

Short Stories

By Ir. Tedjo Tjahyadi

OLD SOLDIERS WILL NEVER DIE

My friend suggest to me that "old soldier will never die" should be a more suitable and better title for one of the three articles I have sent him to read. Of course, he has his own reason and judgment for the purpose, But I also think, that composing another article would be more beneficial, at least to myself, it would be another opportunity for my part to improve my writing skill, since the title of which is before hand, and that is my reason. Somehow I like to thank him for his attention and willingness to read my article.

Well, speaking about the word reason, Jaya Suprana in his book (in Indonesian) ALASANOLOGI has made a wide range of analysis about the Indonesian word "alasan". If you are somewhat curious or have any other reason to know more about his philosophy, you may buy one yourself some other day.

In this article, I would try to write short stories about my friends Where about, of what they are doing in daily life, all of whom are mostly old people. By coincidence they are mostly widower trying to sustain and feel the happy atmosphere they used to enjoy with their family. Really, being a widower myself, now I begin to realize that housekeeping like dish washing, laundry, cooking, keeping, the interior of the house all spick and span etc. are not as simple as they seem to be. It has been taken for granted as part of the works that should be managed by the housewives; so most widowers might not be prepared when they are suddenly confronted by this new conditional situation. Anyhow they have to face it and solve the problem themselves; life must go on anyway.

MY FRIEND IN SEMARANG-1

When I went to Semarang with my wife some years ago I took time to visit my friend, a retired mechanical engineer who was on his mid-seventies. Nearly five feet and ten inches tall, he was well built, but has to be on his wheelchair, since he was paralyzed from the waist down. So last month, when I went to Semarang again, now alone, he was also a widower by then, since his wife passed away some six month ago. Of course, he was still on his wheelchair, when I happened to meet him at the backyard of his fairly big house in the hilly part of southern Semarang city. He was accompanied by some humming bird in their small cages, which alternatively tweet and chirp while stretching their wings. He said that the singing of his bird to a certain extent had made him feel at ease, and avoid him suffer of being lonesome. As a means of communication he had at his disposal a wireless electrical bell (in this respect he had to put the bell-knob in his pocket), a hand phone, may be a house phone was also available. He had a

MPV with a driver who was also in charge to help him "board" the vehicle from his wheel chair. To serve his daily activities, he had a boy assistant, a cook, a gardener and two security personnel. Although everything seemed to be well planned, there was unhappy moment when his electric bell did not work and a loud scream to call the boy also come to nothing. So he had to use his hand phone to contact one of his friends asking his help to come over his house. This I think was nothing serious, but as an elderly any moment the unexpected might happen, and that could be a serious problem, since he was alone inside the house. His son and daughter I knew were living in Jakarta.

MY FRIEND IN SEMARANG-2

Also in Semarang I have another old friend who used to be my classmate in Senior High some sixty years ago. He is also a widower, but has sustained a longer period of widowhood compared with my other friend. He lives with his eldest son, a bachelor, at Candi area in moderate mansion believed being built before the war, and has been part of the Dutch government officials housing complex at the time. At the age of eighty four, we can say that he is quite healthy and can enjoy his olden days happily; except that he suffers the so called age-acquired degenerative disease with his retina and has lost his vision totally. However, in spite of this major deficiency in his life, he is none the less flagging or even fails to do his morning walk as his only means of sport activity regularly. His driver, in addition to driving him to the jogging track, will also lead him the way to walk around for about forty-five minutes. During his walk, his friends, men and women alike usually greet him, or perhaps walking along for a moment, and have a chat with some jokes, which could make him and the others laugh also. Well, I think it would do much good for his physical health also. Besides, being happy would also create a sound mind. So the other day when I went there to meet him, deliberately not informing my presence, I just addressed some people around him who happened to be his friends, and whom I also knew personally. Instantly, he called my name without the slightest hesitation, and asked me when I came here in Semarang. So not having the ability to see, he was able to recognize me only from hearing my voice. It a nan in his age and condition could be so optimistic as he is, I think he must be that kind of a person who values that life is something full of happiness and certainly worth living for at any rate, I hope so.

MY FRIEND IN SURABAYA

Now, I would like to write something about one of my friends in Surabaya. I happened to meet him by chance during a morning walk, and my other friend introduced him to me. In the course of time we occasionally made a visit to each other, so as to become more acquainted. Meanwhile I learned that he had been a widower, for more than fourteen years and lived all alone in his house since then. He has a son and a daughter both already married, but stay in another city. Since I bear the same status as a widower, I would sometime ask his advice or may be just sharing experiences to each other, how to cope with certain problem or any other case we may encounter in our daily life. Of course, it is not the only topic of discussion. Now and then we also crack jokes among ourselves. Since singing and dancing are his hobby, many of his friends say that he looks like younger at his age. I mention this tact to him, and certainly it is blessing, thanks to his divine style of living. But an old man is an old man, sometimes he

sighs that actually be feels like ageing more sooner. As an example, there are occasions, where he feels of not being able to do things that he usually does it with ease before. He says that should be a sign of ageing in progress at that instance, I try to console him of not taking it too seriously, since it is only a natural process and that everyone has to face, isn't it ?

In my opinion these three old people are all outstanding. They are like old soldiers, but not in a sense of the real meaning of the word, and like old soldiers they will never die also. And last but not least, with God blessing may they sustain their happy life for years to come.

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