

## **Najib's Hawaii Visit Brings Nostalgia For Peace Corps Volunteers**

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**By Mikhail Raj Abdullah**

HONOLULU, Nov 15 (Bernama) -- Leonard Camp Jr. was a construction engineer from Rochester in New York back in the 1960's.

Young and wanting to see the world, he wasted no time when he was picked as a Peace Corps volunteer to serve in Sabah from 1963 to 1965.

Serving the Public Works Department then, he was responsible for drawing up the original survey for a road linking Penampang and Kudat and thereafter from Sandakan to Tawau airport.

And he did it with compassion, for there was no government quarters but Camp camped in the jungle for weeks on end to survey what was surely virgin jungle for road development and runways.

When Datuk Seri Jamaludin Jarjis became Malaysia's ambassador to the United States, one interesting fact he found was that there were over 30 Peace Corps volunteers in Hawaii who had served in Malaysia.

Knowing that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was coming to Honolulu for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit, he decided to get them to meet the prime minister.

And they did, many in their late 70's and 80's, who braved the gridlock jam in Honolulu on Sunday due to the APEC meetings to meet the prime minister in person at the Halekulani Hotel, here.

They were so awed by Najib's humility when he went round the room to meet the volunteers as well as Malaysian students and a small Malaysian community in Hawaii.

In a way, it was an expression of gratitude from Najib for the volunteers who had served in the development of Malaysia in its formative years.

And talking with Malaysians about the early days brought a deep sense of nostalgia for the volunteers.

"I have so many fond memories of Malaysia," a deeply touched Camp said who never had dreamt of being honoured with Najib's presence and invitation to the gathering.

Another volunteer was Ed Chip Euhara-Tilton, who was in Kuantan in 1966 when he was 20.

Originally from Arizona, he enrolled in California for a few weeks' crash course to learn the Malay language and local customs.

As for his sojourn in Malaysia, he said: "It was a challenge; you must have a lot of patience."

Jamaludin said he would set up a Peace Corps alumni in each American state. The Malaysian government plans to revive the Peace Corps and the first batch of volunteers ready to teach English is expected to arrive in January.

The Peace Corps volunteer programme was initiated by the late U.S. President John F. Kennedy on March 1, 1961, in 28 countries including Malaysia.

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