fell ill suddenly; she collapsed after visiting the Ming Tombs in Beijing and the next day she fell into a coma. Carleel and Mahmood faced many difficulties to arrange for her return to Malaysia. Sara was admitted to the University Hospital in Kuala Lumpur and passed away on 21 November 1989.

When I first met Sara in the 1960s, soon after my marriage to Mahmood, I found her intimidating because of her reputation as a disciplinarian. However, during the last few years before her death, I became better acquainted with her and found her warm-hearted and helpful.

I enjoyed her company during our shopping sprees on our annual trips to Kota Bharu to attend the Sultan's birthday celebrations which usually take place in late March. My special affinity to Sara is that we both share the same birthday. Jeanne and Ezanee made it a special occasion when we were in Kota Bharu so that we could have a joint birthday celebration and exchange presents with each other. Sara's devoted friend Datin Sarah Wan Mahmood and I, together with many others, miss her presence especially during family gatherings.

Family

Carleel's marriage to Tengku Noor produced five children: Fatimah Fadillah (born 23 April 1946), Nazrillah (born 9 May 1948), Ismail Harith (born 8 August 1950), Mohd Haniff (born 14 May 1954) and his twin brother Ahmad Hilme (born 14 May 1954). They were all born after the Japanese Occupation when Carleel had to return to Singapore to complete his medical course.

Carleel must feel a great sense of satisfaction and joy to see how well his children have succeeded in life. His eldest daughter Fadillah (fondly called Kak Lah by young and old because she used to act as mother to her brothers and sister) majored in English and is now the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University Kebangsaan. She is married to Ibrahim Keling and they have one daughter, Anis, and two sons.

Carleel's second daughter Nazrillah, popularly called "Gee", is creative and artistic. She studied commercial art in the UK and subsequently married Jeffrey Fowler Abdullah, an Englishman. They have

two daughters, Claire Louise Aida and Carla Salina. Like all fathers, Carleel regrets that they are living so far away in the UK and he is not able to see much of them. In fact, Carleel is a great-grandfather now as Gee's daughter Claire is married and has a son, Jake.

The third child Harith obtained an arts degree from the University of Malaya and proceeded to England for an accounting course. He spent many interesting years there before returning to Kuala Lumpur to work as a broker in Kenanga, Tengku Noor's firm. After several years, he decided to strike out on his own. In September 1986, he married Faridah Abdul Kadir, daughter of the famous politicians Tan Sri Fatimah and her late husband Tan Sri Kadir.

Carleel was delighted when his fourth son Haniff decided to study medicine. After graduating he married his college sweetheart Dr Rashidah Baba, also from Malacca. They have one son, Amran Najmi Merican. Dr Haniff now manages the Merican Dispensary in Malacca together with his father.

Haniff's twin brother Ahmad Hilme Merican suffered some complications at childbirth which has prevented him from an academic career. Hilme helps in the dispensary. He is married to Jariah bt Abdul Garpul, known to most of us as "Maimoon". They have two children.

Suhaila Emma (born 19 March 1959 in Malacca), or popularly called Susie, is Carleel's only daughter from his second marriage to Sara. Susie studied at the University Pertanian, Serdang. She graduated with a degree in food technology and now holds a senior post in Nestle, the food processing company. She is active in the Kuala Lumpur arts and theatre world.

All the Mericans, especially Carleel, were overjoyed when Susie decided to get married in October 1995. It had been a fervent wish of her late mother for many years that Susie would settle down. She married a Chinese whose Muslim name after conversion is Annuar Kin Abdullah. Kin, a quantity surveyor by profession, shares her keen interest in the theatre.

Public Recognition /Award

When his father died, Carleel inherited the post of Personal Physician

to the Royal Family in Kelantan. In recognition of his services to the Royal Family and the state, he was awarded the title of Dato' by the late DYMM Sultan Yahya of Kelantan. By this time Carleel had married his second wife Sara and had migrated to Malacca.

Secrets of Success

Carleel projects a fatherly image and with his humour and easy manners, he endears himself to both friends and patients. Not surprisingly he runs a very successful private practice in Malacca, attracting patients from far and wide. Older patients especially find it comforting to talk to him and some of them sincerely believe that only his prescriptions will cure them of their ailments.

Carleel has charismatic qualities and a commanding appearance which make him a suitable candidate for a leadership role in his Malacca community. Loyal to his old alma mater, he attends his medical alumni meetings regularly and has held the post of president of the association.

By nature and upbringing, Carleel, the eldest sibling, has a great sense of responsibility and *noblesse oblige* not only to his direct family but to the Merican clan too. Before his father died, he left him a letter tantamount to a will asking Carleel to look after Mak Pok and his siblings. His siblings can testify that Carleel has discharged his duties nobly. He is fondly referred by them as "Nana" (a term commonly used by the Peranakan in Penang meaning big brother).

Sidique and his cousin Ahmad Merican once said that the Merican women were the backbone of their family. Indeed the Merican boys either married women with strong personalities or the women became strong after marrying into the Merican family because they had to live up to their husbands' expectations. Sara, who was a tower of strength to her husband, is a perfect example.

Concluding Remarks

Carleel has lived a rich and fruitful life. He was a devoted husband and father. With the sudden death of Sara, Carleel is surrounded by his dutiful and loving children and a total of eight grandchildren.

At the age of 75, he is still robust and healthy despite having undergone bypass heart surgery two years ago. He is the oldest living male Merican and deserves the title of doyen of the Merican clan. He fits his role well with his imposing heavily-built figure and paternal attitude towards people.

After working for half a century, Carleel deserves to take it easy. Carleel wisely decided to reduce his working hours by getting his son Dr Haniff to manage the clinic full-time. Being sociable and gregarious, he now spends much of his time in the Senior Citizens Club in Malacca. He is very popular with the members, offering free medical consultation a few nights a week.

A widower, Carleel lives alone, preferring not to remarry although there have been offers of marriage channelled through his well-meaning friends. But Carleel is not alone: he is surrounded by close friends and devoted children who visit him regularly in his house at Klebang Besar. He also travels frequently to Kuala Lumpur to see his married children, relatives and friends.

Chapter 11

Dato' Dr Ezanee Merican

*"If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you ...
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it."*

– Rudyard Kipling

Childhood

Ezanee is the only son of Dr Ali and Che Pok Abdullah who was born in Penang. His mother gave birth to him on 17 April 1929. Soon after this, he was brought to Kota Bharu where his father had gone a year before. Imbued with an adventurous spirit, his father Dr Ali Osman Merican took the small baby Ezanee and his mother to Kota Bharu to start a new life there. In those days, travelling from Penang to Kota Bharu was no easy matter. They had to travel by train for two days through Thailand and on arriving at Palekbang, they had to take a boat across the river to Kota Bharu.

Apparently Dr Ali had wanted to prospect for gold and iron in Kelantan. However he found none. He fell back on his profession and rented a shophouse in Jalan Hulu Pasar to set up "The Dispensary" – the first and, for many years, the only private medical clinic in Kelantan. At that time, the row of shops was the only brick building in town as Kota Bharu was like a frontier town. The road by the side of the clinic was only a path.

Uncertain of his success as a private practitioner, Dr Ali placed only four rattan chairs in the clinic for his patients. The family, consisting of the father, Che Pok and Ezanee, lived on the floor above the clinic.

Dr Ali became a popular doctor and was appointed as Sultan Ismail's Personal Physician. Later his sons Carleel and Ezanee continued the tradition of being the Personal Physician to the Sultan.

In the 1930s when a car was a rarity in Kota Bharu, Dr Ali was among the first to own one – a black Renault. Ezanee shares his father's passion for the latest inventions and technology.

Among the four sons, Ezanee perhaps bears the most physical resemblance to his father. He is shorter than his brothers and has inherited his father's fiery temper. Admired by others for his many talents, he is also known for his temper.

Education

Ezanee had his early education in Kelantan. His intelligence was apparent from the beginning when he attended Ismail English School in 1936, the year it was first founded. During the Japanese Occupation, he and his brothers continued their education in the same school which was forced to adopt the Japanese system.

Ezanee's father had a large library of books – considerably enlarged by the addition of books brought by the *kampung* folks from the houses of British expatriates who had fled from the advancing Japanese troops. Ezanee spent much time reading these books, hence obtaining an excellent foundation in English.

After the Japanese left, Ezanee continued his English education in the same school and obtained his Senior Cambridge Certificate in 1947. In his class were other notable sons of Kelantan, such as Tan Sri Dato' Harun Hashim, Tan Sri Zain Hashim, Tan Sri Mohd Yaacob, Tan Sri Ahmad Noordin Zakaria and Said Osman. They were the first group to pass the Senior Cambridge Examination in Kelantan.

He proceeded to Malay College, Kuala Kangsar to join the first ever Form VI class, comprising Malay boys who had obtained Grade I in the local Senior Cambridge Examination the previous year. The class had to wait for a committee from Singapore to interview them for admis-

sion to Raffles College and the Medical College, Singapore. At that time there was no entrance examination to the colleges. Ezanee succeeded in getting a Federal Scholarship to study at the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore in 1948.

Achievements/Career

In school, Ezanee was active in athletics and ping pong. He was also the Head Prefect from 1945 to 1947. Like his father, Ezanee had multiple hobbies. They included sprinting, reading and playing the piano and the saxophone.

Compared to his brothers, Ezanee is the most musically inclined. With little formal music training, he could pick up a tune easily and play it on the piano. Ezanee is a live wire at any party and holds frequent parties at his spacious house in Kota Bharu. He likes nothing better than to have close friends for dinner and a chat. His parties are usually enlivened with singing by him or some friends, accompanied by the piano or organ.

During the Japanese Occupation, Ezanee played in a band. He was a member of a very small state brass band which played for the occupying Japanese. In August 1945, in the ceremony at which the Japanese Forces surrendered to the British Forces, his band played for the march-past to the tune of the US Marine march.

In his university days, Ezanee was active as a student leader and served as the secretary of the Students Union and the Medical Society. But Ezanee's most outstanding achievement is his flair for making friends – his lifelong friends include Dato' Dr V Thurasingham, Dr Tan Kok Peng and Lim Cheng Hong, Dato' Dr R S McCoy and Dr Lopoorte Khoo (both from Kuala Lumpur) and many others.

On graduation, Ezanee worked at the Penang General Hospital. Later he resigned from government service and joined his elder brother Carleel in the same medical practice started by their late father in Kota Bharu in 1928.

Ezanee is a very caring and popular private practitioner and has earned the trust of many Kelantanese patients. He ran a busy practice, administering to rich and poor, royalty and peasant. When Carleel

married Sara and left for Malacca, Ezanee continued the family tradition of acting as the Sultan's Personal Physician.

Personality

According to the English horoscope, Ezanee is an Aries. As such, he is a firebrand who forges his way through life with daring, initiative and enterprise. He is fearless and yet has a disarming naiveté.

Gregarious by nature, Ezanee has an irrepressible charm and intimate manner which endear him to people. Despite this, when emotionally aroused, he can be very abrasive. Most of us who blow our top at friends run the risk of losing them. Not so for Ezanee, for they know that deep down he is very warm-hearted, caring and generous.

Two years after I was married to Mahmood, we had to leave for the UK so that Mahmood could obtain specialist training in orthopaedics. We were lucky that Che Pok and Lylone (who were staying with Ezanee in the family house, Pondok K'Seena) agreed to look after our son Adnan.

When I got to know Ezanee, I observed another characteristic about him. He is hyperactive by nature; when he visits our house he doesn't sit still for long. To keep in touch with a vast number of friends scattered all over Malaysia, he frequently calls them on the phone. Ezanee has the gift of making close friends and keeping them. The phone is certainly an indispensable tool to enable Ezanee to keep in constant touch with his friends.

Marriage

Ezanee has had his full share of health problems. During the Japanese Occupation, he had a serious abscess under his armpit, the remedy for which – in those days in Kelantan – was to use leeches to suck the pus out. Interestingly leeches have now been adopted for use by modern Western medicine.

In 1951, during his fifth year in the university, he contracted tuberculosis and had to be hospitalised for nine months. It was during this time that he met his future wife, Jeanne (Jeanne Mallory Lawther), who was then a student nurse. She is of Australian and Chinese descent.

Awards/Public Recognition

Ezanee's service to the Kelantan Royal Family and service to the community resulted in the conferment of the title of Dato' (DPMK) in 1968. Later he was given the title of Dato' Bentara Istana. In 1975, he was made a JP (Jaksa Pendamai). He served for thirty years on the Pardons Board until he resigned in 1994. He was a member of the MPR (Majlis Penasihat Raja). Ezanee has the rare gift of being at home with royalty and yet not lose the common touch. He can chit-chat comfortably with servants and VIPs alike.

Health

According to Sidique, Ezanee is accident prone. When he was in school, he once fell into a drain. During the Japanese Occupation, Ezanee climbed a hill – Bukit Marak – and fell, rolling down the hill.

After contracting tuberculosis while in the university, in 1959, Ezanee fell sick again. He discovered that he had a tumour of the thymus gland which was diagnosed as malignant after excision. His brother Mahmood asked for six months' "no-pay" leave to locum for Ezanee while he was away from the clinic for his treatment. When the medical authorities rejected his request, Mahmood resigned as his devotion and loyalty to his brother overrode his personal career. When Mahmood resigned from the government service, he lost some seniority and, on rejoining government service, had to wait his turn to obtain study leave to go to the UK for a higher degree.

