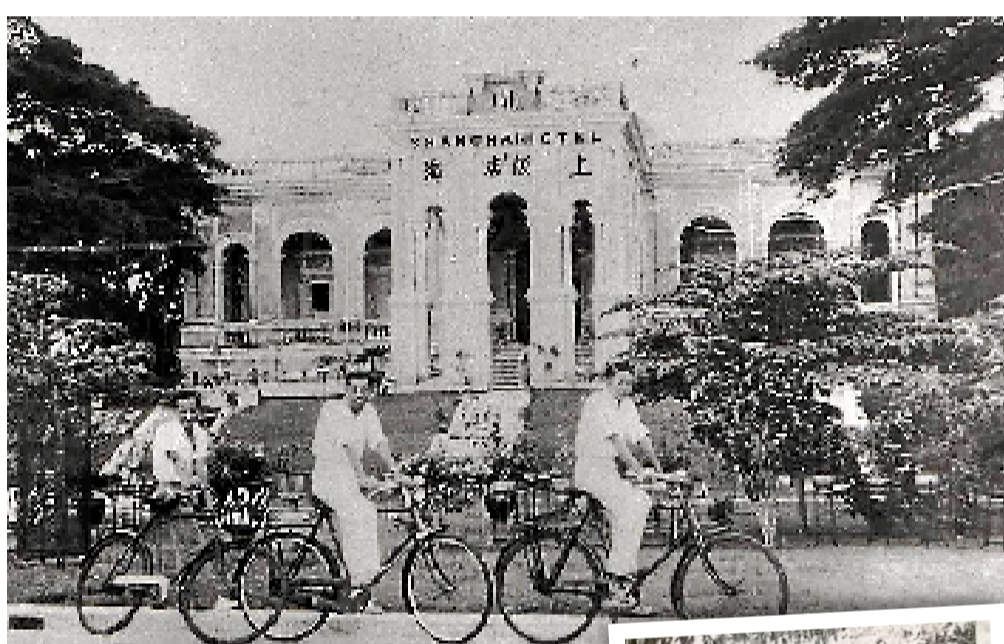


Gurney Drive, Tanjung Bungah, Batu Ferringhi and Teluk Bahang



The thing to do: Two women hunting for shellfish by a beach in Penang. Taken in March 12, 1978.



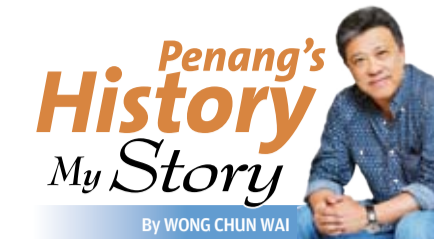
A landmark: The Shanghai Hotel used to be a popular venue for important functions in the 1960s.



Fun times: (Clockwise from left) The writer aged two with his mother Yeoh Poh Choo and father Wong Soon Cheong at Batu Maung; aged three at a restaurant by the sea; aged two having fun at the beach in Tanjung Bungah.

Life's a beach in Penang

Spending time by the seaside is a popular pastime for the locals



IT IS hard to explain to someone outside Penang, especially those staying in the Klang Valley, how wonderful life can be on the island. Even those of us who have left the island state to pursue our careers and set up new lives elsewhere will sing the same tune, as if our time on the island is permanently captured in a time capsule.

The so-called Penang diaspora is a living testimony to the saying that "you can take a Penangite out of Penang, but never the Penang out of a Penangite".

Apart from those who venture out in search of greener pastures, there are, of course, many who will never leave the island.

They will never give up their life-style for the fast-paced life of Kuala Lumpur, for example, even if the career options are more plentiful.

For me, having migrated to the Klang Valley such a long time ago, I can only reminisce about my early days, my growing-up years where memories seem to be strongly embedded.

Where else but in Penang — except maybe in some East Coast states — where the beaches are just a short distance from your school, office or home.

For those of us who studied in St Xavier's Institution at Farquhar Street, we had a seafront at the end of our football field.

After a game of football, we would sit near the seafront, where we would enjoy the strong crushing sounds of the waves hitting the wall, as we closed our eyes to let the wind blow against our faces.

Fishing was not allowed but on occasion, we would be able to throw our lines into the sea and take home a fish or two for dinner.

Our neighbour — the Convent Light Street (CLS) — was luckier. Many of

their classrooms faces the sea directly!

No wonder Captain Francis Light and Sir Stanford Raffles, who later went on to discover Singapore, chose to work and live at the site where CLS is now located.

For most families, a Sunday outing meant going to the Gurney Drive, Tanjung Bungah, Batu Ferringhi or Teluk Bahang for a swim.

