

Tunku's golf buddy

The game has figured in Dr Abdul Majid's life since he was a 10-year-old boy

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Photos by SAMUEL ONG and

courtesy of TAN SRI DR

ABDUL MAJID ISMAIL

Flashback 1957

WHILE other 10-year-olds preferred playing football or taking a swim in a nearby stream back in the 1930s, Tan Sri Dr Abdul Majid Ismail used his after-school hours to earn extra pocket money by caddying at the Sentul Golf Club with his friends.

"There were seven of us and we carried the bags of the *Tuan* daily for extra pocket money," said Dr Abdul Majid.

And, the boys had fun even though the job involved walking in the sun for a round of nine holes.

Dr Abdul Majid remembers that they did not know the names of the expatriates who frequented the club, so they gave them nicknames; one was named "Tuan Tujuh Lapan" because his car number plate was SL78 while another was "Tuan Botak" for obvious reasons.

"Besides carrying their bags, we also had to make a mound of sand at the tee box for the golfers to tee off from, as back then there were no tees," said Dr Abdul Majid, who was paid 10 cents for each round.

It was a lot of money to the lad back then as a packet of *nasi lemak* cost only one cent. "I would give the money to my mother to buy groceries," he said.

Dr Abdul Majid studied in a Malay school in Segambut before receiving a scholarship to study in Maxwell School.

The young Abdul Majid, who is the eldest of 10 siblings, studied very hard for the feeder school examinations to secure a place in Victoria Institution (VI), as only the top 120 students from Batu Road, Pasar Road and Maxwell Road schools would be selected.

After his Senior Cambridge examinations in 1940, in which he emerged tops among the Malay boys, he was called to see the British Resident's secretary at the Government Offices (now Sultan Abdul Samad Building).

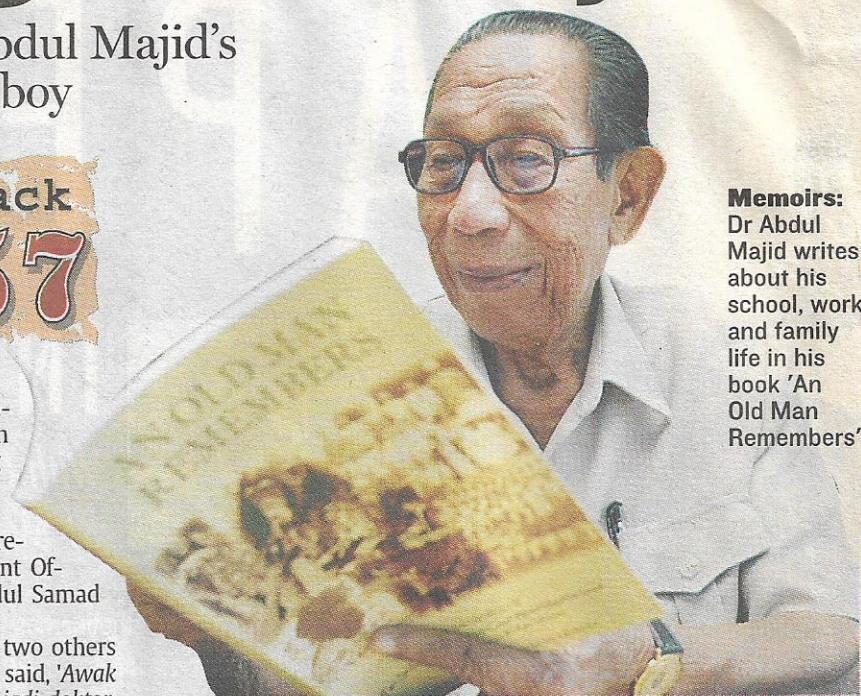
"I stood there with two others and he (Tun Raja Uda) said, '*Awak Majid pergi Singapura jadi doktor, awak Mat Nor pun pergi Singapura jadi doktor dan awak Shamsudin pergi Technical College jadi engineer*;' ('You, Majid, go to Singapore to be a doctor, you, Mat Nor, are also going to Singapore to be a doctor and you, Shamsudin, go to Technical College to be an engineer')," said Dr Abdul Majid, who felt his future was already decided for him.

Thus he was awarded a scholarship to study at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore, where he got his popular nickname "Coco", by which he is still known today.

"It happened when I went on one of the movie outings with the seniors to watch *The Jungle Princess*.

"When we got back, one of the seniors decided to re-enact the movie and one of the guys was chosen to play the role of Dorothy while I was chosen to be her pet chimpanzee 'Coco'," explained Dr Abdul Majid, who from then on was known to his friends as "Coco Majid".