Ezanee was known for his boundless energy. Not content with running a busy clinic, he ventured into building and running a hotel in 1972. He named this hotel K'Seena after the family home at Jalan Teliput.

In 1975, at the early age of 46, Ezanee suffered a heart attack. He was lovingly nursed back to health by his wife and mother. I remember Che Pok's favourite food for the sick was bird's nest soup, which she believed had healing properties. Che Pok soaked the bird's nest for hours and patiently plucked out the fine feathers before boiling it with rock sugar.

In 1980 Mahmood wanted to give his mother a treat by taking her on her first overseas trip to the US. Unfortunately, on the first leg of

the American tour at Vancouver, Canada, Che Pok fell seriously ill with kidney failure. She had to be hospitalised. Faced with an invalid on foreign soil, we were both shattered. When we called Kota Bharu to convey the news to Ezanee, he told us the bad news that he had been diagnosed with malignant cancer of the nasopharynx. This was one of the very rare occasions that Mahmood, an extremely calm person, broke down and cried. (The first time he did that was when our third son Azman passed away in 1971.)

Because of intensive radiotherapy treatment in Singapore, Ezanee partially lost his sense of smell and taste as well as his vision and hearing. It was a high price to pay to be cured of the dreaded cancer. As family members, we are amazed by Ezanee's indomitable spirit. He continues with his normal life: working, travelling, and using his favourite gadget – the telephone – to call friends to keep in touch.

Then in 1981, he had his second heart attack after making a speech at his nephew's wedding reception at the Lake Club, Kuala Lumpur. In March 1984, he developed angina while visiting his three children in Dublin. This climaxed in a coronary bypass operation, carried out at the Wellington Hospital, London.

There is a new trait in Ezanee which we have never seen before. Thus far, we had known him to be hyperactive and hot-tempered but we did not realise how brave and determined he is to conquer his disability of partial sight. With any ordinary person, this would have been a major setback but Ezanee has an indomitable spirit which sustains him. He finds comfort and solace by learning more about his religion and making frequent trips to perform the *umrah* in addition to the *haj*.

Voluntary Work

Like his father, Ezanee is active in social and professional clubs. He has been an active member of the Kelantan Rotary Club for years and served as President in 1972–1973.

He is also active in medical associations such as the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) and the Alumni of the King Edward VII College of Medicine and the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ma-

laya. He served as President of the MMA in 1980–1981. He was also President of the Alumni.

Ezanee was the president of the Royal Kelantan Club for five years from 1976–1980, for which he was later conferred life membership.

Family

Ezanee is a devoted and indulgent father of two sons, Shahrin (born 28 February 1961) and Shiraz (born 5 October 1965) and two daughters, Karin Soraya (born 23 December 1959) and Julia Shahnaz (born 16 September 1963). All his children were sent to attend an international school, the United World College, in Singapore. He wanted to prepare them for further education overseas.

Ezanee has achieved what all doctors wish for and dream about and that is to have his own children follow in his footsteps. Soraya, Shahrin and Shahnaz all graduated in medicine from the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin. His youngest son Shiraz graduated in Business Studies and Economics from the Hawaii Pacific University.

Dr Shahrin trained and qualified as a radiologist in England. He worked in Brunei for several years before returning to Kuala Lumpur to work as a consultant radiologist in Gleneagles Hospital in Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Soraya worked in the University Hospital before going into private practice.

Dr Shahnaz is a consultant neurophysician at the General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur.

Ezanee's youngest son Shiraz works in the Arab-Malaysian Merchant Bank.

Devoted father that he is, Ezanee bought two adjoining houses in Petaling Jaya for his four children. He and his wife Jeanne make frequent trips to Kuala Lumpur to visit their children and friends.

Secrets of Success

Ezanee has a colourful personality: charming, exuberant and warm-hearted. While Malek and Mahmood are noted for being calm and rather reserved, Ezanee is very sociable. He is imbued with many natural talents, such as a flair for music; being highly intelligent and

versatile, he rose to leadership positions in the community. Gregarious by nature, he is an eloquent conversationalist and makes friends easily, forming deep and lasting friendships. His wide circle of friends are totally loyal to him. He is a person who is as comfortable with royalty as with his servants.

Like his siblings, Ezanee has strong determination and this trait serves him well in his adversity. Undaunted by the loss of his vision, he continues to use the telephone to contact friends and travels frequently between Kota Bharu and Kuala Lumpur to visit his children. He adapts courageously to his disabilities, and in adversity finds solace and strength in his religion. One of the secrets of his success is his boundless energy and an unquenchable thirst for knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

My impression of Ezanee is of a person who has enjoyed a full and rich life. It must be gratifying for him to see all his children doing well.

At present, Ezanee looks forward enthusiastically to seeing all his children settle down. His eldest son Shahrin married Siti Hajar, a Singaporean, and Ezanee is now the proud grandfather to Omar, a bouncing baby boy. In 1995, youngest son Shiraz married Zihan. It was the classic romantic story of the boy falling in love with the girl next door for they are neighbours in Petaling Jaya. In 1996, they were blessed with a baby boy, Amir.

Ezanee has been blessed with many things except robust health; he has suffered from several illnesses. Yet he has risen above his adversity, especially the tragic loss of his vision, and at the age of 68, remains very active and gregarious.

Chapter 12

Sidique Merican

*"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?"*

— Robert Browning (1812–1889)

Childhood

Sidique, the third son in Dr Ali's family, was born in Kelantan on 24 August 1930. A Virgo according to the English horoscope, he is dependable and sincere but undemonstrative in his affections for people.

His elder brother Carleel related to me the circumstances of Sidique's birth. As was customary, Dr Ali had gone to Tumpat, a small town about seven miles across the river from Kota Bharu. He had gone there to gamble with his "old cronies". At about 3 or 4 am, Mak Pok's labour pains started; she was beside herself with anxiety but the first wife, Fatimah, did her best to calm her down. At the same time, she sent a servant to fetch the *bidan* (village delivery nurse) to help with the birth. Dr Ali was expected to spend the night in Tumpat as it was late after their game and he would return home the next morning. However, Dr Ali suddenly came home at 5 am, saying he could not sleep, dreaming that Sidique was going to be born. His arrival could not have been more timely; he promptly delivered Sidique.

There are not many stories or anecdotes about Sidique's childhood except his prowess in sports. Born with a natural flair for physical activities, Sidique had no difficulty vanquishing his peers on the field.

In an article on athletics in the *Sports Mirror* (11–17 June 1988), he was called “The Golden Boy of Athletics in the early Fifties”. In fact, Dr Ali’s sons were referred to as “Golden Boys” because when they teamed up in a relay, no other team in Kelantan could beat them. My husband, with characteristic fair-mindedness, said that they had an unfair advantage over the other Kelantanese boys as during their schooldays they were physically bigger.

All the Merican boys were born bright and from their early years in school, they showed great promise of academic brilliance. Although all the boys did well in sports ranging from football and hockey to sprinting, Sidique was the one who truly excelled.

Education

Unlike his older brothers Carleel and Ezanee, Sidique was the first son in the family to be sent to a Malay school. This gave him a firm grounding in Bahasa and also knowledge of Jawi. He started school in 1936 and spent three years in the Malay school, finishing at Standard 3. Then in 1941, just before the Japanese invasion, he went to the Sultan Ismail English School, entering Standard 1.

His English School education was interrupted by the Japanese Occupation. After the war, he continued his education, attending class in Standard 4 (for 3 months), Standards 5, 6, 8 and finally 9, obtaining the Cambridge School Certificate (equivalent to Form V).

Career/Achievements

When he completed secondary school in 1949, Sidique wanted to be an engineer but failed to be admitted into university because he did not have a credit in English. He taught in Islah English School (a private school for overaged pupils who could not enter government schools) for one year. It was here that he met Tuan Hj Osman Daim (later to become a MARA officer) and Pak Abdullah who encouraged him to pursue his athletic activities.

By then he was a well-known sprinter. Spurred on by the desire to take up a technical course, Sidique went to Kuala Lumpur to work as a *mandor* in the Public Works Department. He tried to get into the

Technical College where his friends Nik Mat and Rahim Yusof were studying.

From 1951–54, Sidique was sent to Kirkby Teachers Training College, UK by the government. He spent another year in Loughborough College, Leicestershire, on a course specialising in physical education under a state government scholarship. If he could not become an engineer, at least he could fall back on his passion and forte – sports.

In Kirkby, he played rugby in winter and took part in athletics in the summer. His stint in Kirkby provided him an opportunity to meet many girls among whom he had no lack of admirers. However, no serious attachment emerged as he was passionately “in love” with sports.

In 1955, at the age of 24, he completed his training in England and returned to Kota Bharu. He taught at the Sultan Ismail College and took an active interest in sports, holding the post of Sports Secretary until 1960. That year his outstanding performance in sports earned him a United States Information Service (USIS) scholarship to undergo a four-month course in sports and recreation in the United States. It was during this period that the Malaysian Schools Sports Council was established, followed by the establishment of the Kelantan Schools Sports Council.

In 1960, Mak Pok and the family must have been very proud when Sidique was appointed the athletics coach to the Malaysian team participating in the Olympics in Rome. After Rome, he became a headmaster in Kuala Krai (from 1961–62) and later an assistant organiser of schools (1963–1972).

The latter job entailed looking after 60 “*rakyat* schools” – these were rural schools not up to the standard of government schools. Sidique’s task was to upgrade them. He then also became a Development Officer for schools with the responsibility to build schools throughout the state. He held this post for seven years until 1972. Although it was his excellence in sports which had brought glamour and accolade, I believe his role in developing and building schools in Kelantan should be considered a valuable contribution to the relatively disadvantaged state of Kelantan. Most of us from urban areas take education for granted but for the rural folks it is a struggle to attend school,

hampered not only by financial problems, but also by the long distances they have to travel and the lack of facilities and teachers.

A turning point in his life took place in April 1972 when he was appointed Sports Officer in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. His wife Fatimah and two sons followed him to Kuala Lumpur. In 1980, he became the Director of Sports – not many are fortunate to get a job doing something they love. He became the first person to lead a Malaysian sports contingent to the Communist countries – Russia, China and North Korea. He was one of those sports personalities who were privileged to attend several Olympics. In addition to Rome, he attended the Olympics in Montreal in 1976 and Los Angeles in 1984.

Through sports, Sidique became a widely travelled man. He acted as Deputy Chef de Mission/Secretary to the Malaysian contingent to various games, including the SEA Games, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and Olympics from 1974 to 1985. Deeply involved in sports, he also served as the Organising Secretary of the SEA Games in 1977 when Malaysia hosted the event.

Awards/Public Recognition

Datuk Zakiah Harun, Director of the National Archives, paid tribute to Sidique as one of those who helped encourage the people of Malaysia to stay healthy in her book *Malaysia Cergas*. He is listed in the Hall of Fame in Muzium Negara's Exhibition on Sports Personalities. His contribution to sports development in Kelantan earned him the Pingat Bakti and later in 1970, a higher award, the Seri Kelantan, from the Sultan of Kelantan on the Sultan's 60th birthday. His contribution to the country in developing and upgrading sports also did not go unnoticed for at the age of 47 he was awarded an AMN, a federal award, by the Agong in 1978 on the King's 60th birthday.

Sidique retired from government service in August 1985 at the age of 55. But he could not detach himself from his grand passion for sports; he now manages a small business building hockey and football fields and manufacturing and supplying sports and gymnasium equipment.

Marriage

With his all-consuming passion for sports, Sidique had little time to socialise or mix with girls. He married rather late in life, at the age of 33. He met his wife Hajah Fatimah Shariff, a Penang girl, when she was posted to Kota Bharu as a teacher. He admitted to me that it was a whirlwind romance as he proposed to her ten days after meeting her and they were married ten months later in August 1963.

Family

They have two sons, Ezlan (born 15 May 1964) and Shazman (born 8 October 1965). Both boys inherited their father's prowess in sports, particularly Shazman who played many games and entered national competition in swimming.

While Ezlan took up medicine, Shazman became an engineer. At present, Dr Mohd Ezlan Sidique is a consultant orthopaedic surgeon. He was posted to the General Hospital in Kuala Terengganu for a couple of years before returning to work in Kuala Lumpur. Shazman works in a manufacturing company.

I do not know whether Ezlan was influenced by his uncle Mahmood when he decided to specialise in orthopaedics. Sidique was a proud father when Ezlan passed his final examination for the Mch Orth (Master of Orthopaedic Surgery) to qualify as an orthopaedic surgeon. A *kenduri* (thanksgiving) was held in the house in December 1994 to celebrate Ezlan's success. In his younger days, when he was interviewed by reporters, Ezlan said he was not interested in sports on a competitive basis. He was determined to become a doctor like his three uncles, Carleel, Ezanee and Mahmood. Knowing that sacrifices had to be made to achieve his ambition to be a doctor, Ezlan, at an early age, decided to place priority on studies rather than develop his inborn sports talent fully.

At the time of writing this chapter, I had just attended a grand wedding reception for Ezlan and Noor Deeni, the daughter of Dato' Hj Kamaruzaman Mohamed and Tengku Datin Maziah Hamzah, on 15 December 1996. This union joins two prominent families whose friendship started many years ago in their home state of Kelantan.

