



Uncle Harvey Was Family

BY ROLAND OOI

HARVEY and my dad Eric Ooi were good friends. I mean they were really, really very close buddies.

It was a friendship that spanned over six decades. From as far back as I can remember, Harvey was always there with us.

From the numerous times we spent at Batu Tiga circuit to the weekend mahjong sessions at our home.

Then there were our family holidays at the Port Dickson bungalow, to having my first beer at a legit pub (Brigade).

I also remember those nostalgic early years, with Harvey in his really fast grey Datsun 1800SSS, (BW 4023) and my dad, in his 1600SSS, (BAA 4757). They used to make those insane weekend trips out of Kuala Lumpur runs at near race speeds on the old roads.

For a very long time I thought that driving at those speeds was normal.

And below a four hour run from the Singapore causeway to our home in Petaling Jaya was the norm.

Then there were those 'who's faster' discussions between Billy (William Mei), Lee "brother-in-law" Kwai Leong, Harvey and my dad during those mahjong sessions.

This would almost always lead

to a pause in the game as they headed out to a closed dirt circuit somewhere in Petaling Jaya, to make their point.

Those were good times. When they were all 'young' and could get away with being a little crazy.

I was maybe 12 or 14 then, and was sure my life was way more exciting than all my school friends with these 'uncles' around.

Harvey was always there in nearly every part of our teenage lives as he was family to us.

In the 70's, motorsport personalities were a little like celebrities. A larger segment of the population followed the races then, and I always felt 'special' for my dad was a racing driver.

I also had the likes of Harvey, William and Kwai Leong as family friends. The ones I called 'Uncle'. The ones who appeared in the newspapers, the ones who my friends at school knew of. The ones strangers walked up to, to talk about cars and watch them race.

They were the 'cool' guys everyone wanted to know, and Harvey was the coolest dude because he was "HARVEY YAP"!

Throughout my growing up years, Harvey had always played a very special role in my dad's life and in our lives too.

So many good memories I will

cherish and take along to my grave.

I won't go into specifics as there were too many instances, and I don't want to bore you guys.

But with the passing of Harvey, my dad, William Mei, Kwai Leong & Ronnie Loong, a major chapter in the book of my life has come to a close but those wonderful memories will be etched in my mind forever.

The chapter of my dad and some of his closest friends from his racing days. Those who have now left this life to be together in the next.

I believe that the mahjong sessions have resumed with Harvey's arrival. They now have enough 'kaki' to resume their game.

I'm sure there will be beers, there will be talk about the good old days and who was faster.

About the wins, and about the close races with the likes of Hengkie Iriawan, Leo Geoghegan and Ian Gray. The larger than life personalities of a bygone motoracing era.

Rest well Uncle Harvey, you will be missed..... by me, my family, and all those who were blessed enough to have met you along your journey.

God put you on this earth for a purpose, and you have served that purpose well.

Thank you for being there.