



**Awang Kerisnada bin  
Hj. Awang Mahmud**

## **The story of a wayfarer :**

There is a saying that every man has a history. For in that history therein lies the story of his journey. I have always wondered whether I had ever created any significant history as I travel to every journey to all my previous destination. I guessed I had and will always have. I have always hope that in whatever history that I had created, there would be some goodness that I had done to those whom I came across along the way.

As I look back, I could not in due honesty say that my journey at this stage was any satisfactory that I always wanted. There will always be something incomplete, unaccomplished and unfinished.

I had served in Johore as a judicial officer for a good 6 years of my life. Even as I was transferred elsewhere, I was frequently in touch with my buddies and friends from there. In their sms and e mails, they had always inquired on whether there is any chance that I could have come back to serve Johore again. Or at least continue to write to the Johore Bar Infoline publication like I always did before.

Oh well, I am always delighted at the thought that many buddies and friends still remember me with fondness and are constantly looking forward to hear from me. It touches me in so many ways of being given such an attention. Thank you to those who have continuous thoughts of me and who prayed for my betterment in life.

### **MY FIRST STEPPING INTO THE SOUTH**

I remembered many events and many passage of happenings in my life time. My mother was a strong woman, a teacher and a loving mum to all of us in the family. If there is one human being whom I can described as having the greatest influence on me, then it had to be my mum. My mother knew the sadness that I felt in having to leave Sarawak and having to serve in an unfamiliar place far from home. But she had encouraged me to take up my new posting in Johore Bahru and she convinced me that from my childhood times, I had the natural tendency to love something unfamiliar but pleasant.

And above all my mum reminisced that when she first married my father, they had their honey moon in Singapore and they had journeyed to Kuala Lumpur by train which travelled along Johore. My father and my late mum were teachers and spend quite a while in Johore and it was their relatives who stayed in Johore that introduced to them many friends along the way. Infact my dad was also introduced to Cikgu Mat Yassin then a headmaster of a school in Muar Johore in the 1960's. They became acquaintances more so because my father was also very much involved in the Teachers Union in Sarawak and Cikgu Mat Yassin was also an active member of the teachers association in Johore. Teachers in the 1960's were a handful and they tend to know each other better through unions that unites them. Cikgu Mat Yassin is the father to our present Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Mat Yassin.

My father became a lecturer before he retired and my mother was a senior principal of a school and retired and got herself involved in business in which she often travelled to Johore as well.

**“ Johoreans are refine people and with polished mannerism, ”** said my mum to me as I was trying to visualize my future stay in Johore.

**“ .....You will naturally love them and in return you will be loved by them. You would love your future terrain..... ”** my mum said to me before I left Sarawak to serve in Johore.

**My mother couldn't have been more right on what she felt would be my happiness serving in Johore.**

When I first set my foot in Johore in 2002, I never knew that there was this unfound paradise and discovered friends that I shall have and the places which I would fell for. It was a young heart of the year of 2002, a man curious about the new people and his new surrounding.

I remembered the day which I reported duty at the Johore Bahru High Court. It was an all the bitter sweet experience of reporting for duty in the fasting month. I was so curious of everything around me and the majestic High Court Building at Jalan Dato Onn was imposing and amazing because of it's neo western architecture. I think I had earlier written in detail in one previous article in year 2008 on the events of my first setting foot in Johore Bahru and it would be an act of redundancy to repeat them here in this article.

But it would be suffice for me to express again that before being transferred to Johore many years ago, I never thought that I would lost my heart to this bountiful land, the place of grace and her people of beauty. At that time, I harboured the belief that Johore would be an temporary shelter in the midst of my career. I could have never been so wrong. I did not find a temporary shelter but I found a home which I have never known before.



### **MY REASONS FOR LOVING THE SOUTH**

I was posted to Johore Bahru by the end of the year of 2001 and it was the 16<sup>th</sup>. November 2001. It was indeed a significant day for all Muslims as it was the first day of the fasting month of Ramadhan. But poor pitiful me. I have never been in a place so alien and so far from my home during such times. I had to endure the little bit of the Divine test in the small hardship that I experienced and could imagine how the angels could have smiled upon a young man tumbling through the steps in this land of the bounty.