Shazman qualified as an engineer in the United States. It is gratifying to note that the son chose to take up engineering which the father had wanted to do himself. Shazman is now married to Salbiah, a girl from Kuala Lumpur who works as an air stewardess in Malaysia Airlines (MAS).

Concluding Remarks

It will not do justice to Sidique if I conclude my chapter on him without highlighting his achievements in sports. Now looking at his bulky, 180-lb figure on a 5' 10" frame, it may be hard to imagine him as the slim and handsome "Golden Boy of Athletics" from 1949 to 1954. In the 1950s he reigned supreme in the 100 and 220 yards and the long jump.

When he was an 18-year-old schoolboy, he found that his large physique was suited to the bruising sport of rugby. He excelled in this, playing for the state of Kelantan.

Athletics, as a sport, was neglected in Kelantan and races were held more as a carnival than as a serious affair. Sidique discovered his talent in running in June 1949 when he was drafted to compete in his school athletic championships. What is remarkable is that Sidique achieved peak performance despite the lack of proper facilities. Running bare-footed in the 100 yards, he clocked 10.3 seconds – an impressive record at that time.

Despite general apathy towards sports, fortunately two of his teachers recognised his talent and arranged for him to enter the first postwar Malayan Amateur Athletics Association Championships at the Selangor Club Padang in Kuala Lumpur. Lacking professional coaching in Kota Bharu, he was criticised for starting the race in his crouch start of the 1920s vintage. Despite this criticism, he became a star performer, winning the 100 and 220 yards finals convincingly. Sidique was a born runner. His participation in Malayan athletic meets gave him the desired exposure. He improved on his performance by running the 100 yards in 9.9 seconds in Kota Bharu in the Kelantan State Athletic Meet but the British sports authorities did not accept his state record.

In 1950, at the age of 20, he set a Malayan record of 10 seconds for the 100 yards at the Kelantan State Athletic Championships in Padang Garong. Thus Sidiqie became the fastest runner in Malaya in the 1950s. When he was in England in 1952, he ran for the Liverpool Harriers and recorded 9.8 seconds for the 100 yards, beating all his European rivals. Sidiqie ran his last race at the Penang National Championships and retired as undefeated champion. He quit athletics in 1958 at the age of 28 and devoted his time to coaching budding athletes in schools.

Sidiqie's grand passion for sports was so absorbing that it left him little time to devote to studies. Although he did not share the limelight of his brothers in academic achievements, he has the unique distinction of being the fastest runner in Malaya and his entire working life has been devoted to the development of education and sports in the country. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports was fortunate to have him at the helm of sports development for five years. His travels and his exposure to world athletic meets have given him the expertise to comment and improve upon sports facilities in Malaysia.

Getting to know Sidiqie over the years, I detect two remarkable traits in him. He has a wonderful way with children and they are drawn naturally to him; he loves them. Secondly, Sidiqie has an iron determination in him which is also characteristic of the whole family. When he believes firmly in something there is nothing that can sway him from the course. He is courageous in fighting for what he believes to be right even if it makes him unpopular.

At the age of 64, Sidiqie is quite content in his retirement. Sidiqie finds solace and fulfilment in managing the *dusun*, an orchard in Kuang, several miles out of Kuala Lumpur, which he shares with his brothers. Both Sidiqie and Fatimah must feel a sense of achievement to see their two sons excelling in sports as well as in their respective careers. Sidiqie now looks forward eagerly to seeing and playing with his grandchildren.

In today's materialistic world where many young Malaysians only want to get rich quickly, one may wonder why Sidiqie chose to devote his entire life to sports – a field which was then financially unattrac-

tive. But a successful life means more than the acquisition of money. True to his beliefs, Sidique did what he felt was right by following his heart's desire and he has contributed in no small way to education and sports development in this country. To me Sidique has made a success of his life – he certainly did not grow rich from sports but his life has been truly enriched by it!

Chapter 13

Lylone Merican

*"The seed ye sow, another reaps
The wealth ye find, another keeps."*

– P B Shelley (1792–1822)

Childhood

Lylone Fatimah Merican was born in Kota Bharu on 14 July 1932, the only daughter of Dr Ali Osman Merican and Che Pok Abdullah. Born under the sun sign of the Crab, she is a Cancerian. Basically shy, she has a strong maternal instinct and no sacrifice is too great for her to make for those she loves.

She grew up in a family with five active and intelligent boys. With a sensitive, shy and timid nature she must have felt overwhelmed by the boys. Besides, it was not easy for her to participate in her brothers' sports and other interests. In those days girls were usually kept at home most of the time. She withdrew into a shell. Unlike her other brothers who went to the same school and played together, she was sent alone in a trishaw to Tengku Zainab School.

Personality

Lylone is shy, humble and reticent. Even at the age of 64, I could not get her to talk about herself. She is willing to talk about her mother and her brothers but not about herself. Lylone has been unfavourably compared to her brothers who were brilliant in the academic and sports fields.

She was the victim of an age when women were neither encouraged to further themselves in education nor excel in outdoor activities. The circumstances in the rather conservative state of Kelantan partially contributed to her personality. Living in the shadow of the Japanese Occupation also left a mark on Lylone. At the age of 10, she was not allowed out of the house. Rumours of Japanese savagery and raping of women would be enough to keep any girl housebound. When Japanese soldiers visited the house, mother and daughter had to be hidden inside the rooms for safety.

In personality traits, Lylone is in many ways the extreme opposite of the boys: Carleel is exuberant, Sidique is boisterous, Ezanee is gregarious while Malek and Mahmood are self-assured and they all enjoy a reputation for their prowess in studies and sports.

Apart from the attribute of infinite patience, Lylone is also a contrast to her mother Che Pok Abdullah, who was strong, firm and determined. She is extremely patient, especially with children, prudent with money and tactful (not a critical word or complaint against anybody was uttered by her).

Lylone is sensitive and very soft-hearted. Saying farewell to her when we go on a long journey will bring tears to her eyes. Sympathetic by nature, she gets along well with all her relatives.

When Dr Ali Merican died suddenly of a heart failure the family was shattered by the loss. Lylone, being a dutiful and devoted daughter, felt deeply for her mother. Carleel arranged to employ a series of doctors to continue running the family dispensary during the Japanese Occupation and while he was away in Singapore. But Che Pok Abdullah rose up to the challenge of helping to provide for the family. A good manager and organiser, she ran the school canteen and had staff under her. Lylone played a supporting role, assisting her mother and helping to bring up the boys.

Education

Unlike her brothers, Lylone did not complete her secondary education. She stopped school at the age of 14 and went to Singapore to learn cake-making and icing. She obtained a diploma and returned to Kota

Bharu, content to stay at home instead of venturing into business.

While Mahmood, Lylone and their mother are noted for their patience, Ezanee takes after his father in being hot-tempered. Malek and Sidique can be quietly persistent and obstinate like their mother. Because of her patience and because she was content to stay at home, Lylone helped Ezanee raise his four children, Soraya, Shahrin, Shahnaz and Shiraz. She also helped look after Adnan when Mahmood and I were in England from 1963 to 1966 for further studies. All these nephews and nieces are very fond of her.

Marriage

Family friends thought that Mak Pok was perhaps too protective of Lylone, her only daughter. Under her mother's close supervision and influence, she had very little opportunity to meet other girls and boys. Che Wan bt Nor Mohd Hashim (popularly called Kak Wan), a family friend and wife of Che-gu Sani, remembered that immediately after the war, there were several proposals of marriage to Lylone but they were rejected by Mak Pok; possibly they were not suitable for her daughter. It is not surprising that Lylone married late in life. At the age of 36, she married Roslan Endut, a store supervisor working for Lever Brothers.

Family

Just as she was loyal to her mother, she was also loyal and devoted to her husband. They have two daughters, Rosmawati (born 28 September 1970) and Rafizah (born 3 October 1971), and one boy, Zulkiflee (born 29 November 1974).

Brought up under her mother's strong influence in the conservative state of Kelantan, Lylone is very religious and attends regularly to her five daily prayers. In her quiet way, she has also influenced her children to be religious.

After marriage, she helped her husband manage a restaurant and the business prospered for a few years. Unfortunately, both the business and marriage then took a turn for the worse. It must have been a painful experience for Lylone. Without informing the family, her husband took a second wife.

As a wife, Lylone was loyal and patient and accepted long periods of her husband's absence. He liked to pursue his social activities and hobbies, especially attending football matches all over Kelantan and around the country, including visits to Singapore.

Lylone is soft-hearted and forgiving by nature and I have never heard her speak ill or complain about anyone. She is stoic in facing life alone and raising her children alone but she is not completely alone; she enjoys the strong support of her mother and brothers.

Lylone is completely loyal to her mother and was a great support to her. According to Che Wan, Mak Pok was so protective that Lylone was not allowed to visit even her girlfriends' houses to socialise. This restriction may appear harsh by modern standards but the war had brought fear to most mothers who were reluctant to let their daughters leave their houses or venture out.

She is as devoted and loyal to her brothers as they are to her. She not only helped look after Ezanee's children when they were young but looked after our son Adnan when Mahmood went to England for further studies.

In early 1992, Carleel became seriously ill with viral infection of the heart and was hospitalised in Kuala Lumpur. Lylone and her aunt Fatimah stayed in Kuala Lumpur for a month to look after him in the hospital and later accompanied him while he recuperated at his daughter Suhaila's house in Subang Jaya.

Like Che Pok, Lylone was left as a single parent to raise her three children, and her brothers rallied round and supported her. Her daughters have done her credit as both are now graduates. Rosmawati is a graduate in economics from the University of Malaya while Rafizah graduated in 1995 in computer science from Universiti Pertanian. Zulkiflee has gained a technical education from a vocational school in Malacca.

After graduation, Rafizah worked as a computer programmer in a Sapura subsidiary. In 1997, Rafizah married Ahmad Mahir who works in a finance company. Rosmawati works in Syarikat Pakar Sains, a water-meter supplier in Kuala Lumpur. Her brother Zulkiflee joined the same company a year after her. Despite the absence of a father's sup-

port, Zulkiflee has turned out well, enjoying his job in Pakar Sains. He has developed a strong interest in computer programming and photography.

Conclusion

To sum up, Lylone's success lies in her skills as a devoted homemaker and mother. Conscious of the value of education, she strove very hard to motivate her children to study and to better themselves. In 1996, Lylone decided to leave Kota Bharu to live with her children in Kuala Lumpur. Lylone has every reason to feel happy and fulfilled to see her children turning out so well!

Chapter 14

Dato' Malek Ali Merican

*"If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same.
... Yours is the earth and everything that's in it.*

– Rudyard Kipling

Childhood

Malek, the fourth son of Dr Ali Osman Merican, was born in Kelantan on 15 July 1934. A Cancerian according to the English horoscope, he is very reserved, courtly and courteous.

Even from a very tender age, he revealed his characteristic trait of unswerving determination and single-mindedness. Mahmood related to me a few stories about him. We must remember that all the brothers were robust sportsmen. When Malek was angry with either one or all of them he would chase them for hours. As one brother became tired, another took over but Malek continued in his unwavering determination to catch his brother. Malek is like that – totally unwavering in his belief in what he deems the correct course of action. He holds steadfastly to his principles.

Sidique related to me another incident when the barber came to the house to cut their hair. In those days, barbers were expected to visit the house and the boys would sit under a tree to have their hair cut. When

his adopted sister, the late Mona, asked if he wanted to cut his hair short, he nodded and so the barber gave him a close crop. After his haircut, he looked at himself in a mirror in the house and was so angry with the haircut that he chased Mona for hours all around the house and compound.

Education

Malek was outstanding in academic studies as well as in sports activities. After the Japanese Occupation, he and his brothers attended the Ismail English School (later renamed Sultan Ismail College) from 1946–51. All the brothers were active in extracurricular activities, one of which was scouting. Malek had the distinction of being among the first batch of King Scouts in Kelantan.

In sports, he excelled in table tennis, football and athletics. His school records were brilliant and he was elected by the school prefects to be their Head Prefect. Che Pok must have been a very proud mother when her two sons Mahmood and Malek received the "Perfect Boy Award" from their school. Malek contributed to the school in editorial work and in running classes for his classmates as there were not enough textbooks and no tuition classes available at that time.

After completing the Senior Cambridge Certificate Examination at the Ismail English School, he proceeded to Sixth Form at the elite Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, Perak. Malek and Mahmood won the admiration of teachers and peers alike in excelling in studies and extracurricular activities such as sports and music. At one college concert, Mahmood played the violin while Malek played the piano.

Malek had the distinction of being appointed the head boy while he was in the Malay College from 1952 to 1953. It was the first time that a student joining the Sixth Form from another school was appointed Head Prefect.

According to Malek, when he was asked which university he wanted to enter after his secondary school education, he chose Cambridge as he knew of the Cambridge Certificate Examination. At that time, he did not realise that Cambridge University was one of the top universities in England. Because of his academic achievements, Malek did not

have any difficulty in getting a government scholarship to the UK and was admitted to the prestigious Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University in 1953. He obtained a BA Economics (Cantab) degree in 1956. Not satisfied with this achievement, Malek proceeded to study for another degree, BLitt Economics (Oxon) in the Corpus Christi College, Oxford University.

When he returned to KL in 1958, I remember my husband telling me with pride that Malek had the rare distinction of getting a degree from each of the prestigious Cambridge and Oxford universities.