After graduation, Dr Abdul Majid returned and became a member of the Sentul Golf Club, where he had once caddied. He practised hard and went on to be the



Memoirs: Dr Abdul Majid writes about his school, work and family life in his book 'An Old Man Remembers'.



Proud moment: Dr Abdul Majid receiving the Alliance Victory Cup from Sultan of Terengganu Sultan Ismail Nasiruddin Shah in Cameron Highlands in 1965. Tunku is seated at left, smoking a cigar.

club champion for two years in a row.

He continued playing the sport on returning home the year after completing his postgraduate courses in Edinburgh and Liverpool in 1957.

"Tunku decided to change his hobby from casual morning walks to golf, which was why many

Now, at the age of 86, Dr Abdul Majid, who is a grandfather of 10, still plays golf with his friends and practises ballroom dancing with his wife.

"My wife and I occasionally go to the Selangor Club for dinner on weekends when she declares the kitchen at home officially closed, and after that we would adjourn



Star Metro, together with Federal Hotel Kuala Lumpur, is organising a contest to commemorate Malaysia's 50th year as an independent nation. Readers can take part by sending in old photographs that they or their families and friends have taken in 1957. It could be of anything and everything that happened in that historic year. These pictures will then be compiled into an album for public viewing at the hotel. Five of the most interesting photos and captions will earn them attractive prizes.

How to participate:

Readers can send in the photos to starmerdeka@gmail.com

Where can they see their pictures:

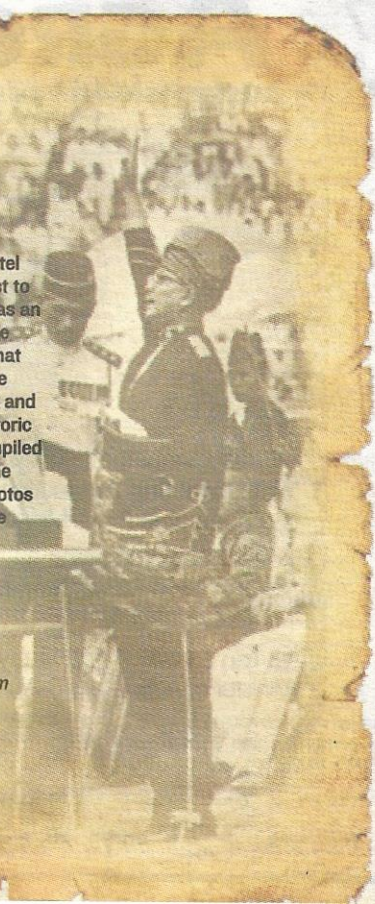
On www.flickr.com/photos/the1957album

Prizes:

Include one night's stay at Merdeka Heritage room and dine on favourite dishes of Tunku.

Last day for entries:

Aug 24, 2007



ambassadors and foreign dignitaries, who wanted to be friends with Tunku, made sure they knew how to play golf, too," said Dr Abdul Majid, who worked as a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon before going on to be the Director of Planning and Research in 1969.

"Tunku encouraged government officers to take up the sport and he even asked Parliament to allocate funds to build Kelab Golf Negara Subang (KGNS)," said Dr Abdul Majid, who was not in the country to witness the Merdeka Celebrations in 1957 but celebrated the occasion with his family in Trafalgar Square, London.

He also remembers that to celebrate the General Elections win, Tunku told him, "Go and buy a Cup and we will have a golf competition in the Camerons," whereupon Dr Abdul Majid hurriedly bought a trophy and organised a competition, which was called The Alliance Victory Cup.

While Tunku retired as the country's first Prime Minister in 1970, Dr Abdul Majid went on to become the Director General of Health the following year, a post he held until 1976.

to the dance floor upstairs," said Dr Abdul Majid who wrote his memoirs, recalling the times from his days as a young boy in Kampung Baru to recent times. Titled *An Old Man Remembers*, it was released last year.

The 1957 album project is an initiative by *StarMetro* together with partner, Federal Hotel. Five of the most interesting photos and captions will be selected to win prizes.

Each of the winners will get a night's stay at the Merdeka Heritage room in the hotel, a copy of *Favourite Dishes of Tunku Cookbook*, dinner for two featuring a selection of Tunku Abdul Rahman's favourite dishes from the cookbook at the Bintang Revolving Restaurant, and a shopping voucher worth RM500 at Plaza Low Yat Technological Lifestyle Shopping Mall.

Members of the public can send their photos taken in 1957 to starmerdeka@gmail.com with captions describing the photos.

The album can be viewed at the Federal Hotel lobby as well as <http://www.flickr.com/photos/the1957album>.

The contest ends on Aug 24.