I stayed in two different hotels throughout the whole of Ramadhan month, the first being the Puteri Pacific in which I was only entitled by official travelling directives, to stay for a maximum of only 8 days. As I moved out of the hotel, I had to decide whether to rent a house immediately or stay in a cheaper hotel. Such dilemma arises because I was still waiting for my car which had to be shipped from Kuching to Johore Bahru and the appointed transporter or mover told me that it would be three long weeks before my vehicle would arrive.

Renting a house immediately would cause some inconvenience as I had not received my car thus it would be difficult for me to get to eating outlets particularly during the breaking of the fast or even during the early morning meals before sunrise. Therefore I decided to stay in a cheaper hotel, the Causeway hotel at Jalan Meldrum which was in the middle of the town. Staying a month in a budget hotel like Causeway hotel would certainly pinch into my expense but that would be the best alternative as it's location which is near to eating outlets made my breaking of fast easier and early morning

meals much better. There was this 24 hour restaurant ” was just in front of the hotel and that was where I stayed throughout the whole of Ramadhan in the year of 2001.

## **JOHORE AND TRULY JOHORE WILL IT BE**

I have countless reasons to love Johore. I will find it a little too many to write down all my reasons for loving her. Johore is a sweet story in the journey of my life. Not a bitter sweet but a lovesweet episode that I will not want to put behind.

I found it all in this land, joy, friendship and all the life of thrills without any frills.

Johore is a land of diverse culture and traditions. In fact diversity made Johore all the more beautiful and lively. Walking through the streets of Johore bahu City and other major towns, one could appreciate that how much diversity and multi ethnicity Johore has. I recalled walking along the path of Jalan Meldrum, Jalan Wong Ah Fook and all the surrounding areas in the city. How could I not remember the magnificent Sultan Abu Bakar mosque, which stood so majestically up the hill with a commanding view of the Tebrau Straits and which place I had so much frequented for my Friday prayers. There were also times when during the mornings of the weekends I would simply drive from Taman Perling where I stayed to the mosque for a morning congregational prayer, where upon completion of it I would stroll down for a morning jog at the Royal Muzium ground.

## **WHAT THE RIVERF AND SEA MEANT TO ME**

Being an avid angler, fishing is obviously a pastime that I can never do away without.

How could I ever forget my various fishing grounds at Sungai Sayong Pinang in Bandar Tenggara, or Kampung Pendas at Gelang Patah where I made my way to the beneath of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Bridge or better known as “Linkedua” for fishing.

## **RELISHING THE TIDES AND TIME IN TANJUNG LEMAN**

And the beautiful seaside at Tanjung Leman, is another of my favourite fishing ground, a shore of crystal blue waters and the beautiful sandy beaches, and further decorated by the tall green coconut trees and a pristine tropical mountainous background. I could also recall getting the biggest catch of sting rays fish, several groupers, and sea crabs the sized of coconut fruits along it's estuary.

Tanjung Leman is all alluring to any passer by, one could not help the temptation of strolling and swimming along her sandy beaches and her blue azure waters. And I was among those who could not resist such temptations. It was from Tanjung Leman that one would be able to hire boats or just simply get by express boats to Pulau Aur and Pulau Pemanggil. Pulau Tinggi is also within a reasonably near travelling distance by boat. Infact to my surprise there is even an island known as Pulau Sibu which reminded me of a town with a similar name in my home state of Sarawak.

**Tanjung Leman will always be that beautiful estuary for me. The meeting place of the river and the sea. It's the place where one cannot help but would stroll along her beaches and partake in the aquatic leisuers of swimming. Picnics or even camping for the night are common activities for those frequenting Tanjung Leman.**



Tanjung Leman in all its greenery and breeze that adds to its natural tranquility, is also a perfect place of anglers and fishing activities. I am an avid angler as well, and when I fished and got one, there is one sure thing that the fish caught would end up in a frying pan or barbeque grill. I do not subscribe to the idea of catch and release or rather the C.A.R. To me such practices are ridiculous and hard to explain. Why should one let go what he or she has just successfully catch, and I believe that everyone should keep what they earned and enjoy it to the very last bit.

