

# He always had feelings of the people at heart

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A MAN for all seasons.

That's how the family of R. Kalimuthoo, the driver and friend of Tunku Abdul Rahman, has always felt about the first prime minister.

They say the Tunku was a wonderful person who always had the feelings of the people at heart. "He tried to never hurt anyone's feelings," said his son, Muthu who served as an aide to the Tunku from 1984 until his death.

Kalimuthoo's second wife S. Thanam, 63, also served as an aide to Tunku's wife, Tun Sharifah Rodziah, for 10 years from 1980.

Another son, Ganesh, became Tunku's driver when his father retired in 1989. After the Tunku's death, he continued driving for Sharifah Rodziah until 1994.

The family lived at the staff quarters in the compound of Tunku's residence at Jalan Air Rajah, Penang.

The couple have nine children — Kalamah, 45, Susila, 44, Balasubramaniam, 43, Mahandran, 42, Muthu, 40, Markandan@Ganesh, 37, Prema, 35, Shanti, 34, and Thanaseelan, 30.

Muthu said the Tunku got him a scholarship to pursue a LCCI accountancy diploma course after his Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia.

"After I completed my diploma in 1985, he asked me to work for him. My duty was to take care of him, prepare his clothing for events, open the

mail and make sure that he got the newspapers daily.

"I was paid a monthly salary of RM300 and he tested my honesty twice, once by placing a RM500 note in his nightgown. In the second incident, he placed RM1,000 in it but was happy when I returned the money," said Muthu who is married to R. Alil Subagari, a teacher.

He said the Tunku always greeted his guests at the door and sent them off at the door. "He continued this even when he was wheelchair bound."

"I used to sleep outside his room with the door open in case he needed me.

"His old age and sickness did not stop him from performing his religious obligations. He would be up at 5am to perform the subuh prayers."

Muthu remembers that the Tunku never liked people to refer to themselves as "saya" in his presence, preferring the royal "patik".

Ganesh, meanwhile, recollected an incident where a cashier at the Penang ferry terminal had asked him to pay toll for the Tunku's car.

"I told the man that the Tunku was in the back seat. I ignored his questions and drove straight into the ferry.

"When we reached home, the Tunku called then Penang Port Sdn Bhd chairman, Syed Aided Syed Murtaza, and complained about the incident. But he told Syed Aidid to forgive the clerk concerned."