It was not only during schooldays that Malek was active in sports, distinguishing himself in the 440 yards and the long jump. He continued to play football and competed in the long jump during his university days.

Marriage

It was a meeting of two diverse people from the east and west coasts of Malaysia when Malek, the boy from Kota Bharu, met his future wife Chin Yew Gaik from Ipoh. That fateful meeting took place in London at a dance. Yew Gaik had gone to England to take up a course in physiotherapy. With his reputation of outstanding academic and athletic achievements, Yew Gaik must have been very impressed by Malek. During their courtship, Malek must have swept Yew Gaik off her feet. The socially shy Malek was similarly struck by Gaik's exuberance and vitality. In those days in the late 1950s, interracial marriages were uncommon. Nonetheless, they married in London before Malek returned to Malaya.

Family

Malek and Yew Gaik (whose Muslim name is Yasmin Gamilah) have raised three successful children. Their eldest son Omar (born 28 March 1959) graduated from the University of Birmingham with an economics degree and proceeded to Harvard for an MBA. He has gained a name for himself as an options futures trader. Omar is married to Lynda Janine Sackett and has two sons, Nicholas Karim Merican and Jonathan Azmi Merican.

Malek's second son Azmi (born 19 December 1960) graduated from the University of Bristol, also with an economics degree and now works with his mother and sister in managing a large furnishing and furniture business. He is married to Chooi Hoong and has a remarkably vivacious daughter Hannah.

Karina is their only daughter (born 31 January 1965). She obtained a law degree from her father's alma mater, Corpus Christi, Cambridge. After working for a few years in an international law firm in Singapore, Karina left her high-powered job to manage the family business. Karina is married to lawyer Logan Sabapathy and has one son, Kamil Omar Merican.

Career/Achievements

One cannot write about Malek without focusing on his career, for during his working life, he had hardly any hobbies apart from work.

From 1958 to 1974, Malek was attached to the Malaysian Ministry of Finance where he held various posts in the Economic and Finance Divisions. From 1971-74, he was the Deputy Secretary General to the Treasury, responsible for the Economic, Finance and Tax Divisions.

Malek established himself as a highly-respected economist and his judgements and opinions were often sought after and reported in the newspapers. From 1969-70, he was appointed the Alternate Executive Director to the Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at Washington, DC to represent Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Laos, Cambodia, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Ghana.

Malek took his family to Washington during his tenure as Alternate Director to the Board of the IMF. They enjoyed their stay in Washington and benefited from an exposure to the American way of life.

His fame as a first-class economist grew. After his two-year tenure at the IMF, he returned to Malaysia. There was much speculation over which job offer Malek would accept. There was a rumour that he would join Bank Negara as one of its senior officials. But the prospect of working under Tun Ismail, the Governor, must have deterred Malek. Hence Malek returned to the Treasury to continue working there.

Then in 1974, at the age of 44, Malek made the momentous deci-

sion to resign from the government service to become the Deputy Managing Director of Aseambankers, a merchant bank owned by Malayan Banking, Bank of America, Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank, Union Bank of Switzerland and Dresden Foundation. He was soon promoted to Managing Director.

With his experience and expertise, Malek had no difficulty in attracting job offers. Sime Darby made an offer which Malek accepted. He left Aseambankers in 1979 and joined Sime Darby, initially as Group Director of Corporate Affairs and subsequently as Group Director of Corporate Finance and Planning. Sime Darby is one of the largest conglomerates in Southeast Asia, controlling about 75,000 hectares of palm oil and rubber estates and is also involved in other manufacturing and trading businesses.

In 1982, Malek left Sime Darby to take up the challenging post of Managing Director of Arab-Malaysian Merchant Bank Berhad. Spear-headed by Tan Sri Azman Hashim, this merchant bank is the largest and most active of the 12 merchant banks operating in Malaysia. Malek made substantial contributions to the merchant bank and also to the widening and the deepening of the financial market in Malaysia.

An innovative banker, Malek was instrumental in initiating many schemes in corporate finance and investment. In starting the Malaysia Fund in May 1988 and having it listed on the New York Stock Exchange, he has given Malaysian securities a needed boost in attracting foreign portfolio funds to Malaysia. He believes that this will encourage the country's economic growth. In a speech at a dinner to mark the launching of the Malaysia Fund Inc in KL, he said: "We can broaden and deepen our securities market by systematically attracting a broad range of foreign institutions and other investors across the globe to invest in Malaysian shares."

Malek believes that the inflow of foreign funds will increase liquidity, reduce bank interest rates and enable Malaysian companies to raise funds at a cheaper rate for expansion and diversification. In May 1989, the *New Straits Times* (NST) reported that a total of RM120 million subscription was made following the marketing and placement of units in the Malaysia Growth Fund in Japan and other markets.

Malek is very concerned about the need to revitalise the stock market. In the Third National Conference on the Securities Market in Malaysia in May 1986, he made various proposals to strengthen the stock market. Among them was the plan to establish a strong Securities Commission to take over the functions of the Capital Issues Committee (CIC), the Foreign Investment Committee (FIC) and the Takeover Panel and the functions of the Registrar of Companies. Even after the Pan-Electric debacle, Malek said the authorities continued to be "lame dogs" in their efforts "to enforce rules relating to false trading, market rigging and share price manipulations".

The NST reported Malek's repeated calls to set up a Securities Commission to provide a credible and effective framework for the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (KLSE). Speaking at a luncheon meeting of the Malaysian Stock Brokers Association in December 1986, he said that the market needed such an authority which can respond quickly and effectively to the continually changing market situation.

Meanwhile, MUI Bank made a bid for Malek's services; their offer was too tempting for Malek to refuse. When he left Arab-Malaysian in 1989, Tan Sri Azman was sorry to see him go but was magnanimous and described Malek as a "special man" who would be a "great loss to anybody whenever he leaves".

Malek stayed only six months in MUI Bank. He found the top management structure to be too rigid for his initiative and ideas on financial innovations. But Malek's move to MUI set rumour mills in KL turning and *Malaysian Business* featured him on its cover in September 1989.

Malaysian Business writer S Jayasankaran talked at great length with Malek and discovered a man who was "unassuming, soft-spoken and polite in conversation, where necessary sharply critical with the written word, and always refreshingly frank with his opinions." Jayasankaran also wrote that he "is driven, meticulous, brainy, shrewd ... a medley of qualities [which] took him swiftly to the top."

I also quote the writer's comments about Malek's move to MUI at the speculated reward of RM5 million in three years: "... he is nobody's man but his own ... For Malek himself represents new territory and

new challenges. That he is the first bumiputra to head a largely Chinese conglomerate doesn't figure for this Malaysian who refuses to see things through ethnic lenses."

He made a painful decision to leave and admitted that his move to MUI Bank was a mistake. According to MUI, the reason for Malek's resignation was "his differing perceptions on the organisation's structure and the needs of the group." He rejoined Arab-Malaysian in May 1990 to continue as its Managing Director.

In February 1991, Malek presented a paper, "Prospects for Fund Management", at a two-day conference on "Labuan - An International Offshore Financial Centre" in Kuala Lumpur. He called for more discussions to be carried out before deciding on the types of fund management in Labuan. He felt the government needed to clarify procedures and technical problems as the present regulatory framework was not well designed for offshore fund management. At that time, he believed that Labuan would make initial headway in offshore banking and offshore insurance more than offshore fund management.

In September 1993, the NST reported Malek's appointment as President of the newly set up Federation of Malaysian Unit Trust Managers. According to Malek, the most pressing issue which needed to be addressed by the Federation was the formulation of guidelines on equity/property trust funds which the Federation would finalise and submit to the Securities Commission. He added that the unit trust industry was still in its infancy and had great potential to be a major vehicle in mobilising private individual savings in Malaysia.

In 1996, at the age of 62, Malek made a wise decision to reduce his work pressure. Needless to say, every move he makes seems to create excitement in the Kuala Lumpur corporate and financial world. With his retirement as Managing Director of Arab-Malaysian Merchant Bank Berhad in December 1993, he became the Adviser to the Bank and remains a Director of the Bank and its subsidiaries and associates. In July 1996, Malek talks of total retirement. He finds happiness with his grandchildren and enjoys travelling and holidays but I find it extremely hard to believe that he can live a life of leisure without intellectual and professional challenges.

Awards/Public Recognition

Malek's outstanding performance as a government servant has not gone unrecognised. He was awarded an Ahli Mangku Negara (AMN) and a Jasa Mangku Negara (JMN) by the Federal Government of Malaysia in June 1972. His contributions to the Kelantan Economic Development Corporation earned him the award of DJMK (together with a Dato' title) from the Sultan of Kelantan in March 1981.

Career/Appointments Held

The impressive scope of Malek's interests can be judged by the list of his appointments in 1996. In addition to being the former Managing Director of the Arab-Malaysian Merchant Bank, Malek is also Director, Arab-Malaysian Merchant Bank Holdings Sdn Bhd; Director/Adviser, Arab-Malaysian Merchant Bank Bhd; Director, Arab-Malaysian Bank Bhd; Director of Arab-Malaysian Unit Trust Bhd; Director of Arab-Malaysian Property Trust Management Bhd; Director of Arab-Malaysian Nominees (Tempatan) Sdn Bhd; Director of Arab-Malaysian Nominees (Asing) Sdn Bhd; Director of Arab-Malaysian Consultant Sdn Bhd; Director of Arab-Malaysian Trustee Bhd; Director of Arab-Malaysian Securities Holding Sdn Bhd; Director of Arab-Malaysian Sdn Bhd; Director of Arab-Malaysian Securities Nominees (Tempatan) Sdn Bhd; Director of Malaysia Fund Inc USA and Director of the Employees Provident Fund.

Malek was the Chairman, AMMB Labuan Ltd and Chairman of the Malaysian Issuing House Sdn Bhd.

Malek has also been appointed the President, Federation of Malaysian Unit Trust Managers; Trustee, Tun Abdul Razak Foundation; Member, Investment Advisory Council of the Malaysia Growth Fund; Member, Court of Fellows of the Malaysian Institute of Management.

Malek's wider professional interests are reflected in his appointments as Director, Fraser Securities Pte Ltd, Singapore; Director of Fraser International Pte Ltd, Singapore; Director of Malaysian Emerging Companies Growth Fund Ltd and Director, Isetan of Japan Sdn Bhd.

Secrets of Success

Like his brothers, Malek rose to the top of his career without fear or favour. He succeeded without expecting or relying on bumiputra concessions or special privileges accorded by the government.

Malek, a self-made man, has indeed made it to the top with determination and hard work. His leadership in the corporate world is marked by innovative ideas and sound judgements.

Personality

A man of integrity and principles, he is courageous in expressing his views, even against government policies. One of his controversial stands is that bumiputras should try to make it on their own without too many concessions.

As a person, Malek is shy, reticent and reserved – a very private person, not the sort of man that you can sit down with a cup of coffee and engage in idle chit-chat. Some of his friends have referred to him as the typical Englishman with a stiff upper lip and formal courteous manners. Curiously enough, at first glance he seems to have a striking resemblance to Prince Charles of England. To some Prince Charles is admired in England as one of the best thinkers about world problems but to others it may no longer be a flattering comparison because of the recent scandals which have rocked the stability of the British Royal Family.

Another Kelantanese once remarked to me that Malek projects a picture of a very cultured and proper Englishman, very correct and courteous at all times. Malek has certainly gone through a metamorphosis from a shy Kelantan *kampung* boy to a very polished and sophisticated city banker and economist.

Concluding Remarks

In contrast to the many political protégés nowadays who became instant millionaires, Malek became financially and professionally successful without political leverage.

It is easy to discern the qualities that made Malek such a successful man. To start with he is outstandingly intelligent. Sound judgements

and fresh ideas characterise his leadership in the corporate world. Characteristically determined even as a small boy, he is resolute in his beliefs and is brave enough to go against the odds, such as when he took on his much older and stronger brothers as a child and other "giants" in industry in later life.

As a bumiputra, he is one of the rare ones who do not believe that to succeed you have to rely on government concessions and bumiputra privileges.

Malek is exceedingly polite. But underneath this calm and polished veneer is a man of iron principles and unwavering determination in his beliefs. He is a man of high integrity – unwilling to make compromises to win mass approval or support. Because of this he is highly respected for his views.

Despite his outstanding professional success and despite receiving state and federal accolades, Malek remains incredibly shy and humble in a corporate and financial world peopled by pompous and vocal figures.

He is certainly a role model for a young aspiring economist and banker – in fact for any Malaysian youth!

Chapter 15

Dato' Dr Mahmood Merican

*"If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you.
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired with waiting,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it ..."*

– Rudyard Kipling

This chapter is the most difficult chapter for me to write since it concerns my husband. Sometimes when one is close to a subject it is difficult to be objective as they say when you are too near the forest you cannot see the wood for the trees. On the other hand with more familiarity, I tend to write in greater length thus not doing equal justice to the other siblings. For this I crave the indulgence of all concerned.

Childhood

Mahmood, the youngest in the family, was born on 6 October 1935. His mother gave birth to him in Kota Bharu at the shophouse above his father's dispensary. In those days, nearly all women delivered their babies in their own homes as the hospitals were generally regarded as the last resort for seriously ill patients. Nowadays, it is accepted prac-

tice not only to deliver in hospitals but also to attend antenatal and postnatal checkups.