## **GRILLING THE SENANGIN FISH UNDERNEATH THE SECOND LINK BRIDGE**

And so as fishing. If an angler catches a fish, then just pull the line, get the fish and keep it. And later decide what to do with it, it's either his or her own stomach or someone else's stomach. Meaning giving it to others as well including friends. But under no circumstances should one just catch and release a fish, especially a juicy big kind of marcel or grouper or even the elusive senangin. I remembered one fishing buddy catching the elusive "senangin" fish beneath the Second Link Bridge.



The senangin fish is one which like to stride along the bridge and in stronger currents. To catch a senangin from the foot of a bridge is sure no easy task. The fishing line must be reasonably strong to withstand the senangin counter attempt to escape itself from the hook. A senangin will not give up easily even when it is trapped to the hook. A senangin has almost no scale and is quite big with an oval size.

Wow, gracious goodness me, after the catch, the senangin was too good and too fleshy to be ignored that we decided to grill it over fire immediately without bringing it home!! The juicy senangin was so delicious that we even ate the entire fish head and even bent on eating the tail

## **THE FISHING EXCURSION AT THE RIVER IN BANDAR TENGGARA**

It was a pleasantly remembered first experience of fishing in Johore that I managed to get two large and sweet freshwater prawns or better known as the "udang galah" at the river banks of Sungai Sibol, which was at Kampung Sayong Pinang in Bandar Tenggara. It was a place behind Kulai and a clear water river nearby the Orang Asli settlement at Sungai Sibol. I was honestly hoping to catch some good fish but ended up with a better catch of two sweet juicy prawns. My fishing buddies told me that such is a good tale tell sign, for it is quite uncommon for a first time angler to end up with the prawn catch.

My advice to anglers who are fond of prawn angling is to use the right bait which in my case were seaside worms which my fishing buddies bought from the Orang Asli or aborigines. Anglers can also use squaids as bait. Then the best time to catch prawns would be during a warm night when the river water is at the low tide. At a warm night weather and low tide, prawn would congregate in some masses to come up from the river beds to above and this would be the time when they are most active. My first catch of the prawns was at night as well, along the camping site of the river bank of Sungai Sibol at Kampung Sayong Pinang.

The river trout is another hard to catch and finally the toman is a very much priced catch. Only the skilled angler would be able to lure and entrapped the elusive Toman and only the bold would take the Toman to a fight before managing to pull the tenacious fish to catch and land it on the river bank.



As an angler, I have always subscribed to the view that anglers should just keep their catch or enjoy it in any way they desire. Thus my friends and I were known as the non nonsense angler. We are indeed always in hunger to get the big catch and we avoided the nonsensical “..catch and release ...” anglers. We kept those kind of anglers at bay.

We belong to a school of thought that advocated that whatever marine life that we catch, would have to end up in the frying pan or on the barbeque grills !! We keep what we earned. That was our battle cry.

## **THE LURE OF DESARU**



Similarly my weekend getaways would also include strolling along the sandy white shores of Desaru, another allure for hiding and quiet leisure. I love Desaru, not just for her beautiful beaches and mystified sunset but because of the abundant of birds that were nested in the nearby forest. I even saw a few hornbills in the nearby jungles along the shores and these birds reminded me of Sarawak because the hornbill is the official emblem of the

state. Infact Sarawak is widely known as the Land of the Hornbill. Desaru is a heaven for the sea birds and even sea eagles.

As much like the Andaman sea in the lagoons in Langkawi, Desaru is where the sea eagles would earn their catch of fish, the sea eagles would nose dived from the sky to the sea water during it's wave serenity and would snatch the fish and carry it to their nests.

I was humbly impressed, that the beauty of nature and true to it's very word, the Divine endowed all creatures and creations with skills and ability to live and survive in any environment. I never like eagles of any kind, they are ferocious birds of prey. And I remembered as a young boy, of losing one of my rabbits at my grandmother's village in Sarawak due to the suspecting eagles. Even though I do not have sufficient prima facie evidence to support my suspicion but nevertheless I think those eagles were guilty on all counts :)

The eagles were a show of elegance nevertheless and their hunt for their prey in the waters, their accuracy in snatching the unsuspecting fish, were just so amazing to watch.

