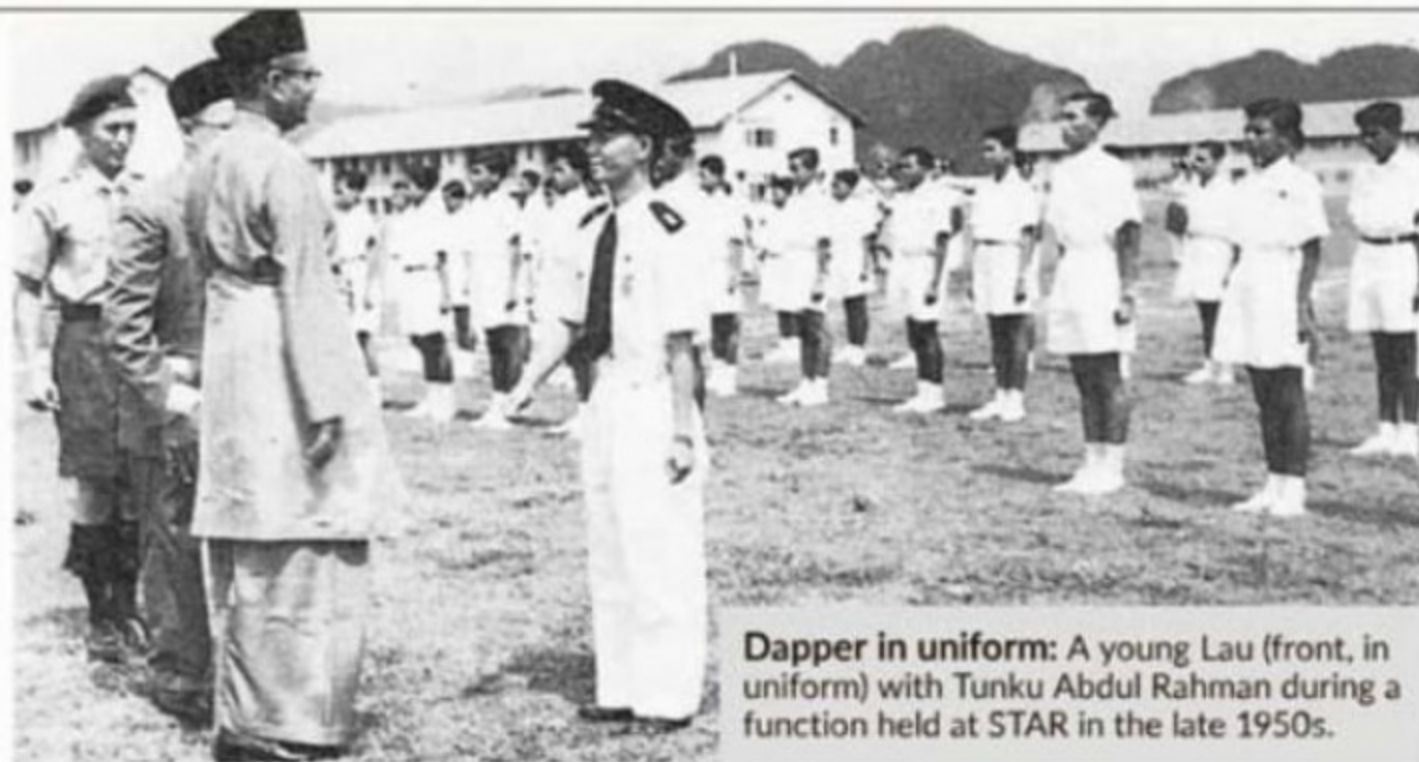




**Extended family:** Lau (second from left) poses for a picture with his old boys (from left) Shahul Hamid, Shamsuddin and his wife Fadzilah when they visited him at his house in Taiping in March before the MCO was implemented.



**Dapper in uniform:** A young Lau (front, in uniform) with Tunku Abdul Rahman during a function held at STAR in the late 1950s.

