

British airman ordered to 'shoot' Tunku

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KUALA LUMPUR: As a young airman with the Royal Air Force, Brian F. Williams was horrified when asked to double-up as a cameraman and shoot Tunku Abdul Rahman proclaiming Malaysia's independence.

"I had never touched a camera before and this was the old, wind-up kind. I just concentrated on shooting and hoped for the best."

Williams was an air raid officer in the RAF in 1955 when Jim Bush, then head of the Natural Rubber Development Board, told him the Australian Broadcasting Corporation



Malaysiaku Gemilang

was short of a cameraman. And the Brit was it for the job.

"I shot the opening at the Merdeka Stadium and at the 'padang' (the field which is now Dataran Merdeka). I also went around Lake Gardens, shooting the crowds milling about and trying to capture the atmosphere," he said during a phone interview from

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Barcelona, Spain.

While he described the adventure as a once-in-a-lifetime experience, he is sorry that he never had the opportunity to see the footage he shot.

"I never saw the results. I shot the film and they immediately flew it out to Australia or Canada or somewhere.

"I was doing it for free, I wasn't paid."

Williams, who spent 15 years in the country, between 1955 and 1970, was nostalgic about Malaysia. "All my memories are fond memories. I have many friends there."

After leaving the RAF, he worked for Cold Storage for a year and spent five years with



The Restaurant Bunga Raya in Barcelona owned by Brian F. Williams.

Clouet & Co, a French company which owns the Ayam brand.

Williams fell passionately in love with the Malay culture, including the language and food and learnt to speak Malay fluently.

In 1989, he opened a Malay restaurant called Restaurant Bunga Raya in Barcelona.

Running it as a one-man show, Williams, now 72,

serves chicken curry, beef curry, nasi lemak, serunding, sambal udang, sambal sotong, sambal belacan and rendang.

He shyly admitted the restaurant has a good reputation. He recalled that one Malaysian customer who used to work for the Deutsche Bank in Barcelona and frequented his restaurant used to "fly in every month" to eat

his rendang when she was transferred to Germany.

Since 1990, Williams has been making a yearly pilgrimage to Malaysia, usually staying in Bangsar or near Kuantan. But not this year. A kitchen fire in his restaurant has put paid to those plans.

Malaysia is where he hopes to retire, though. "They say home is where the heart is, and my heart is there."