I had the rare pleasure and thrill in trekking the jungles with friends at Desaru, a place so thick with bushes and trees but yet so pristine and so beautiful. The jungles are still forgiving because it's along the shore so there was no chance that one might be lost. Just walk along the path near the shore, one can enjoy the fresh breeze from the sea and yet remain in the jungle and be amazed by the songs and hymns of the birds and varied insects.

In the chalet among the many resorts in Desaru, I would sit with friends at the balcony, watching fishing boats from a nearby distance which were still at sea even in the late evening. These were fishermen seeking and searching for honest livelihood and they too were always in an earnest desire to feed many mouthfuls waiting for them back home. They could be fishermen from the other districts or other nearby areas. And I see many enthusiastic faces all smiling in pulling the nets to the boats and trawlers for it's the catch from those nets that feeds the many awaiting from their homes.

There is this nice golf club in Desaru but at that time I was not a golfer at all. Now I am a golfer and I do wish to tee off at Desaru with my old Johorean buddies.

In fact the Pulau Spring Resort Golf Skudai is an affiliate in my membership and I certainly have plans to try my “elementary golfing skills” there in the future.

## **INTO THE FUNNY WORLD OF GOLF**

I had developed a rather late liking for golf. Initially I was an all tennis player. However in Johore I found it extremely difficult to get partners for the game even though I was then a member of the “Clark and Hatch Fitness Club” at the Puteri Pacific hotel in JB. There were two excellent tennis courts at Puteri Pacific then but getting someone to play the game with me was hard.

I did not develop a passion for golf during my stint in Johore Bahru. This is notwithstanding that I have many buddies and friends who are avid golfers. Somehow that “calling to be part of the golfing fraternity” did not come to me as yet. I had always find reasons and excuses to avoid playing golf despite many persistent invitations to the game from my friends and buddies. Instead I joined the anti golfing school of thought, branding golf as a game for the almost semi retirees or those in the December season of their lives. I had wrongly perceived golf as a game which was not physically demanding and a game of leisure without much labour and intensity. There is no masculinity or even a shred of “macho element” in this game, as I wrongly thought. I harboured the prejudice that once I take up golf, then that itself is an implicit admission of being old in age.

It was then that I looked upon golfers as the only best choice for these much “relaxed looking gentlemen.” Then I was not able to appreciate the game and nor was I able to see the mental and health benefits of taking up one. I decided then to stick to my favourite jungle trekkings and tennis as my sports.

But I couldn't be more wrong. Real golf is more demanding than tennis or even jungle trekking. In tennis it's between you and your opponent and to score points are obvious and easy as long as one is fit and skillful. Jungle trekking is a leisure sports, one can stop at any time in between and take a clean break and rest, and enjoy the flora and fauna of the pristine surroundings. Jungle trekking does require stamina but a short relaxation after sometime will obviously re-charged the strength again.

But golf is a different universe altogether. Real and serious golfing requires stamina, strength of the muscles and the right technics and style of teeing off and pinching the ball. There are many golf clubs with various numbers and for every hit of the ball, most golfers require different clubs and different strategies. Golfers must have the physical and mental strength. They must know when to play the hard way or the soft way. They must analyse the needs at every hole and this is especially so at the green. There are many rules in golf as compared to tennis. And golfing is also about good ethics and smart dressing. There is a dress code for smart dressing and code of ethics while playing.

Golf to some extent is about integrity and honesty. A golfer who cheats on points will finally be known for his dishonesty. This is more so in the number of handicaps that each golfer will proudly claim to have earned. The lesser the handicap the better a golfer is. But a dishonest golfer will be known as when he eventually plays in competitions, then his claim of having lesser handicaps would not be reflected in his poor quality of play.

My passion for golf was quite a pleasant coincidence. I was at the Damai Beach Hotel one fine sunny day attending a family day outing organized by a group of friends. I

was looking at the fading evening sunset, and the group of people playing the beach volley ball. Volley ball had never gained an interest from me, and just next to the beach were a group of golfers.