It also meant digging bucketfuls of *siput remis* or shellfish in the sand.

Working at the Pitt Street — now renamed Jalan Mesjid Kapitan Keling — office of this newspaper, we would sometimes take a slow walk to the nearby Esplanade for our meals.

In the evening, when work was completed, my colleagues and I would drive to Gurney Drive to have some hawkers snacks before heading home.

During the 1970s until the 1980s, the annual dragon boat races were held off Gurney Drive and at night, the road would be turned into an illegal racing track.

The races would only begin after midnight and dragged on until 2am, with cheering at strategic spots, particularly at the roundabout.

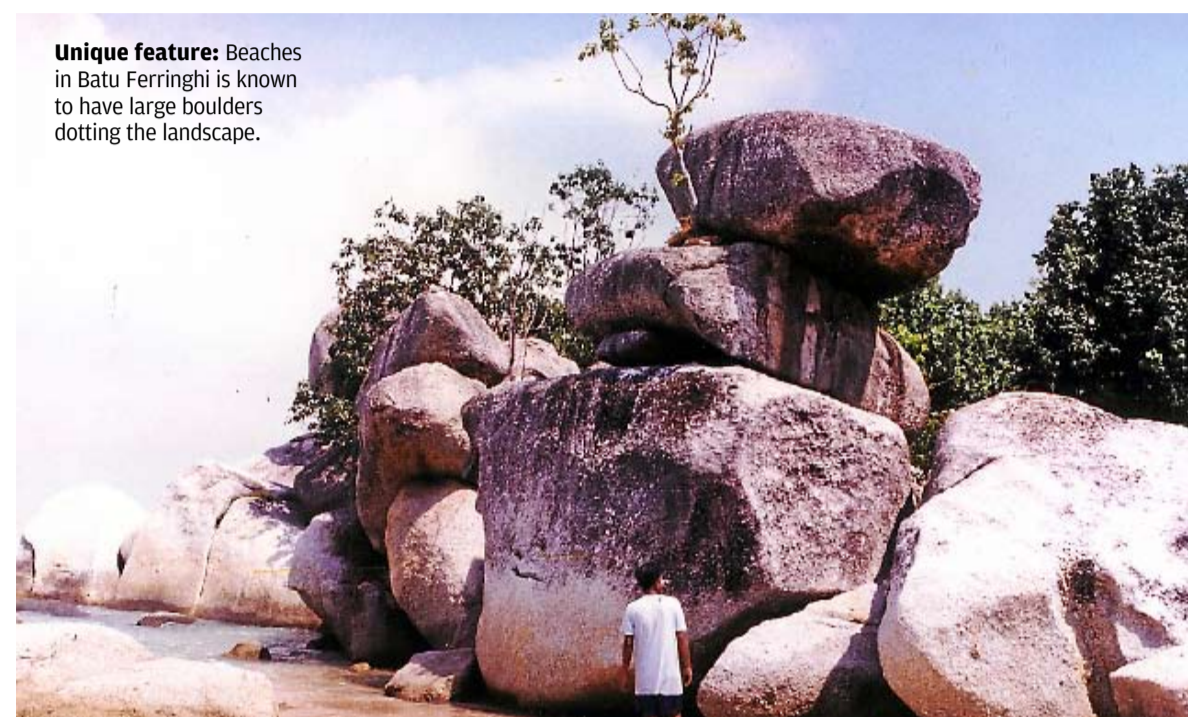
Where the condominiums of 1 Gurney Drive (or PG1 as it is commonly known) now stand, there used to be an old hotel and restaurant called The Shanghai, which was THE place for important functions like weddings during the 1960s. But that's known only to people in their 60s and 70s.

For us young journalists, Gurney Drive was where we would meet to have endless rounds of beers at the restaurants facing the promenade.

And the conversations would often be about the interesting interviews we have done with tourists at Batu Ferringhi.

There was such a thing as the

Unique feature: Beaches in Batu Ferringhi is known to have large boulders dotting the landscape.



"beach beat" then but during the 1970s, this tabloid was rather racy in nature. While it could not deliver the Page 3 topless girls similar to *The Sun* in the United Kingdom, there were regular pictures of tourists in two-piece bikinis. The Home Ministry then was obviously less strict!

By the time I joined *The Star*, for the first time in 1980, there were already less of such interviews as the newspaper had moved on to be more serious in its reporting.

Still, the beaches continued to be a source of news stories which included foreigners swimming in the nude at the freshwater pools at Chin Farm in Batu Ferringhi.

There were the occasional raids by the authorities and the newsmen would be happy to tag along.

Batu Ferringhi or Foreigners Rock

has many personal memories for me as I used to camp along the long stretch of beach as a teenager with my school friends.

