

Triumph from the sick bed

Ailing war veteran joins ex-comrades across the globe in wearing the PJM to rejoice campaign success

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DESPITE his ailing health, David Dilley remains a hardened soldier at heart, displaying true grit and determination.

Proudly showing his Pingat Jasa Malaysia (PJM), the 75-year-old British war veteran was overjoyed when he learnt that he could finally wear the medal alongside two others for long service and good conduct.

There's a hitch though. The spirit may be willing but the body is weak.

In his present condition, he could hardly walk, let alone march with his fellow comrades proudly donning his PJM at Remembrance Day ceremonies in London and elsewhere on Sunday.

But the gutsy old man was not about to let the chance slip by.

He promptly asked his daughter to take a photograph of him with his PJM and send it to Fight4thePJM campaign chairman Barry Fleming, so that he could say 'Thank you' to Malaysia and to his fellow colleagues.

That photograph is, perhaps, one of the most lasting evocative images of the campaign, then and

now.

"This special photograph epitomises our campaign — back then in Malaysia and more recently in the UK," said Fleming, referring to Dilley's involvement in their six-year struggle to wear the PJM.

In fact, Dilley has served not only his country for many years but also servicemen and women who hit hard times.

His charitable work includes 29 years with Britain's Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Families Association as well as the Royal Army Service Corps & Royal Corps of Transport Association and the Royal British Legion.

Indeed, he is a remarkable man who had given his time for others — as he did in Malaysia.

Dilley, who lives in Leicestershire and had served in Borneo for many years, is very ill now.

Still in hospital, he is, however, determined to be around to wear his PJM at Remembrance Day events.

Fleming referred to remarks by one of his colleagues when he saw the veteran's photograph with his three medals and a red poppy pinned on his hospital suit.

"Way back in the 1950s-60s, our servicemen and women serving in

Malaysia needed guts, determination, strength, cunning, discipline and ingenuity.

"Above all, they required teamwork to achieve what most would recall as one of Britain's military success stories.

"Fast forward to modern times and these same virtues have succeeded again," said Fleming when quoting his colleague.

Yesterday, *The Star* reported that 67-year-old birthday boy Gerald Law was among British war veterans across the Commonwealth who proudly displayed their PJM for the first time in Remembrance Day parades and ceremonies.

It was earlier reported that some 35,000 ex-servicemen could finally wear the PJM following a six-year relentless campaign to overturn the Honours and Decorations Committee's "accept but not formally wear" ruling.

The decision was announced in the House of Lords by Undersecretary of State for Defence Lord Astor of Haver, who is himself a recipient of the PJM.

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond had said the war veterans had been given permission by Queen Elizabeth II to formally wear the PJM for the first time during Remembrance Day events.

Fleming also recounted fond memories of his experience during the war, where he is based largely at the 28th Commonwealth Brigade headquarters in Terendak Garrison, Malacca, from 1965-68.

Serving in intelligence and security, both military and civil, he had the opportunity to work with the locals in kampungs and towns where he learnt to speak Malay in his daily work.

As a result, he felt much closer to Malaysians and grew to respect them very much after developing a lasting admiration for them.

"I am most proud of the fact that, working with the locals, we were able to help defend Malaysia not so much through bombs and bullets but through peaceful means.

"We were able to demonstrate



Heart of valour: Dilley from Leicestershire, seriously ill but determined to wear his PJM, displaying true grit and determination that epitomises the Fight4thePJM campaign.



Down under: British war veteran John Feltham (centre) — probably the only UK veteran in Townsville, Queensland, Australia, wearing the PJM for the first time — together with two other Australian ex-servicemen displaying their PJM at the Remembrance Day ceremony in Townsville, Queensland.

that peace was a better way than violence which the terrorists and external incursionists were trying to impose," said the 67-year-old from Berkshire, south England.

For Fleming, the PJM was important to him as it was about something much greater and more lasting than his brief service.

"It is about those critical nine years when Commonwealth forces helped build a strong and successful independent nation that is admired for its achievements around the world," he added.

And it was also in Malacca that he married his wife Jane in 1967.

Nearly 45 years later, the couple together with their three children and six grandchildren would gather at a Malaysian restaurant in their hometown to celebrate Malaysia's National Day on Aug 31 and their wedding anniversary in January.

For them, it is not just a celebration of their wonderful memories of Malaysia and its people but also their happiness today that has its roots in the country — their unforgettable yesterday.



Worthwhile struggle: (From left) Four British war veterans Michael King (1st-3rd East Anglia Regiment Ipoh and Malacca 1959-62), John Cooper (RAF Seletar 205/209 Squadron Flying Boats Seletar 1958), Edward Wood (RAF Kuala Lumpur 1957-59 Blacksmith/Welder Station Workshops) and Richard Allison (RAF Kuching 1965-66) proudly wearing their PJM for the Remembrance Day Parade at RAF Martlesham Heath, Suffolk, England. (Right pic) Fleming wearing his PJM at the War Memorial in Woolhampton, Berkshire, England.