Sensing that I was alone, one golfer who was an acquaintance of mine had offered me his club, for me to try what was actually my first ever teeing off. Before teeing off, he briefly taught me on handling the club. I then took hold of the driver ( the club ) and teed off, quite and managed to hit the ball quite amazingly far away even though it landed on the roof top of one coffee house of the golf club !!

That certainly earned the surprise of the whole flight of golfers. I couldn't believe that I had this untapped and unpolished skill for golf thus it didn't take me long to sign up for a golf membership with the zest of knowing that there is this " Tiger Woods inside of me " so anxious to escape from my body to display it's hidden skills and talents. Well, in all modesty I did not have even a percentage of " Tiger Woods " inside me, but instead just the " Lion Woods " roaring to show it's claws to the world !! Beware Tiger, your cousin cat is here to dethrone you from the forest !!

As I played more golf I acquired many virtues that I thought I had overlooked or never bothered to polish. I learnt to dress in the smartest possible way as dressing code is one ethics that every golfer must observed. And I learn to be more discipline, more patient, more focus and perhaps more resolute. I learn to divide my time accordingly between golf and my other important chores. I only played on weekends as the weekdays would be filled with my other important official duties.

In spite of it all, I never became a " golf addict " so I guess I need not worry of the prospect of falling or sliding into the category of the " hard core " golfers who found their new religion in the game alongside with their false prophet at the golf course. I was never close to that. Obsession for a game is bad to some extent as too much time and even emotions would be poured into something which is supposed to be for mere relaxation and fun.



In saying all these, another negative aspects of the game of golf is the betting or wagering part. I believe in playing for the fun and the thrill. But a golf game will lose it's thrill once the flight of golfers decide to play for bets and wagers. I detest that because it is morally and religiously wrong. But some of my golfing buddies insisted that the real thrill in the game lies with the bets. They said that if golfers play for nothing, that that is where the game loses it's thrill.

I have no desire to argue with these " worshippers of the game " but as a solution I did proposed that instead of having bets, the flight of golfers could organize a small competition among themselves. That competition may involve some reasonable amount of cash but it is on the basis of everyone getting something in return. For instance a small cash of RM200/- may be collected from the entire flight of four golfers before the game with an agreement that the winner will get a token of RM90/-, and the runner up will get RM60/- while the third place will get RM30/- while the last place will get RM20/-. In that way everybody gets something from the competition and it is not on the basis of " the winner takes it all " as in the operation of bets or wager.

A competition is one which is morally right with no baggage or burden of wrongs along the way. But a wager or bet is wrong. And there could be negative effects of it in some ways. And I also knew that some bets do involve thousands of ringgits and at the end of the day the winner will be smiling on his way to the bank while the rest would be moaning and groaning. Losing thousands on a golf field is not good for the stress level of the losers and infact it defeats the fun and pleasure of the game because losers would be in depression out of the defeat.

## **MY REASONS FOR GOLFING**

However notwithstanding proposing a “morally acceptable competition in golf as oppose to bets and wagers ” I have never played for dollars and cents with my golfing buddies. We played to see how much golfing skills we have acquired from time to time. We played simply for fun and splendour.

I am now a member of the Damai Golf Course in Kuching. The Damai Golf Club in Kuching is unique and significant in many ways. It is a beautiful seaside golf course designed by a former number one golfer in the world who is Arnold Palmer. Arnold is an all time great golfer and an American. He designed the Damai Golf Course in 1988. The seaside Damai is indeed very beautiful with white sandy beaches, huge area of the golf course and the tropical mountains rainforest at the back ground. It is very often when I played in Damai, I could see white neck sea eagles flying from the nearby mountains and hills and diving to the sea to grab fish and other marine catch and magnificently taking off to the air again, back to the nest in the mountains. Damai is such a serene place to be with friends, not just to play golf but to enjoy the swimming pool and tennis courts

Being a member of the Damai Golf Club I was lucky in many ways. Firstly I was given a membership number to the envy of many and that number is 088.

