



Dato' Balbir Singh Sidhu

(17th February 1937 to 17th March 2019)

Barrister-at-Law, Middle Temple, London (1963)

Advocate & Solicitor, High Court of Malaya (1964)

Barrister-at-Law, Supreme Court of Queensland, Australia (1980)

Solicitor, Attorney and Proctor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia (1987)

Barrister-at-Law, High Court of Australia in Canberra, Australia (1987)

We are here to remember the distinguished life of a very senior member of the Malaysian Bar, an advocate and solicitor for 55 years, Dato' Balbir Singh Sidhu, or Dato' B S Sidhu, known to his friends as Bill, who left us at dawn on 17 March 2019. We miss him dearly.

A memorable figure in the Courts of Malaya, Dato' B S Sidhu was a striking man with kind eyes, who treasured his family, friends, peers, clients and justice. He was a man for all seasons, blessed with an angel's wit and a natural ability to defend the truth. The law was his passion, the Court was his playground, and the library was his fortress. Hailing from the silver state of Perak, born on 17 February 1937, Dato' B S Sidhu was a Sitiawan boy at heart. Enjoying his salad days at Anglo Chinese School, Sitiawan, Dato B S Sidhu was an active sportsman, a hockey player, and a diligent and determined student who embraced the literary arts, studies in religion and history. From an early age however, he knew he wanted to read law in London.

Imbued with that rare quality of purpose, a young and resolute Dato' B S Sidhu arrived in London on 14th December 1959, and enrolled as a law student at The Honorary Society of the Middle Temple, London. Student days in London shaped the affable Dato' B S Sidhu and it was in London that he forged life-long friendships which he

would cherish, continue to create memories with, and celebrate in the many birthday and Christmas parties in the years to come. Dato' B S Sidhu was a proud and founding member of FOMSA (Malaysian Students Union) in London, 1960, and was honored to call amongst his close learned friends in London, several future cabinet ministers, a finance minister, a prime minister, and a sultan of Malaysia, in addition to outstanding members of the judiciary with whom he had a good and long friendship. He would often recount that he had lived through a time in history best described by Charles Dickens in the famous opening paragraph of his novel, A Tale of Two Cities:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair... in short, the period was so far like the present period.

Dato' B S Sidhu was called to the Bar of England and Wales as a Barrister-at-Law of The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, London on 26 November, 1963. He was admitted to the High Court of Malaya on 5 October 1964 and moved to the capital, Kuala Lumpur, where on 1 January 1965 he set up his own firm, the eponymous B. S. Sidhu & Co, which he helmed with passion for the entirety of the rest of his life. The firm, now 55 years and running, a part of his legacy, continues to this day.

During that same year, he met and on Christmas Eve married a young, beautiful staff nurse of Malaysian-Chinese descent, the love of his life, Datin Girlie Sidhu, with whom he had two dotting daughters, and the privilege to love and to be loved by her dearly and closely for the rest of his life. It was surrounded by Datin Girlie Sidhu and his two daughters, Sharon and Shireen Sidhu, at the family home that he peacefully and quietly took his last breath.

Dato' B S Sidhu was a respected and feared lawyer, the lawyer you want on your side. In one instance, a conglomerate which he had fought against in a previous case, and won, later approached him as a client on another matter, and they became and remained good friends. He practiced as a sole proprietor and had a strong flow of clients from all over the country, and internationally, most of whom had been recommended by former clients, and it would be some 25 years or so before he would take on two long awaited pupils as his chambering students, and open his firm to them

as partners, the culmination of a grand design, perhaps. His long wait was rewarded when he was joined in practice by both his daughters who were, like their father, also admitted as an advocate and solicitor to the High Court of Malaya at Kuala Lumpur, after their return from London.

In recognition of his public service, he was conferred the award of Darjah Indera Mahkota Pahang (D.I.M.P.) by His Royal Highness, the Sultan of Pahang in 2005.

Dato' B S Sidhu spent time living in the cities of London, Kuala Lumpur, Brisbane, and Sydney, where he was, respectively, a Barrister-at-Law, Advocate & Solicitor, Barrister-at-Law, and, Solicitor, Attorney and Proctor, and though he loved to travel, in his speech during a 70th birthday celebration at the Grand Ballroom at the Regent Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, he described Malaysia as his beloved home, the country which truly flows with milk and honey. He found that special sense of coming home each time his plane would make its landing at then Subang International Airport, and later at Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Opposite the Kuala Lumpur High Courts was and still is a private member's club which most of the lawyers of the day frequented, on account of the proximity to the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, and Kuala Lumpur High Court houses at the time. Dato' B S Sidhu was an active and vocal Royal Selangor Club member, often seen taking lunch with clients after a good day in Court, and where he was involved in various committees over the years ranging from Entertainment & Special Events, Editorial Board, and sections such as Motorsports, Darts, Dancesports, and many more, and his favourite, the Musical & Arts section where he was appointed Convenor. Throughout his life he continued to lunch at the club whenever possible, fondly looking out at the view of the former Court houses across Merdeka Square. His choice of the law profession carved out the path of his years, weeks, days of his life, like waters from a river inevitably shaping the canyon through which it ebbs and flows.

Though his interests were vast and he also found time to participate as an active member of the Selangor Turf Club, the Royal Lake Club, and the Port Dickson Yacht Club, amongst others, the law, he would often say, was his hobby, and the Courts were his playground. With a high regard for the Latin language and of the power of words, Dato' B S Sidhu was a man of letters, a voracious reader, and had in his youth

excitedly studied the Shakespearean plays, of which Julius Caesar remained his favorite, rich with powerful verses and a moving speech which provoked and changed the course of events. He believed that one man, one voice, one extraordinary mind can change the world.

With a profound respect for law, and an innate sense of justice, of fairness, his logical mind was never complacent, never resigned or content with mediocrity. Good enough simply is not good enough. He would often quote his Boys' Scout motto, "Be prepared," and to this end, Dato' B S Sidhu enjoyed thorough research before every case. He would always strive for excellence, and demanded the best from those around him, often working late into the night when necessary. He would fight the good fight, indeed, he would ensure he finished the race.

Within the law, Dato' B S Sidhu found he could help those in need, and for his clients, he led the charge for justice. Amongst the numerous large-sized lacquered wood and gold engraved plaques he was bestowed by grateful clients, we highlight three to offer a glimpse of Dato' B S Sidhu, the people's lawyer. One read, "To B S Sidhu, Our Great Defender;" another labeled him, "Champion of the Poor;" and a third, simply stated in large letters across the board, "Thank You For Your Brilliant Defence."

"O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" he often would quote at poignant times, especially later in his life, with full conviction and faith. It is with this faith and light we released our beloved, inimitable, eloquent, charismatic, and unforgettable Dato' B S Sidhu.

Our firm, and our family and friends present and absent, are grateful for this opportunity to commemorate his beautiful and blessed life today, in his favourite domain, a Court of law. Always remembered, never forgotten, Dato' B S Sidhu is our inspiration, our safe harbor, our shining light, our mentor, our defender, our champion.

Written By,

Ms. Shireen Sidhu & Ms. Sharon Sidhu, daughters of Dato' B S Sidhu