

Sarawak's golden couple

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BY JACK WONG

KUCHING: Romance filled the air as Tan Sri Dr Wong Soon Kai and Datuk Sri Dr Jane Yong celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in style at the Crowne Plaza Riverside Hotel here on Saturday.

The loving couple looked radiant as their fascinating story was told by two of their three children – son Dr Wong Chee Liang and younger daughter Wong Chee Lin, a lawyer – to some 1,000 relatives and friends at the grand candlelight party.

A film on the couple's life, narrated by elder daughter Dr Wong Chee May, was also shown.

The couple's eldest grandson Vincent Wong, a music student in Australia, entertained the audience on the piano while Chee Lin rendered two songs.

Soon Kai and Dr Yong married in Singapore in 1953 upon their graduation after six years of courtship.

In 1959, Soon Kai became the first Sarawakian to graduate as a surgeon in Britain.

He served as a government doctor for 15 years and spent another four years in private practice before entering politics and becoming a state minister in 1974.

He was deputy chief minister before he retired from politics in 1996 and is

now science adviser to the Sarawak government.

Dr Yong was the first woman doctor to run a clinic in Sibiu.

Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, both classmates of Soon Kai and Dr Yong at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore in 1947, were there to share the couple's happy moment.

Other classmates, some of whom had flown in from overseas, later took to the stage and joined Dr Mahathir, Dr Siti Hasmah, Soon Kai and Dr Yong in rendering several numbers.

Sarawak Yang di-Pertua Negri Tun Abang Muhammad Salahuddin, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud and federal and state ministers were also present.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir praised Soon Kai for his immense contribution to the state's development.

"His contribution to Sarawak politics had been very positive. If he had stayed longer in politics, he would have done more for Sarawak," added Dr Mahathir, who was once Soon Kai's roommate in medical school.

Taib described Soon Kai as a very sincere man who was a "tower of strength" to him in laying a strong foundation for a stable and progressive Sarawak.