SEKOLAH Tuanku Abdul Rahman (STAR) in Ipoh, Perak, was where I got to experience some of my fondest memories.

It was also the place where I met Lau Hut Yee, a revered teacher who taught all of his students with dedication and passion.

Established in 1957, STAR was a residential school intended for the poor, but talented, boys from far-flung villages across the country to study in English.

What a privilege it was to have been able to study there.

I remember stepping onto STAR's compound in 1961 to attend lessons starting with remove class till upper six which I completed in 1968. With only a few words of English in my vocabulary back then, it was no surprise that keeping up with classes that were all taught in English was truly a difficult feat.

But through years of studies and great difficulty, the boys (STAR students) and myself included, were able to pick up the language.

It was all thanks to Mr Lau, fondly known as Pak Lau. We owe it to this dedicated teacher whom all the boys respected and loved.

Pak Lau came from a poor family in Taiping, Perak, and studied at the King Edward VII School in Taiping.

He went on to obtain the best results in the Senior Cambridge (School Certificate) Examinations and was awarded a scholarship to study at a university when he was in Lower Six. Unfortunately, he had to turn down the offer as it would have taken too long to complete the course in the university.

## Pak Lau, the revered teacher of STAR

He needed to enter the workforce as soon as he could to help out with family expenses.

Therefore, he ended up attending the Kirkby College in Great Britain for a two-year teaching course.

Not long after he returned home, he was hand-picked by the late Tun Dr Hamdan Sheikh Tahir, the first headmaster of STAR and former Penang Governor, to be a teacher to care for the village boys, like myself.

What started as a first job led to Pak Lau's 'marriage' to STAR. He devoted 34 years of his life to teaching at the school.

He was the first teacher I met when I started schooling there. He was then the warden of Yellow House where I was placed during my first few months in the school, and he taught me General Science for the Lower Certificate of Education (LCE).

Pak Lau was a no-nonsense teacher: very strict, tough and disciplined. But he was kind and treated his students as if they were his own. In his eyes, there was no such thing as race or religion. All he aimed to do was to help the village boys as he understood what it was like coming from a similar background.

Students would often

claim that they were part of his family and he gladly accepted it.

As a teacher in the school, his performance was excellent. He was revered by students and colleagues for his dedication to the teaching profession.

For that, he was conferred the Tokoh Guru Kebangsaan, a high honour by the Government.

Additionally, the General Science books that we used then were all written by him.

These books were also used by students across the country.

Pak Lau continued writing until he was well into his 70s. His enthusiasm and writing skill really inspired me. It became my motivation to write books for my students while working as a professor.

On Dec 19, 2014, the STAR Old Boys Association in collaboration with Pak Lau's loved ones and family members, organised his 80th birthday at the Intercontinental Hotel, Kuala Lumpur. Over 100 attendees, half

of whom were 'old boys' of STAR, had gathered to pay tribute to him.

Many of Pak Lau's relatives from Taiping, Australia, Great Britain and Singapore also joined us.

We were given a chance to say something about him during the function, either on behalf of the students or ourselves. Many pounced on the opportunity to honour his contributions. There was also a special video message from former Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh, who has now been appointed as Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) chairman.

In conjunction with Teachers Day which fell on May 16, I'd like to say this to Pak Lau: "The boys could not have gotten a better and more dedicated teacher than you. Pak Lau, we were at your birthday party to pay our respects to you - one of the greatest and most dedicated teachers of STAR. You taught with all your heart. Your efforts have turned charcoal into diamonds. It was under your guidance and teaching skills that we students from the far-flung villages of the country grew up to be men of substance, contributing to nation building, either in the public or private sector."

Indeed, my friends and I were fortunate to have been taught by teachers like Pak Lau to be disciplined, respectful and thankful.

**DR SHAMSHUDDIN JUSOP**  
Research Fellow  
Faculty of Agriculture  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

We welcome letters on issues related to education. Send to [educate@thestar.com.my](mailto:educate@thestar.com.my).