Personality

Born on 6 October, Mahmood is a Libra according to the English horoscope. He is pleasant, extremely gentle, soft-spoken, patient, kind and reserved by nature. According to the horoscope, a Libran demonstrates traits of philosophical logic and sometimes indecision but actually Mahmood is not indecisive; it is just that he needs time to consider all aspects of an issue before he verbalises his opinion or decision. A lover of beauty, harmony of sounds, colours and poetry, a Libran hates to be rushed. He does not like to take sides as he considers it unfair. But the most remarkable characteristic about Mahmood is that he is a happy and contented person and seldom ever loses his cool or temper.

Education

Mahmood started schooling at the age of 6 and during the period 1941–45, he went to the Padang Garong Malay School in Kota Bharu. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, children did not learn much in school as much time was spent on extracurricular activities such as singing patriotic Japanese songs and planting vegetables in the school compound.

During the Japanese Occupation, Mahmood, together with his brothers, spent time looking after the family's cows, planting vegetables and reading the English books brought by the villagers from abandoned British houses. The books became a library for the family and reading provided an excellent foundation for speaking and writing English. According to Lylone, her brothers did not frequent cinema theatres or spend money on other hobbies. They read or played games.

When the British returned in 1945, Mahmood was sent to the Ismail English School in Kota Bharu. It must have been an interesting experience to join the Standard 1 class together with others of varying ages, the schooling of the older classmates having been adversely affected by the Japanese Occupation. Many students had to make statutory declarations about their age, reducing their age by several

years for otherwise they would be considered too old to enter schools.

As mentioned in previous chapters, all the Merican boys participated in sports in school. They were good enough to represent their house and school in football and table tennis. In particular, Sidique excelled in running and later became the fastest runner in Malaya. Malek's forte was football and he played for Cambridge University. Mahmood excelled in hurdling and the high jump, both in school and in university.

But it was in the academic field that Mahmood attracted the most attention. He amazed his contemporaries and teachers by completing his primary and secondary education within five years. With double promotions, Mahmood went through the nine years of primary and secondary schools (the old standards one to nine) in five years. In 1950, he passed with several distinctions his Senior Cambridge examination (equivalent to the present Form V) at the age of 15.

It was common enough practice to double promote, especially overaged students, during the postwar period. But his teachers discovered that Mahmood, even after double promotion, excelled in every class. According to his old teacher Hussain bin Mohamad, he would have been double-promoted in Standard VII as "he was too good for his class". But he was young and the teachers decided to leave him there for the year.

When I asked Encik Hussain his impression of Mahmood as a student, he said Mahmood was always calm and collected, a trait which he shares with his mother. Some of Mahmood's friends who sat for the Senior Cambridge examination with him were Datuk Nik Nawi, Ahmad Roose, Dr Ho Boon Kiat (now deceased), Datuk Nik Hussain and Jackie Khoo. I was told by Datuk Nawi that in their class of 1950, only 11 passed the Cambridge examination out of 25 students. He has the distinction of being the first student in the school to receive the "Perfect Boy Award", an event that was reported in the *Straits Times*.

In the postwar years, you did not have to complete the Sixth Form if you succeeded in passing the Entrance Examination to the University of Malaya – the only university in the country at that time.

In 1950, at the age of 15, Mahmood was too young to enter univer-

sity as the minimum age requirement was 17. Therefore he had to bide his time by attending Form VI at the elite Malay College in Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) from 1951–52. He enjoyed his stay at Kuala Kangsar which provided him some social interaction with other boys and girls of his own age.

Malek completed his Standard IX examination in 1951 and joined Mahmood at MCKK. The two brothers participated in school activities, in games and in concerts; they performed a duet, with Malek playing the piano and Mahmood the violin. Plucked from the rural setting in Kelantan, their horizons widened with new experiences.

After their father passed away at the end of the Japanese Occupation, the family finances were low as with others similarly affected by the war. They employed a doctor to manage their clinic while their mother continued catering food to the school canteen. In those days, scholarships were scarce. However, with their academic achievements, it was not difficult to secure scholarships. Malek obtained a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom while Mahmood obtained his to study at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore.

This choice of scholarships shaped the course of events and led to their meetings with their future wives in London and Singapore respectively. In London, Malek met and married Chin Yew Gaik, a vivacious Chinese girl from Ipoh. In Singapore, Mahmood met me, also from Ipoh, and we were married after my graduation in 1961.

In university, Mahmood found time to participate in sports and excelled in athletics, preferring hurdling and high jumping to other sports such as football and badminton. He not only won many prizes but many admirers as well. To his critics, Mahmood breezed too easily through his studies.

Because Mahmood did exceptionally well in his preclinical course, he was offered an extra year by the university to complete an Honours Degree in Physiology so that he would graduate later with two degrees. In later years, Mahmood regretted not taking up this offer. To a young man, a six-year medical course was already a long time to spend at the university. He was one of three top students in his year who were appointed tutors to the younger medical students.

Mahmood was awarded the University Entrance Scholarship on the results of the entrance examination and the University Senior Scholarship on his third-year examination results. With the two University Scholarships supplementing his Federal Bursary, Mahmood was relatively well-off. He purchased a second-hand car and was very popular with his classmates as the car was very useful to ferry his friends to parties and dances held in the campus. Nowadays, many years later, when his classmates fondly reminisce about old times, they recall a rickety car which could only start on a downward slope and whose doors and roof would not shut tightly during rainy weather!

Mahmood was a favourite with the girls in his class as he was of such sunny temperament, obliging, gentle and patient. He himself admitted he preferred the company of the girls compared to the rowdy boys. It is surprising that he did not become seriously involved with any girl during his six years at medical school although there were brief romantic attachments.

Being an active student leader (he was President of the Students Union in 1957), Mahmood had the opportunity to travel overseas for student meetings and conferences. Among the countries he visited were India, Indonesia and the Philippines. He recalls with fond memories his trip to the Philippines in 1955 where he met the warm-hearted and musically-inclined Filipino students.

He was deeply touched by his experience in India which he visited in 1953 during the university vacation after the end of his first year. There he travelled by train all over the subcontinent. He was appalled by the mass poverty and witnessed the degradation of women working as prostitutes to earn a living.

In 1957 Mahmood was in his final year at the university when I entered the University of Malaya. Campus for me, however, was the Technical College (now University Teknologi) grounds in Kuala Lumpur. I completed my first year in University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur and transferred to the University of Malaya in Singapore in 1958. At that time, Mahmood was working as a houseman in the General Hospital in Johor Bahru across the Causeway.

At this time the Eusoff College had just been constructed and was

open to female students. The hostel was named after my father who had devoted his life to education. He was a member of the 1948 Carr-Saunders Commission which recommended university status for the then Raffles College and the King Edward VII College of Medicine. Later he became the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the University Council. He was the first Malay to receive a doctorate in Law from the University of Malaya in recognition of his contribution and service to the university.

Marriage

I must have attracted some publicity and curiosity staying in a hostel named after my father. Although painfully shy, I enjoyed music and dancing and met Mahmood at one of the university dances. He was then working as a houseman in the Johor Bahru General Hospital. In fact, he had applied for a posting to the General Hospital in Penang where his elder brother Ezanee was. However, fate intervened and he was posted to Johor Bahru and met me across the Causeway in Singapore.

We were married in March 1961 after I graduated from the university. Mahmood was inspired by a desire to serve the country and he thought the most needy areas would be the rural districts. His medical postings were in Kluang and Batu Pahat. In 1961, at a relatively young age, he was the Medical Officer in charge of the Batu Pahat District Hospital. He then became the Surgical Registrar in the General Hospital in Malacca and later the Orthopaedic Registrar in the General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur.

Specialist Training

Not content with an MBBS (Bachelor in Medicine and Surgery), Mahmood decided to specialise in orthopaedic surgery. While working in Batu Pahat, he sat for and passed the Part I Examination for the FRCS (Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons) held in Singapore. He obtained a government scholarship and proceeded to Edinburgh at the end of 1963 to continue with Part II of the FRCS. After completion of the FRCS, he went to Liverpool to study for his Mch Orth (Master in

Orthopaedics). In the Mch Orth examination in 1966, he won the Professor's Prize and this was recorded in the prestigious *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery*.

While we were in England, I took up a postgraduate course in librarianship and qualified as a member of the Library Association (ALA). At the end of 1966, after completing our studies, we were naturally anxious to return to Malaysia as we had had to leave our eldest son Adnan with Mahmood's mother and sister Lylone in Kota Bharu.

Career

Mahmood was the Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at the General Hospital in Kuala Lumpur from 1967–71. With his boss Datuk Dr Abdul Majid Ismail away overseas, he was in charge of the Orthopaedic Department at the time of the 13 May riots in 1969. I remember with dread those anxious days when I was left alone with my young children during the curfew. During off-curfew hours, I could not go out to buy food as we had only one car which was used by Mahmood. Besides I had not passed my driving test and could not drive confidently. During this period, Mahmood would leave the house at 7 am and come back late at night. He admitted he had never seen so many injured and dead bodies in one week. After the racial riots ended, Mahmood received a letter of commendation from the government for his dedication to duty.

A reporter from the *New Straits Times* who interviewed Mahmood wrote in 1984: "Everybody thought him a born leader – he excelled in everything and inevitably when he was a fifth-year medical student, he was elected President of the University of Malaya's Student Union in 1957." Because of his leadership qualities, some of his contemporaries thought that he would enter politics but instead upon graduation, Mahmood pursued a medical career which is also an effective way of serving the people.

During his interview, the reporter observed that Mahmood, having been involved as a doctor during the 1969 racial riots in Kuala Lumpur, was grieved by the rift between the races. The reporter quoted Mahmood

as saying "our greatest need at this moment is to reverse the trend of racial polarisation. It is a very serious problem and I believe it's getting acute among the young."

Academic Life

Intelligent, academic-minded and somewhat of an idealist, Mahmood was attracted to a university career. He applied and competed with overseas applicants and succeeded in getting the post of Associate Professor, Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Malaya in 1971. His transfer from the government service to the university was supported by the late Tun Hussein Onn who was then the Minister of Education, as there were very few Malaysian lecturers and no Malay lecturer at all in the Faculty of Medicine at that time.

Prof Ungku Aziz, the Vice-Chancellor, in announcing to the press, said: "It is a historical stage in the development of the university's medical education" and that it was "no mean achievement" to be appointed to this "honour post".

Mahmood thus became the first Malay to be appointed to this post in October 1971. On his first day of work he had an unhappy meeting with Prof Danaraj, Dean of the Medical Faculty. Surprisingly his former lecturer did not welcome Mahmood but instead asked when he would leave the service of the university.

That was the way things worked out for Mahmood: it was never easy! Without any provocation on his part, he seems to rub some people the wrong way. His cheerfulness and calm belie a commitment to high standards. He succeeds with apparent ease and this incurs resentment from some quarters. He does not have the eloquence to overcome prejudices nourished by others.

Despite his love for teaching and the academic environment, his stay at the university was brief and was a rather frustrating stage in his life. He had to contend with racial politics and the pressure of administrative work. In addition to that, he had his responsibilities for teaching medical students and caring for patients. He was expected to succeed to the Professor's Chair but this was not to be. Prof Silva was reluctant to retire and managed to get an extension to his term of service.

Private Practice

His gentle demeanour belies his toughness. Mahmood believes that he can succeed and be happy anywhere. Although his heart lay with the academic life, this was not to be his fate. Without bitterness, he sadly left to enter the private sector.

At that time, a group of doctors were setting up the Pantai Medical Centre as a private specialist hospital. The hospital was not ready when Mahmood left the university. He took a bank loan to set up his private clinic at the MIC Building, Maxwell Road. At that time, I was six months pregnant with my youngest child Johan, and I volunteered to help by supervising the workers and sewing all the curtains for the five-bedded day-care surgery.

Professional Achievements

Mahmood was appointed a member of the University of Malaya Council from 1970 to 1972 and a member of the University Court from 1977 to 1985. He was actively involved in various professional bodies. He was the Master of the Academy of Medicine, Malaysia for five consecutive years from 1976–1980.

During his tenure as the Master of the Academy, he succeeded in establishing a new annual research award named after the second Prime Minister – the Tun Razak Research Award – worth RM10,000 to stimulate medical research in the country. On the death of Tun Dr Ismail who was then the Deputy Prime Minister, he initiated the Tun Ismail Oration – an annual public lecture financed by the Kuok Foundation.

He was also active in other professional bodies. Mahmood was President of the Malaysian Orthopaedic Association (1977–80), a member of the Editorial Board, Malaysian Medical Association (1976–85), President of the Alumni Association of the King Edward VII College of Medicine and the Faculty of Medicine, University of Singapore and Malaya (1980) and a member of the Malaysian Medical Council (1977–81).

Because of his interest in sports, Mahmood served as the Malaysian national badminton team doctor. In February 1973, he accompanied

the team to Bangkok for the Thomas Cup Asian Zone final against Thailand. Mahmood also contributed to sports medicine by writing a chapter in a book entitled *Sports Injuries, their Treatment and First Aid*.

