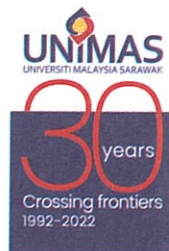


Cerita Perintis

PIONEERS' NARRATIVES

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

Cerita Perintis
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Abbreviation of names of Faculties/Centres/Institute (original names at the time of establishment)

FRST	Faculty of Resource Science & Technology
FSS	Faculty of Social Sciences
FIT	Faculty of Information Technology
FE	Faculty of Engineering
FACA	Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts
FCSHD	Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
FMHS	Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
FEB	Faculty of Economics and Business
IBEC	Institute of Biodiversity & Environmental Conservation
IHCM	Institute of Health & Community Medicine
IDEA	Institute of Design & Ergonomic Application
IEAS	Institute of East Asian Studies
CLS	Centre for Language Studies
CTTC	Centre for Technology Transfer & Consultancy
CAIS	Centre for Academic Information System
CSD	Centre for Student Development

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CHAPTER 1 The Beginning

How It All Began
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The Tree Book
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MHI Malaysia Hari Ini
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The First Year
Dr M Zawawi Ismail

A Resort Campus
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Pioneer No. 6
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FOREWORD



Professor Emeritus
Dato' Ir Dr
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*Founding Vice-
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When I formed the UNIMAS Pioneers WhatsApp group, I wanted to bring together those who joined me in the early days of UNIMAS to remember the good old times and to find out how each of us is faring now. Like many other groups, we share information and news, light and sad. And many a time, when members recall and share their past moments in UNIMAS or Sarawak, others will remember events or personal experiences, and many of these were unshared or untold stories. How interesting it would be if everyone were to write those narratives and publish them for all present and future university community members to know how their organisation began.

UNIMAS is 30 years old, and it has been 22 years since I left. Time flies by, but my eight years as a founding Vice-Chancellor were the best part of my life. There was never a dull moment. I have captured many of those moments in my recent book, "Defining Moments - a Memoir". Together, this collection of narratives

containing memories of my founding colleagues helps paint a complete picture.

As UNIMAS grows older, we, the founding fathers, and our memories, will slowly fade with time. I am glad that we have captured our recall of events into this volume for we have already missed the opportunity from those who have passed on. In my eight years, none received any official recognition for their work. I believe self-satisfaction and the common bonding between us is the ultimate reward for working oneself out in establishing a university from zero. Nevertheless, I hope this collection of narratives permanently records their valuable contribution.

As founders, we have put solid Academic and Development plans for a University that is Contemporary in Character and Forward-Looking in its Outlook. As a result, we now witness a beautiful campus with the growth of students, staff, and graduates beyond our early imagination. We look forward to the University's future successes.

I thank Dr Murtedza and his team of editors for the willingness to collect and edit the articles and UNIMAS Publisher for publishing this group memoir. Finally, I thank the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Kadim, also one of the founders, for his support – without which this publication is impossible.

FOREWORD

Bismillahirrahmannirahim

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullah
Wabarakatuh

I'm writing this from my office overlooking the peaceful and serene UNIMAS Lake. Sheltered in Kota Samarahan, the designated Education Hub, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) stands tall and strong as a community driven university against the perfect backdrop that is the culturally rich and biodiverse Sarawak. From this vantage point, it is hard not to reminisce about the earlier days of UNIMAS. A humble beginning of 119 students from two faculties - we now boast 10 faculties and almost 17,000 students in our tireless quest to position UNIMAS as the institution of choice for learners, researchers and scholars from this region and beyond.

My personal journey growing with UNIMAS has been an interesting one. As one of the pioneering staff members, I spent 10 years as an academic at the Faculty of Engineering. During this tenure, I was responsible for different roles and positions, culminating as the Dean of the faculty before I left in 2004 to set sail on a new adventure. Little did I know, my voyage would lead me back to UNIMAS in April 2013, and this time it was as its 6th Vice Chancellor. Naturally, the appointment came with immense expectations and responsibilities, but it also rekindled that fire in me when



Professor
Datuk Ir Dr
Mohamad
Kadim bin
Suaidi
*Vice-Chancellor,
UNIMAS*

I first started almost 30 years ago which was to see UNIMAS grow into a leading institution of higher learning in Borneo by strengthening its roles, contribution and involvement in the development of knowledge.

In this special book, you will hear from my fellow pioneering colleagues as they recount their early days at a newly established public university as we worked together to mould UNIMAS into a reputable institution of higher education. This book reflects the collective aspiration of our founding members including UNIMAS' first Vice Chancellor, Dato' Dr Ir Mohamad Zawawi Ismail. The key takeaway from the narratives that you will encounter in this book is that grit, perseverance, sacrifices, collegiality and leadership are the unifying thread that first brought us together, helped us stay through its most challenging periods and has continued to fuel our exploration as we pass on the baton to new groups of bright academics and administrative staff.



