

Remembering a friend and outstanding journalist



CLOSE TIES: Keith (right) chatting with the Tunku.

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Veteran journalist Patrick Keith, who played a key role in establishing Bernama (National News Service), died in Melbourne, Australia, last Monday at the age of 75.

A confidant of the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Keith, who migrated to Australia three decades ago, was in Kuala Lumpur earlier this month (Oct 5) to look up old friends and talk about his book, *Ousted*, which was successfully launched in Singapore.

It gives a vivid account of the events leading up to Singapore's separation from Malaysia in August 1965.

Keith began his journalism career in the early 1950s with *The Malay Mail*, and then the *Straits Times* where he was in the front line covering the 12-year jungle war against the Malayan Com-

munist Party, which ended with the defeat of Chin Peng and his stragglers in 1960.

He then moved on to Radio Malaya and, at the Tunku's request, played a key role in getting Bernama on-stream in 1968.

Also at the Tunku's suggestion, Keith was seconded to the Ministry of Information as the deputy director of External Information Services, where he played a pivotal role in countering anti-Malaysia news churned out by the late President Sukarno's propaganda machine.

In this position, too, he had a ringside view observing

and reporting the highly explosive verbal battles, often with racial and religious overtones, waged between senior politicians on both sides of the Causeway before the split.

Looking at different angles, getting to the core of complex matters and telling them simply for all to understand were his finer attributes. Keith stood out from the "pack" by doing ordinary things in extraordinary ways.

Keith is survived by his wife Connie of 50 years, three children and five grandchildren. — *By Felix Abisheganaden*