Secondly the Damai Golf Club has many affiliates golf clubs throughout Malaysia, meaning I may play in those affiliates with membership benefits and for an average maximum period of 14 days in those clubs. Among the well known affiliates of Damai are the Rahman Putra Golf Club in Kuala Lumpur and various clubs in the Klang valley as well. And to my pleasant surprise, Damai Golf Club have 8 affiliate clubs in Johore among those the Pulai Spring Resort Golf, the Tanjung Puteri Golf Resort, the Palm Resort Golf next to the Senai Airport and many more.

Thirdly, an even more pleasant surprise is that Damai Golf Club has affiliates in some countries in the Asia and Pacific which includes Singapore, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. I do look forward to play golf in New Zealand one fine day.

## **GOLFING PASSION OF JAPANESE AND KOREANS**

I had played golf for sometime without feeling or sliding into any obsession for the game. I remembered my recent game during the first day of Chinese New Year at the Damai Beach Golf Club in Kuching. I thought that it was the good day to play golf as most golfers would be celebrating the Chinese New Year.

I was quite wrong in having such thoughts and presumptions. As I arrived at the Golf Course, I saw a number of people at the course. They were Japanese and South Koreans who flew all the way from their countries in this “ Golf Tourism package ”. My golf instructor told me that the Japanese and Koreans had earlier booked the golf course to play the whole sunny day.

I was amazed. One Japanese golfer who played with his entire family told me that in Japan, it would be an extremely long wait for golfers to have the golfing opportunity. A golfer who booked a golfing session in Tokyo will have to wait at least 3 months and some even waited for 6 months before they could play in any given golf course. There are millions of golfers in Japan and despite having thousands of golf clubs, the opportunities to play in a golf course is on the basis of waiting in the queue which sometimes stretches to the thousands. Therefore there are even some enterprising Japanese who simply made bookings to play but later to finally sell off their bookings



to other golfers at a higher price. Having heard such I believe that Malaysian golfers are very lucky to a large extent, as they could play almost every single day.

Hence I do hope that the Johore state government do try to promote “ Golf Tourism package ” to the Japanese and South Koreans. Johore is one state where there are many beautiful golf courses and “ Golf Tourism ” should be promoted to lure the opulent Japanese and Koreans to the state. Johore has the geographical proximity advantage since it is near Singapore. Thus the “ Golf Tourism package ” should strategise the Japanese and Koreans to fly to Singapore before proceeding to Johore Bahru to quench their thirst and satisfy their insatiable appetite for the game. Johore has the immense potential to be golf heavens for these kind of tourists. There are various good golf courses of international standard that Johore has to offer. I know of Japanese who are willing to spend considerably on tourism expenses to play golf in a warm tropical climate.

Johore has other attractions other than golf, she has beautiful beaches and great mountains to be climbed, and a landscape which is tropical but lush green in nature. And above all, the ever friendly and good hearted Johoreans whose warmth and good natured are unrivalled anywhere and everywhere.

For instance I do think that the Pulai Spring Resort Golf Course will definitely attract huge number of Japanese and South Korean golfers. Pulai Spring is a very beautiful golf resort, surrounded by lush tropical jungles with such serene atmosphere. I do intend to meet my old buddies in Johore and to play golf with them and to tell them that how correct they were and how wrong I was on matters of golf last time. I realize that only my amends or penance that I could offer was to treat them to a round of good golf and naturally to enjoy their warm company. And perhaps a stop at a satay outlet at Stulang Laut or Jalan Meldrum would excites the warm atmosphere among buddies and friends again. Friendship is one beautiful monument in every person's life.

I will write again, GOD Willing.

**Awang Kerisnada bin Hj. Awang Mahmud,  
Sessions Court Judge,  
Sarawak**



**THANKS & TAHNIAH !! TO OUR SENIORS WHO  
ATTEND AND GRACE JOHORE BAR FUNCTIONS !!!**



Dr. Wong Kim Fatt  
LLB Hons Singapore



P.K. Nathan  
LLB Hons Singapore



O B C  
(Ong Ban Chai)  
LLB Hons Singapore



Reginald Vallipuram  
LLB Hons Singapore

*N.B. : HELLO !! What happened to  
Bala & the English Barrister lah ??*