

# Leader of the first parade

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by **Llew-Ann Phang**  
merdeka@thesundaily.com

**FOR** some, celebrating Malaysia's independence isn't just about acknowledging a national event on an annual basis.

For the likes of S.Y. Shim, for example, celebrating Merdeka has an added poignancy because he was actually in Merdeka Stadium when Tunku Abdul Rahman declared "Merdeka! Merdeka! Merdeka!" for the entire nation.

Shim led the first-ever independence parade from the Merdeka Stadium car park, past the National Mosque, through the Clock Tower area (now Dataran Merdeka) and Jalan Raja Laut.

Donning his 1st KL Company Boy's Brigade white uniform, complete with a "white Scottish-like cap and tail", Lieutenant Shim, who was then only 22, led his company of 60 students aged between 15 and 18 in the parade's first march-off.

The company stood at the far right of the stage where the Tunku stood amidst all the other uniformed bodies participating in the parade.

"We had to assemble at the car park at 5am and I remember there was no rain, just good sunshine.

We marched through the route and finally dispersed at Jalan Raja Laut," he said.

Fifty years later, Tunku's voice remains loud and clear for the former civil servant as does the memory of the Union Jack being lowered for the Malayan flag to be hoisted.

"I was very proud and happy ... It was the very first Merdeka parade and I witnessed the shouting of 'Merdeka! Merdeka!'," the 72-year-old remembers at his current workplace - an optical outlet - near his home in Shah Alam.

Shim remembers the British High Commissioner, Sir Donald MacGilvary, at the time, and how proud Malaysians were to have a country of their own.

"We were Malaysians and we had Malaysia. No more being under British rule, so I think everyone was very happy about that," Shim said.

Today, a proud Shim says: "Of all the places I've travelled to, I still think Malaysia is the best country to call home."