In his quest for knowledge, in May 1972 Mahmood joined the first group of doctors to study the latest developments in medical science in Communist China. They learned more about the medical services there, in particular the pioneering work of Chinese doctors in limb re-attachment and their use of acupuncture. Commenting on a request by Chinese physicians on 28 March 1973 to set up a Chinese medicine department in the University of Malaya's Medical Faculty, Mahmood, as the Associate Professor in Orthopaedics, said that Chinese medicine would need be studied before steps could be taken to introduce it to Malaysian hospitals. As a first step, Mahmood recommended that medical and health authorities should record all traditional herbs and cures.

In May 1973, Mahmood left with a group of young Malaysian doctors on a medical study tour of the Soviet Union. The group was led by Dr Yeoh Poh Hong (his former medical student); Mahmood acted as the adviser to the group. The group visited hospitals, medical centres, medical schools and other places of interest in Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev. The visits to these Communist countries gave an insight into conditions under these regimes and into medical development along paths very different from that in Britain and the West.

Mahmood became the first orthopaedic surgeon to enter private practice when he resigned from the university at the end of 1973. (Coincidentally, that same year Malek also decided to leave the government service to join the private sector.) Soon he was joined by others. Mahmood still runs a busy practice at the Pantai Medical Centre.

To fulfill his love for teaching, he visits the university once a week to teach medical students. While not as gregarious as his elder brother Ezanee, Mahmood enjoys working with people, especially the young.

He was Chairman of Hospital Pantai Berhad from May 1988 to September 1995. Among his other business interests, he is Chairman of Blopak Sdn Bhd and Pakar Sains Bhd; and a Board Member of Isetan of Japan (Kuala Lumpur) and Syarikat Permodalan Kebangsaan Berhad.

Professional Beliefs

In May 1988, Mahmood took over as Chairman of the Pantai Hospital from Dato' Dr Syed Alhady. In a NST 1993 report entitled "Pantai Chief Sees Business and Ethics Go Hand in Hand", the reporter described Mahmood as "the ever smiling doctor" who had practised medicine since 1958 out of which 15 years were spent in the government service. Pantai has come a long way since it started in 1974 with a meagre capital of RM2 million. Under his chairmanship, several new private hospitals were developed, such as the RM40 million Pantai Puteri in Ipoh, a RM35 million joint venture with Koperasi Tunas in Penang and a RM25 million joint venture with CRSC Sdn Bhd in Cheras.

He played an important role in establishing the Penang Medical College – a private joint venture comprising Pantai Medical Centre, the Irish Royal College of Surgeons, Dr Godfrey Geh, the Penang Development Corporation and Distd College.

As President of the Private Hospitals Association, he spoke at the National Health Care Conference in June 1995. He remarked that the increasing litigation against hospitals and doctors tended to push up insurance costs and foster defensive medicine.

He lamented that the expanding private hospital sector resulted in aggressive marketing and advertising, creation of artificial needs and unnecessary treatment and loss of respect for doctors. He observed that the commercialisation of health care appeared to be inevitable but should be resisted and minimised.

Despite escalating costs incurred by public hospitals (expenditure increased from just RM159 million in 1980 to RM2.1 billion in 1993) he does not believe in privatisation of such hospitals as the needs of the poor will be sacrificed.

Speaking as the President of the Association of Private Hospitals at its Fourth National Conference in June 1996, Dr Mahmood dwelt on the vision of health care in Malaysia and on the relative roles of the government and the private sector in the health care delivery system. To provoke further thought, he laced his remarks with irony. To quote him: "Private hospitals generally support privatisation but I would

advise them not to be too enthusiastic, not just out of concern for the poor but also out of their own self interest. If government hospitals were privatised and there were no more government hospitals, where would the private hospitals dump poor patients and those impoverished by unexpectedly complicated treatment? And from where would private hospitals pinch specialist doctors and other staff?"

Stressing that economic development should be balanced by moral and social aims, he referred to Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim's statement that when the private sector takes over a service from the government it should also take over the social responsibility. Mahmood concluded his speech by saying: "Development must be driven less by financial interests and more by ideals."

Social/Charity Work

Mahmood's love for children and education makes him keen to be associated with educational institutions. When our three sons were studying at St John's Institution, Kuala Lumpur, Mahmood served as the president of the school's parents-teachers association from 1979 to 1982.

Currently he has been the President of the Society for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled, Selangor and Federal Territory (whose official name is Persatuan Pemulihan Orang-Orang Cacat Selangor dan Wilayah Persekutuan or PPOC) since 1985.

During his tenure in the government service and at the University of Malaya Medical Faculty, Mahmood became very concerned with the plight of the disabled in Malaysia. Together with a few pioneer volunteers, he started the Society for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (PPOC). The society serves as an umbrella body for all other societies catering to the various disabilities and is open to all disabled irrespective of race and religion. While working towards establishing a sheltered workshop for the handicapped, he regularly made appeals to the government to reserve jobs for the handicapped. Through the influence of non-governmental bodies (NGOs) including the PPOC, the government now reserves 1% of jobs for the disabled.

At present, it is to Mahmood's credit that a sheltered workshop costing RM1 million was constructed in 1988 at Taman Kanagapuram,

Old Klang Road. It was named after the patron of the society, the wife of our Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Ali. The hostel can accommodate about 60 disabled and the workshop provides training and work for the disabled to earn a living.

The activities in the Rumah Insaniah include sewing, printing, making coconut shell souvenirs, basket weaving and ceramics.

Dutiful Son

In 1979, Mahmood decided to take his mother together with our family on a package tour to the United States. She had never been overseas except to Singapore. We joined a group of Malaysian tourists and our itinerary included visits to Vancouver, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Honolulu. It was a special treat for Mak Pok who looked forward eagerly to her new experience.

Unfortunately, on the first leg of the journey in Vancouver, Mak Pok developed renal failure and had to be hospitalised at Vancouver. Mahmood had to leave the tour group to stay with his mother while I continued the journey with the children.

That trip opened up a new personal insight into my husband. Mak Pok was seriously sick and weak; she had diarrhoea and was bedridden. She had to be fed porridge and given regular medication. I remember she wanted to eat sour canna and we went round the shops in Chinatown to buy the preserved fruit.

Mahmood proved to be an excellent nurse for his mother – he fed and washed his mother and cleaned her soiled clothing. As soon as she improved, Mahmood continued the journey home. He had to travel light with only one change of clothes as his small luggage bag was filled with bottles of intravenous fluids for his mother who had lost a lot of fluid and could not take enough food orally.

When we finally met them at the Honolulu airport, it was a heart-rending sight to see Mahmood pushing Mak Pok on a wheelchair with one hand while carrying his small luggage bag with the other. A bedpan for Mak Pok hung by the side of the wheelchair. The sight brought tears to my eyes. Mahmood's devoted nursing and the warmer climate in Hawaii helped Mak Pok to recover fast.

The trip to the United States was an unforgettable experience. Mak Pok was hospitalised in a foreign country in which she could not speak the language and we had no friends or relatives to advise or help us. That, together with her serious illness (her hands were shaking so badly that she could not feed herself), must have frightened her terribly. The holiday turned out to be a nightmare for us as there were times we felt that Mak Pok might not survive.

Mahmood's medical knowledge and devoted nursing pulled Mak Pok through this crisis. When we returned to Malaysia, Mak Pok was well again but she never fully recovered from her renal problem. She passed away in 1982.

Devoted Father

A very patient and devoted father, Mahmood is against physical punishment. Unlike me, he does not believe in punishing children for misdemeanours. In fact, during the 30 years we spent bringing up our children, he never once smacked them. We have four children.

Adnan (born 10 March 1962) graduated as an electrical engineer from the University of New South Wales, Australia and is now a remisier. He married Haslina Omar in August 1990 and they have two children, Azahari and Amirul.

Sarina (born 29 March 1967) practised law in Shook Lin and Bok, Kuala Lumpur for two years before she left to manage Southern Bank's Business Development Department. Sarina made the momentous decision to marry Didi Syafiruddin Yahya, an Indonesian, and now lives in Jakarta following her marriage on 18 May 1996. Their newborn son is named Iman.

Azhar (born 8 November 1969) graduated in medicine from the University of Southampton in July 1992 at the age of 22. He now works in the Medical Faculty of the University of Malaya and is studying to become an orthopaedic surgeon.

Johan, the youngest (born 14 October 1973), graduated in 1994 with a Double First Economics degree from Cambridge University. At present, he is attached to Price Waterhouse in London as a trainee accountant.

Hobbies/Leisure

Mahmood is restless when he is idle. With his preoccupation with work and other duties, he has little time for leisure. His favourite pastimes are reading (he reads widely, anything from general literature and poetry to medical and business books) and watching the local and international news on television. We share a mutual interest in travelling and golf.

Like his parents, Mahmood is interested in buying land. He believes that it is the best form of investment and a hedge against future inflation. In fact, he admits that he has made more money selling some of the land that he acquired than from his medical practice. An indulgent and loving father, he plans one day to develop a piece of land large enough to house each child and his family within the same compound.

In 1995, Mahmood decided to sell his substantial share holding in the Pantai Hospital to Berjaya Leisure and retire as chairman of the hospital. At the age of 60, he is quite content to relinquish his administrative responsibilities for the hospital to concentrate on his clinical work and to spend more time with his family which has now grown larger with the arrival of his grandchildren, Azahari, Amirul and Iman.

In 1996, together with his brothers, Mahmood bought a piece of land to develop into a *dusun* (orchard). He appears to derive a great deal of fulfilment and satisfaction from this project. If ever he plans to retire, this will be an ideal hobby for him. But most doctors never retire completely and I can never imagine Mahmood's life without his clinical work and patients.

Public Recognition

Mahmood was awarded the DJMK (carrying the title of Dato') by the Sultan of Kelantan in 1987.

Philosophy and Secrets of Success

The secret of Mahmood's success as a doctor and entrepreneur is not only intelligence and a very rational and sharp mind but also infinite patience and determination.

During his long service in the government, he encountered adversity and problems but he faced them with equanimity and optimism.

Even without the millions he is reputed to have made in selling his Pantai shares, Mahmood's greatest success in life is his feeling of contentment and happiness. He has the *joie de vivre* which enables him to enjoy many simple hobbies with pleasure and fulfilment. In our present materialistic world, it is refreshing that Mahmood finds contentment in simple hobbies, be it reading, looking after Japanese carps or spending time in his orchard. In 1997, at the age of 62, Mahmood has wisely decided to ease his workload. With his four graduate children now working, he feels fulfilled and very proud of his children's progress.

Conclusion

To sum up, Mahmood is a man of wide-ranging interests and talents. He can be relaxed despite the many demands on his attention, whether in his medical practice, business or charity work. Though he seldom loses his temper, his gentle and smiling demeanour belies an inner strength and unswerving determination in his beliefs.

The modern, aggressive corporate men may find him too humble and non-intrusive. His humility and gentleness may not impress boardroom players and power brokers, but these traits serve him well in dealing with all sorts of people.

Adversity and challenges do not unnerve him for his greatest asset is his inborn happiness and contentment. Mahmood nourishes no envy for other successful men for he feels he has lived an active and rewarding life. To quote him: "God has been kind to us; we could not wish for more in life."

Chapter 16

Conclusion

"I expect to pass this world but once. Any good things therefore, that I can do, any kindness that I can show a fellow being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

– Stephen Grellet

In conclusion, what are my final thoughts about the Merican clan? Two words immediately come to mind: courage and destiny.

It was certainly courage that made Fatimah leave her familiar homeland with her two small sons, aged 11 and 7 respectively, to travel to a strange land. Inspired by the desire to seek a better life for her family, she set out on a sailing boat, unaccompanied by husband or guardian, which was all the more daring in the old days when women were usually confined to their homes.

That single courageous act started the family clan in Malaysia spanning many branches and now in its eighth generation.

It was not just luck and industry that resulted in Kader Mydin Merican becoming such a wealthy merchant and landowner that by 1834 he was regarded as one of the richest men in Penang. In 1801, he became a leader in his community with his appointment as Kapitan Keling by the British colonists. It became his destiny to play an important role in the judicial, social and religious life of Indian Muslims in Penang. He founded one of Penang's finest mosques – the mosque

which was named after him. In 1994, in further recognition of his contribution to society, the Penang government changed the name Pitt Street to Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling.

Travelling frequently to neighbouring shores, he also traded in Kedah. With a reputation as a wealthy and successful man, he was given permission by the Sultan of Kedah to marry Tengku Wan Chik, a Malay princess. That union produced the direct line to my husband's family.

The second generation consisted of the children of Kapitan Keling. After his death two of his sons were elected to serve as *nazir* of the Kapitan Keling Mosque. A grandson of Kapitan Keling was the last family member to enjoy this position.

The third generation witnessed the success story of Che Teh, a wealthy merchant and landowner. To him fell the responsibility of upkeeping and renovating the Kapitan Keling Mosque to what we see today. His contribution to Penang was recognised when a road — Jalan Merican — was named after him.

In the fourth generation, one of Che Teh's nine children, Ali Osman Merican ("Oss"), made his mark by becoming the first doctor in the family as well as the first Malay doctor in Penang. I will say more of him later.

Chik, Che Teh's fifth child, who was an estate manager, had a daughter Lily. She produced nine children and three are highly successful in their professions: Anwaruddin is the Managing Director/CEO of Petronas Dagang; Zahara is a lecturer in fine arts and an established *batik* artist and Zarina is Special Assistant to the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur.