In Honour of Lucy Bulan @ Sinah Raben.

beyond us. Lucy skilfully took care of this; resulting in learning outcomes that far exceeded our expectations. She was an inspirational community leader. With her encouragement, the people of Bario graciously allowed us to interfere in their day-to-day lives; suggesting how technology might be used to bring benefits that they would appreciate.

Someone once noted that all the pioneering members of the *eBario* team advanced with successful careers in their chosen fields, implying that their participation in the project had some influence on that. But my contention is that the influence laid in the opposite direction; the project achieved what it did because the entire team consisted of dedicated and visionary individuals who were – and remain – committed to its ideals and were inexorably destined for excellence in whatever field they would choose. So, I feel that I was only there to trigger something that was going to happen anyway.

MY 'HIGHLANDERS' FAMILY

Dr Souba Rethinasamy

On the 1st of October 2000, leaving behind my barely one-year-old baby in the capable hands of Ashley, I headed to Bario with the *eBario* team. The team boarded a plane from Kuching to Miri and later a 12-seater twin otter flight from Miri to Bario. The weather was rough and thus it was indeed a bumpy ride all the way from Miri to Bario. I was feeling dizzy and nauseated. When we finally landed, I clumsily got out of the plane and headed towards the tiny Bario Airport – it was hardly an airport in the eyes of an urban girl. A group of people including Cikgu Lucy Bulan greeted us at the airport. Their smiles and warm welcome made my dizziness and nausea evaporate into the cool fresh air of Bario!



A trip to Bario with the eBario team.

We headed to the Labang Longhouse Lodge. Surprisingly, the thinness of the mattress, the freezing cold showers, and the lack of basic infrastructure did not bother me at all. The hospitality of the Bario community and the friendliness of the team filled the humble wooden abode with a warm and welcoming atmosphere. It made our accommodation a cosy and comfortable place to stay.



Lunch at the Labang Longhouse, Bario.

The next day, after a good night's sleep and a hearty fresh breakfast, we headed to the school to start our research. Cool and calm, with her beautiful smile, Cikgu Lucy Bulan welcomed us and introduced us to the teachers and students of the Bario Secondary School (SMK Bario). She truly made us feel like members of her school, in the same manner, so did the teachers and students. We did not feel like we were doing a study at all. It was like being with our family.



A group photo with SMK Bario school teacher and students.

The following year, I made my second trip to Bario with Compserv staff, this time, to set up the Pentium 5s in the Bario Primary School (SK Bario). As we were setting up the PCs, curious school children peeped through the 'actual' windows of the wooden block. No words can describe the children's anxiety and excitement when they were given the opportunity to 'play' with the PCs – I wish I had taken a snapshot to capture that moment. Nonetheless, the image is still fresh in my memory.

The Bario community has been truly amazing. They made the mountainous task seemed like a walk in the park. The research conducted in the Bario school resulted in my first journal paper – and a high impact one, to boot! With the teaching experience and confidence gained from being part of the *eBario* team, I gathered the courage to pursue Ph.D. in the UK and returned to continue my destiny with UNIMAS.

GENETICIST IN THE WILDERNESS

Dr Edmund Sim Ui Hang

My attachment to UNIMAS was an accidental yet fortuitous circumstance. Initially shortlisted for a fellowship position under the MacArthur Research Foundation (in 1994), it was deemed during the interview session that the expertise needed was in Wildlife Biodiversity rather than Genetics. The position of a tutor at the Resource Biotechnology Programme in the Faculty of Resource Science and Technology (FRST) UNIMAS was offered and taken up instead of the MacArthur fellowship.

The tutorship and the years following it brought many precious, unforgettable moments. One of those was my participation in the research expedition to Bario, the Kelabit Highlands. This was the first ever wildlife expedition for me. It was the rite of passage that turned a boy to a man. More than a simple eye-opener, the Bario experience was a steep learning curve for a "lab rat". The flight to Bario from Marudi in a twin engine 12-seater turboprop airplane in itself was unbelievable. It was amazing how such a small plane could get researchers there and back, taking off and landing on a grass runway strip. This was a big deal for any city boy.



Molecular lab work at E Campus (old campus) lab (2000).

Coretan pengalaman, pencapaian dan
kenangan manis staf dan pelajar perintis
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

*Accounts of experiences,
accomplishments and fond memories of
the pioneer staff and students of
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak*




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