

REMEMBERING RICHARD VELU

CALM, POLITE AND WARM

I'VE known R Velu for 48 years, but heard of him as a prolific athletics writer for the New Straits Times Press (NSTP).

I envied sports journalists like Velu, Tony Francis, George Das, Png Hong Kwang, SC Sekaran, Cheryl Dorall, Fauzi Omar, Terence Netto, Ian Periera, and Francis Emmanuel, among others, as a student.

After school, I became NSTP's sports librarian in April 1977. I categorised all newspaper sports pieces by subject and personality for the editing team's reference.

I met Velu then, and his gentleness, warmth, and eagerness to chat quickly impressed me.

Sports journalism captivated me, so I started stringing for The Malay Mail in November 1977 and left the library to join them full-time in 1981.

Velu spent a lot of time in the library reading older sports journalism articles. But some writers took files to their desks. I would track down the borrower to retrieve those files.

But some had even removed pages from the files, and that made my task more difficult.

During one night shift, Velu called me in the library. Instead of pleasantries first, Velu loudly questioned why I had accused him of being among the culprits. He challenged me to meet him outside the office, but I did not react. I was too shocked.

The following afternoon, though, Velu headed to my seat. I anticipated the worst. He apologised profusely, offered his hand, and astonished me with

his kind voice.

That was Velu — an apology-making gentleman. We were close friends when he left NSTP. Unfortunately, we drifted apart later. But he will always be remembered fondly. Everyone enjoyed his calm, polite, and helpful nature.

Dear Velu, rest in peace.

BY TONY MARIADASS

