

What a thrill, that first parade...

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KUALA LUMPUR: He had to put his best foot forward. There was no room for error for Pilot Officer Kanagandram Kandiah.

Not when the whole nation was watching him stride out, leading a group of school cadets of the Federation of Malaya Air Training Corps along Jalan Raja here in front of the Selangor Club *padang* (now Dataran Merdeka).

It was the first Merdeka Day parade on Aug 31, 1958.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra were the guests of honour.

"I remember that moment vividly," said Kana, 71. He was 23 in 1958. "It was a big day for us. We had a rehearsal the night before and put up at the corps headquarters at Sungai Besi Airport.

"On parade day, we were up at 4am for breakfast. Then we

joined the rest of the regular forces preparing for the march of our lives."

From then on, Kana led the ATC cadets at parades until the corps was disbanded in 1964.

There was no march past when Tunku proclaimed Independence at Merdeka Stadium on Aug 31, 1957.

"I was there at 7am to witness the historic moment. The night before, I was among thousands who celebrated the lowering of the Union Jack at the *padang* as the clock at the Sultan Abdul Samad building struck at midnight."

Kana has always believed in community service and during the May 13, 1969 riots, he helped ease tensions in his Jalan Peel neighbourhood here.

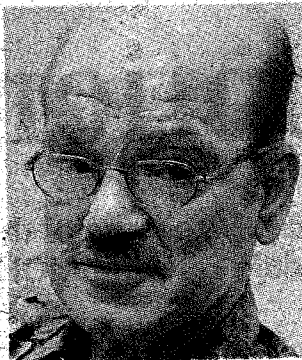
"I approached the district police chief to organise a signature campaign among the multi-racial residents, pledging not to create any problems and support peaceful community living."

He went on to start the Bukit



Bandaraya Residents' Association here in Bangsar in 1974. Kana used his house in Jalan Pudu as the association's office and with the help of his four children, distributed newsletters on their activities.

"The effort gained momentum. Soon, 500 homes supported our efforts to make our neighbourhood safe following a spate of burglaries and snatch thefts. Today, the association serves 1,400 homes."



Kanagandram believes in serving the community

Kana, who is vice-president of the association, later helped form the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation's Bangsar branch, of which he is the secretary.

For his efforts, Kana was named "Most Outstanding Citizen" by the Lions Club in 1983.

A big fan of Elvis Presley, Kana enjoys the fact that he shares his birthday with the King of Rock — Jan 8, 1935.



Kanagandram and Corporal David Leong, of the Singapore Air Training Corps, with Frances Preston (second from left) and Beryl Davis at Bondi Beach, Sydney, in 1955.

Kana began his career with the Labour Department as an administrative clerk in 1956.

He went on to serve the education, treasury, forestry and

agriculture departments before retiring as an administrative officer with the Petaling District entertainment licensing department in 1984.