The youngest child of Che Teh, Sheikh Basha Othman Merican ("Ma' Ba"), distinguished himself as a dedicated teacher and educator in Penang. He was also active in the Scout Movement in Malaya, becoming the Assistant District Commissioner. After retirement, he became the first principal of RIDA College and carried out the task of establishing it.

Ma' Ba was the proud father of successful children. Among his eight children, Idaham is a graduate in electrical engineering who rose to a senior post in Telekom Malaysia before retirement.

His fifth child, Abu Bakar, graduated with a BSc specialising in Botany. His valuable contribution to the Department of Fisheries was prematurely cut short by his tragic death in the hijacked plane which crashed while flying from Penang to Johor.

However, it was Ma' Ba's daughters who attracted the most attention. Datin Marina Merican has been the Communications Manager of Esso for many years. Her younger sister, Faridah Merican, is highly acclaimed in the world of modern Malaysian theatre.

Every Merican family has a success story to tell. Che Teh's marriage to his Chinese wife, Che Chik, produced four children. Their second daughter Ayesah Nachiar married Aboo Kassim. Among Ayesah's four children was Datin Sri Khatijah Kassim who distinguished herself as a dedicated social welfare officer and member of the Malayan Welfare Council and the Perak Welfare Council.

Interestingly, Kassim Merican, the grandson of Othman Sah Merican and Nya Siew Soo, married my aunt, Che Nengah bt Dato' Panglima Kinta Yusoff. Among their 11 children, Dato' Mohiyadin Merican has had the most interesting and successful life. He served in the Royal Air Force, Singapore from 1941 to 1946 and was interned as a Prisoner of War by the Japanese from 1942 to 1945. His career spanning the years 1946 to 1973 saw him occupying senior government posts in the Public Works Department, Road Transport Department and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. He is the recipient of four medals of honour and several honours from the Sultan of Kelantan including the title of "Dato'". With his wide experience, it is not surprising that Dato' Din is currently a company director of several private and public-listed companies.

Kassim Merican's daughter Fatimah Bee married Hashim Bai and produced the famous vocal personality Ahmad Daud. Ahmad Daud fathered an equally famous singer and TV personality, Fauziah ("Ogy").

Among the six children of Kassim Othman Merican ("Johnny") and Zainab bt Ismail, Dato' Ahmad Merican has distinguished himself as a pioneer in the country's mass media industry. He began his career in journalism and went on to Radio Malaya and RTM before successfully setting up TV3. At present restless after his second retirement, he is pioneering another new TV network.

Dato' Ahmad has fathered several successful children, among whom are Kamil, the well-known architect, Zainab the interior decorator and Datin Yasmin Abdullah, a consultant with Ernst and Young.

Sheik Hussain Othman ("Bun"), one of Che Teh's sons, fathered a famous sports personality, Tamin. Now in his 60s, he still participates in competitive sports as a veteran runner and has won sprint races in several international meets. His eldest brother Rahim made a name for himself in Kelantan as a teacher, social worker and organiser. His youngest brother Dato' Yaacob is a well-known lawyer.

Almost every generation has its "hero"; in the fourth generation, Dr Ali Merican deserves that title. Imbued with the same pioneering spirit and courage of his ancestors, he left a familiar and secure life in Penang to migrate to Kelantan. In those days, travelling was arduous and Kelantan was unknown territory to Penangites.

He was an enormously energetic student and a keen footballer. Apart from his professional work as a doctor, he was an active member in various Malay clubs and sports associations. He appreciated the good things in life, enjoying a wide circle of friends and many hobbies, including dealing in jewellery, prospecting for gold, gardening and, during the Japanese Occupation, he even owned champion fighting bulls.

Dr Ali's industry and personal qualities earned him the respect of the Kelantanese. He also found favour with the Kelantan Royal Family who appointed him their Personal Physician. His contribution to Kelantan was recognised in having a road posthumously named after him in Kota Bharu.

Dr Ali Merican adopted a few daughters, one of whom was Mona. Among Mona's children, Marina Yusoff has become a famous public figure. She had the distinction of being the country's second Malay woman lawyer when she qualified in 1965 in the UK (the first being Siti Norma Yaacob). After her graduation, Marina held various posts including Senior Assistant Registrar, High Court Magistrate and Legal Adviser to Bank Bumiputra. Her rise in politics was meteoric; she landed a senior post as Deputy President in UMNO Wanita and a seat in the UMNO Supreme Council in 1974. She quit politics in 1975 and rejoined in 1981, winning a seat in the UMNO Supreme Council

again. Disillusioned with UMNO, she then joined the opposition party Semangat 46 for a while before returning to UMNO in 1996. At present, Marina is the proud owner of the huge Marinara Complex along Jalan Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur.

With the death of her husband Dr Ali Merican in 1945, Che Pok was left to raise her children and she discharged her duty with courage and determination. She was determined that the family property remained intact and that her children received the best education possible. Her sacrifice and devotion earned her the reputation in Kelantan of being an exemplary mother. If we were to vote for a Merican "heroine", she would eminently qualify.

Mak Pok had every reason to be proud of her children – the fifth generation of Mericans. All her sons have had honours bestowed on them for their contribution to society: Sidique by the Federal Government and Carleel, Ezanee, Malek and Mahmood by the Sultan of Kelantan. Despite professional achievements and social recognition, they remain essentially modest and unassuming. Admittedly charming, their humility made it difficult to write this book.

I have focused a great deal of attention on Dr Ali Osman Merican and Che Pok's family, a family within the Merican clan; limited resources have deterred me from detailing every single family.

Doctors tend to beget doctors and Dr Ali produced three successful doctor sons, Carleel, Ezanee and Mahmood. They have all been honoured by the Sultan of Kelantan. Among the three doctors, Ezanee distinguishes himself for bravery for though afflicted with the loss of sight, he still continues his daily life working and travelling.

Dr Ali had two other successful sons who did not follow in his footsteps. Malek, a prominent and brilliant economist and a merchant banker of international repute, was similarly honoured by the Sultan. Sidique has earned a place in history by becoming the fastest runner in Malaya and was honoured with federal awards for his contribution to education and sports in the country.

Like Dr Ali, his sons are natural sportsmen. Although Sidique was a sportsman par excellence, his brothers also excelled in sports. For example, Carleel's forte was the tug-of-war, Ezanee, running, Malek,

football and the long jump, and Mahmood, hurdling. While Malek and Mahmood participated in university tournaments, it was Sidique who attracted national attention for his spectacular records, especially his time of 9.8 seconds for the 100 yards.

It is interesting to watch the progress of the sixth generation. Admittedly, children of successful and well-to-do parents are given a better start and opportunity in life but that alone does not guarantee success and dedication to work. The young Mericans are highly motivated and did well in academic studies.

It seems clear that the sixth generation has been brought up to place priority on studies and their natural sports skills have not been fully exploited or developed.

From a total of 28 Mericans among the children and grandchildren of Dr Ali Osman Merican, there are 23 university graduates.

Among the sixth generation, out of the 22 grandchildren of Dr Ali Merican, 19 are graduates of whom six are doctors: Haniff (son of Dato' Dr Carleel Merican); Shahrin, Soraya and Shahnaz (children of Dato' Dr Ezanee Merican); Ezlan (son of Sidique Merican) and Azhar (son of Dato' Dr Mahmood Merican).

The young Mericans who did not study medicine are equally successful in their chosen professions. Among Dato' Dr Carleel's children, eldest daughter Dr Fadillah (a PhD in English Language) is the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University Kebangsaan. Third child Harith is an Arts graduate who became a remisier and runs his own stockbroking firm. Suhaila, a graduate in food technology, holds a senior post in Nestle.

Shiraz, the youngest son of Dr Ezanee, graduated in economics and works in a merchant bank. Shazman, the second son of Sidique, was a prominent national swimmer. He is a graduate in engineering and now works for a manufacturing company.

Omar, the eldest son of Dato' Malek, is a well-known and highly respected options trader. Karina, who graduated in law, and Azmi, who graduated in Economics, manage a successful family business in home furnishing and interior decoration.

Lylone Merican's two daughters, Rosmawati and Rafizah, are graduates in economics and computer science respectively.

Then there are the children of Dato' Dr Mahmood. The eldest, Adnan, is an engineering graduate but works as a remisier. The only daughter, Sarina, is a lawyer turned banker while Johan, the youngest son, is a keen chess player who scored a double first at Cambridge University and is now attached to Price Waterhouse, London.

It is premature to talk of Dr Ali Merican's great-grandchildren, 16 altogether in the seventh generation. At present they are too young although one of them has a son – part of the eighth generation.

There are prominent Mericans in almost every professional field but I have concentrated on one Merican family within the clan. I did not write in detail about the wives and children of the notable Mericans. Perhaps I have not done justice particularly to their wives but this stance is deliberate as the focus of attention is on the Mericans. I hope another family member will take up the challenge and write another book – a more comprehensive record of the family.

A close family friend, Dato' Wan Mahmood Pawanteh, notes: "The Merican family as a group appears to be the last of the old world generation of grace, respect for elders, discipline and courtesy. As a family they are a cohesive and united group. They regard people not by their social status or wealth but by friendship and intrinsic personal values."

Dato' Wan Mahmood finds these Mericans to be broad-minded and diplomatic. His individual comments are as follows:

Carleel presents a fatherly figure who relates well to the young generation even though he may not agree entirely with their views.

Ezanee is admired for his bravery and forbearance and is not one who moans about his many illnesses.

Malek is noted for his intelligence and high professional standards.

Sidique is amicable and gets along with young people.

Mahmood's tactfulness and gentleness belie a strong determination and belief in his principles.

Another family friend remarked that another characteristic notable about the Merican boys is that they either deliberately marry strong and independent women or they attract women of strong personality. It can be said without exaggeration that Carleel, Ezanee, Sidique,

Malek and Mahmood have married wives who are capable and independent-minded. Together they have brought up children who are hard-working and highly motivated towards achievement and success.

Tan Sri Yacoob bin Mohamed, the newly appointed Speaker of the Senate (Dewan Negara) and a close family friend, gave me another insight into Dr Ali's family.

I met him in January 1997 and I quote him as follows: "I have had a very great privilege to be able to live with a very distinguished family in Kota Bharu from 1946 to 1948 and through the kindness of the family I managed to complete my secondary education in the Ismail English School (now Sultan Ismail College). That family is none other than Dr Ali Osman Merican's family. Their house is situated at Jalan Teliput, just opposite the Ismail English School and is named Pondok K'Seena. The name of the house indicates the modesty of the family ... Through the kind permission of Che Pok, Ezanee offered me and another classmate (the late Encik Said, retired Deputy Controller of Posts, Johor) a comfortable room in the annex of the main house."

Despite advice by some relatives not to devote a chapter to each member of the family, I decided to structure my biographical book this way and then show the chapter to the person concerned. My training as a librarian shows up; I like to classify my subjects.

Why was I inspired to write about the Mericans, apart from the satisfaction of recording family history? I am impressed by their qualities of boundless energy, intelligence, adventurous spirit, determination and leadership which made them so successful.

I hope the future generations of Mericans will learn to love and uphold the traditions of the Merican family – the tradition of bravery, industry, honesty, integrity and humility. I am convinced that they will be imbued with the strong determination to succeed professionally as well as be driven by an obligation to serve society. I hope too that, like their predecessors, they will remain humble in spite of fame and fortune.

Chart A

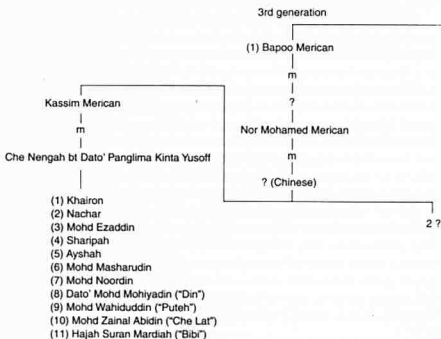
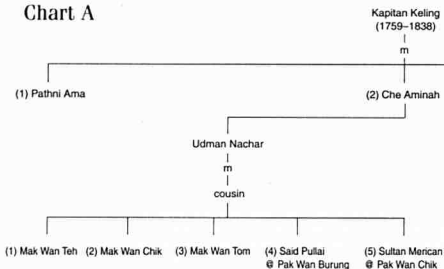
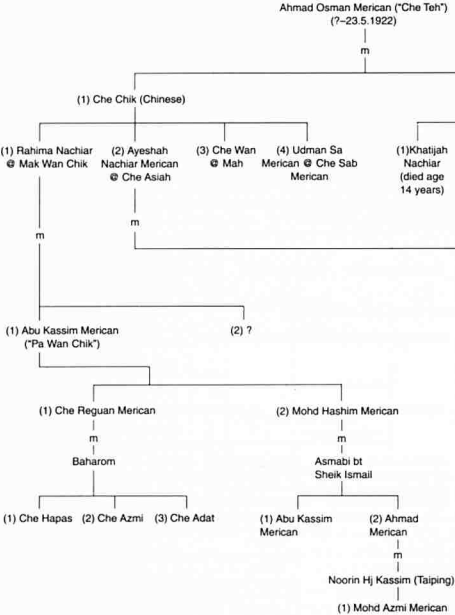




Chart B



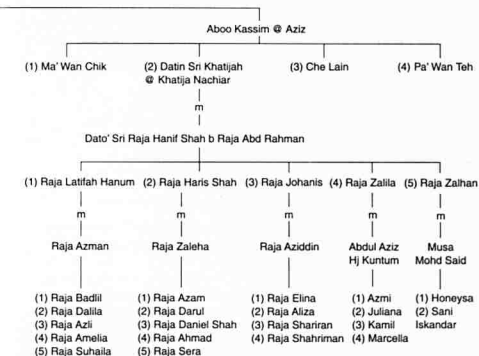
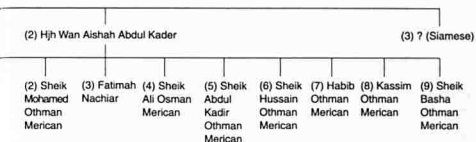
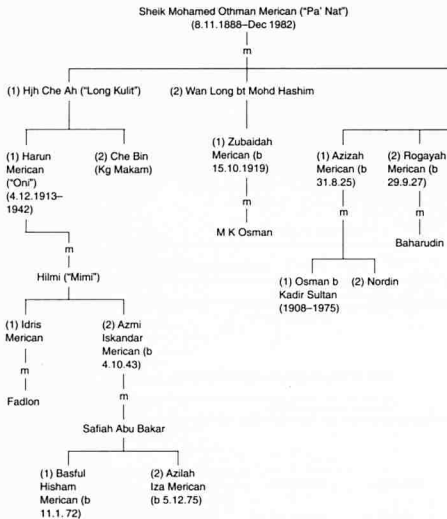


Chart C



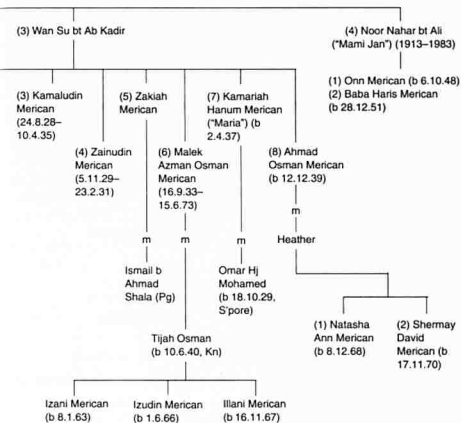
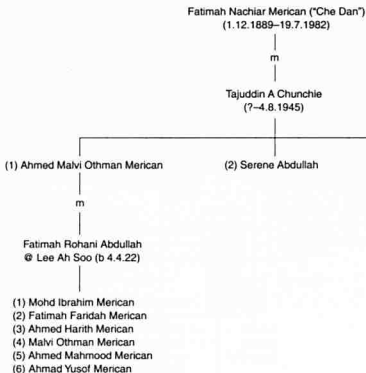


Chart D



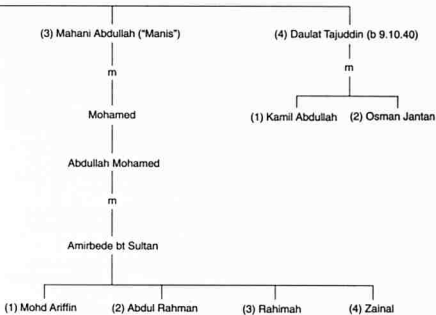
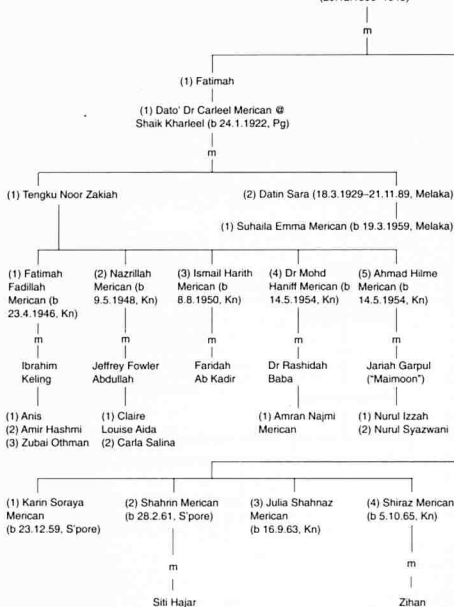


Chart E

Dr Ali Osman Merican @ Sheik Ally
Othman Merican ("Oss")
(29.12.1890–1945)



(2) Che Pok (?–17.12.1982)

(1) Dato' Dr
Ezanee
Merican (b
17.4.1929, Pg)

m

Datin Maznah
Abdullah
("Jeanne")
(b 15.4.34)

(2) Sidique
Merican
(b 24.8.1930,
Kn)

m

Fatimah Shariff
(b 25.10.1938, Pg)

(1) Ezlan
Merican
(b 15.5.64, Kn)

(2) Shazman
Merican
(b 8.10.65, Kn)

(1) Rosmawati
(b 28.9.70 Kn)

(2) Rafizah
(b 3.10.71 Kn)

(3) Zulkiflee
(b 29.11.74 Kn)

(3) Lylone
Fatimah
Merican
(b 14.7.1932,
Kn)

m

Roslan b Endut
(Perak)

(4) Dato'
Malek Merican
(b 15.7.1934,
Kn)

m

Datin Chin
Yew Gaik
(Perak)

(5) Dato' Dr
Mahmood Merican
(b 6.10.1935, Kn)

m

Datin Rayagah bt
Dato' Hj Md
Eusoff (b 28.3.37,
Perak)

(1) Omar Merican
(b 28.3.59)

m

Lynda Janine
Sackett

(2) Azmi Merican
(b 19.12.60)

m

Foong Chooi Hoong
(@ Citi Hasnira)

(3) Karina Merican
(b 31.1.65)

m

Logan Sabapathy

(1) Adnan
Merican
(b 10.3.62)

m

Haslina

(2) Sarina Merican
(b 29.3.67)

m

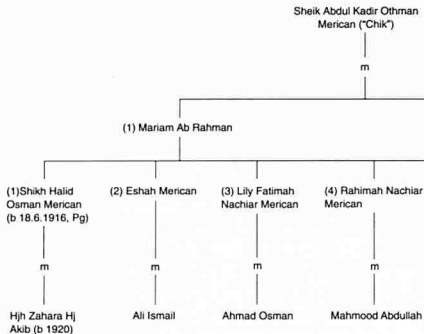
Didi

(3) Azman
Merican
(10.4.68–
1971)

(4) Azhar Merican
(b 8.11.69)

(5) Johan
Merican
(b 14.10.73)

Chart F



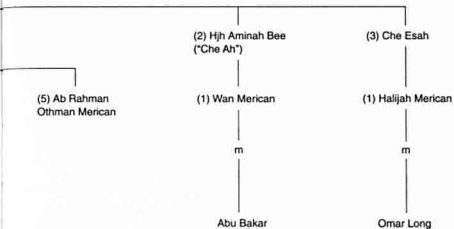
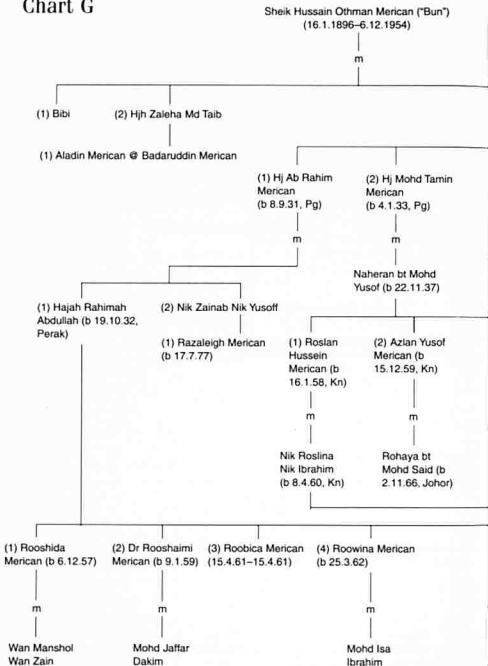


Chart G



(3) Hajah Che Kechik Md Taib (b 18.10.1916, Pg)

(3) Hj Ahmad Azlee
Merican (b 19.7.34, Pg)

m

Haj Asmah Abdullah
(b 22.11.37)

(4) Hjh Zaiton Merican
(b 19.9.36, Pg)

m

Hj Jamaluddin Ab
Latif (b 21.1.36)

(5) Dato' Dr
Yaacob Merican
(b 20.9.38, Pg)

m

Datin Dr Hajah Tunku
Sofiah bt Tunku Mohd
Jewa (b 22.12.40)

(1) Megat
Shaharuddin

(2) Megat
Suffian

(6) Mariani
Merican
(b 2.11.49, Pg)

m

Hj Hamdan
Yacoob

(3) Mazlan Merican
(b 27.12.64, Kn)

(4) Nazneem Merican
(b 28.7.74, Kn)

(1) Shamsuddin
Merican

(2) Zaitoni
Merican

(3) Sofiah
Merican

(4) Anis
Merican

(5) Rosenina
Merican (b 14.2.66)

m

Mohd Asri Hj
Ahmad

(6) Roonaliza
Merican
(b 17.10.67)

m

Mohd Zulkamain Sinor

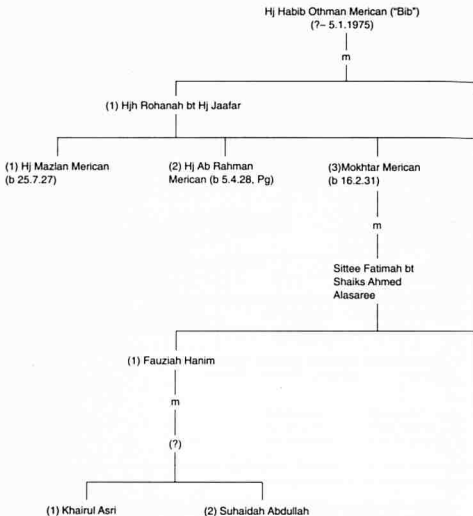
(7) Rooshihan
Merican
(b 24.12.70)

(1) Zarith Julia Merican
(b 7.1.85, Kn)

(2) Zalika Widia Merican
(b 12.12.87, Kn)

(3) Hasanah Zafran
Merican

Chart H



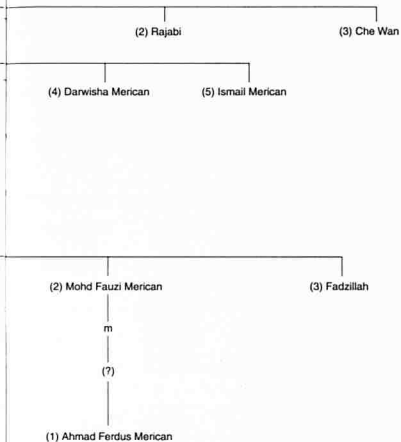
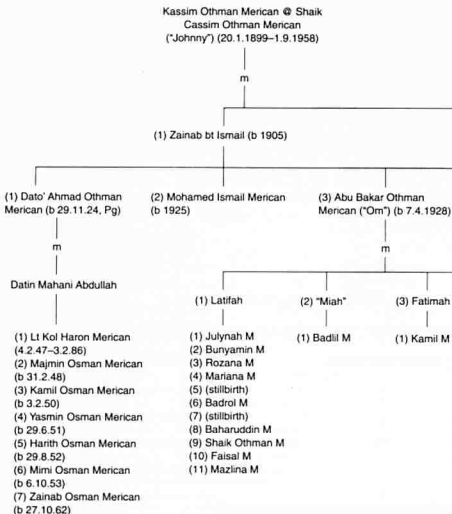


Chart I



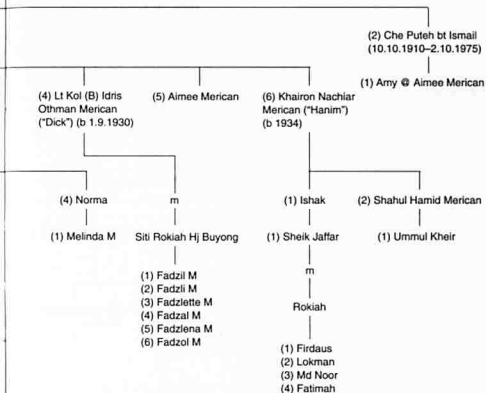
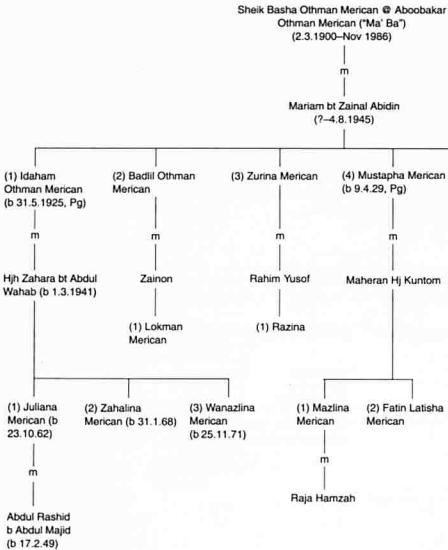


Chart J



(5) Abu Bakar
Merican

m

Azizah A Bakar

(1) Azmil Merican

(6) Marina Merican

m

Samad Yahaya

(1) Amir (2) Aida (3) Aris

(7) Faridah Merican

m

(1) Lesly Dawson

(2) Yusef Al-
Hasham ("Joe")

(1) Feroz Faisal Merican

(8) Ahmad (died
age 40 days)

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