My parents did not even bother to ask where I would be camping.

All I did was to tell them that I would be camping for three days or nights.

On one occasion, all our canned food was stolen while we were sleeping. Needless to say, the camping trip had to be cut short.

As we grew up to be young adults, many nights were spent at the then famous disco, Cinta, at the Rasa Sayang Hotel.

It was only natural that I chose the Rasa Sayang Hotel to propose to my wife at an expensive Western food restaurant.

But as a true reporter, there's always a story behind every event.

The salad, for example, came with a big wriggling worm which certainly took away much of the romance of the evening.

Midway, a colleague of my wife approached us from another table because her boyfriend did not have enough cash to pay for their meal.

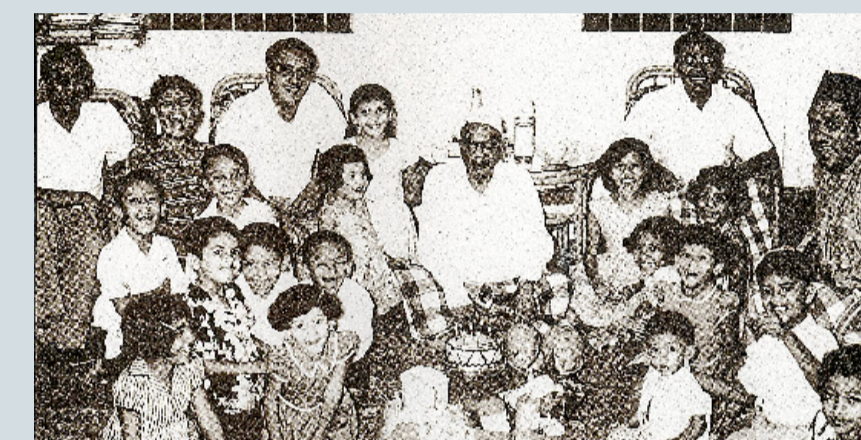
Today, the hotel has been renamed Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort and Spa, and it is surely one of the best beach hotels in Penang.

The beach culture was so ingrained in me that on my first visit to *The Star* office in Petaling Jaya, I strolled into the newsroom in my shorts and shocked many!

But it was so natural in Penang island, where most of the times, we would be in our shorts and sneakers! It would be a lesson from then on that my life in Kuala Lumpur will no longer be a stroll on the beach.



Docked on the beach: There is always a rush at Gurney Drive as fishing boats come in. Locals will take the opportunity to buy fresh seafood. Taken on March 13, 1978.



A colourful life: The late S.M. Zainul Abidin was a judo champion when he was still teaching (top right pic) and his grandchildren always gathered around to celebrate his birthday (above pic). The photos are reproduced from the book, *Pengikisahan Riwayat Hidup Haji S.M. Zainul Abidin*, published by Dimensi Eksklusif (M) Sdn Bhd.

Jalan Yahudi to Jalan Zainal Abidin — the real Zainal

I WOULD like to thank readers for pointing out the error in the history behind Jalan Yahudi, subsequently renamed Jalan Zainal Abidin, published in this column on July 6.

I had wrongly identified Zainal Abidin with the noted Malay writer who was better known as Za'aba. The road is actually named after S.M. Zainul Abidin, one of Penang's pioneer educationists, whose name is also spelt as Zainal Abidin.

The letter below from his youngest son Zainul Arshad is reproduced in full to put the matter in context. There is also another letter from another reader who also pointed out the same error. I am given to understand that many readers had called Zainul Arshad about this matter and he has taken the initiative to write us the letter.

I record my deepest appreciation to readers of this column who have constantly given me feedback, and pointed me to the right directions when need be.

It reminds me that much of local history is passed down orally, from generation to generation. We should all strive to know our own history. In writing this column, I have found that it is difficult to find the definitive records of many of the personalities that have roads named after them.

I believe all local authorities should make it a requirement to document the history of all the roads under their jurisdiction, old or new, for the public records. Even new developments named after people or events must be documented so that those who come after us will have a proper record. The little stories that surround our neighbourhoods are a rich legacy that should be preserved.

The road is named after my father Zainul Arshad S.M. Zainul Abidin writes: I read your article Penang's History, My Story titled "Leaving only tombs behind". Since I was born and bred in Penang I always look forward to reading this weekly column. I had wanted to send you a book about my father in the hope that you may write something about him being the pioneer educationist and politician in Penang. But before I could do that your article on the Jewish cemetery appeared.

I have to point out an error in your article. Zainal Abidin Ahmad has nothing to do with Jalan Zainal Abidin. He was not a

Penangite. Jalan Zainal Abidin (although wrongly spelt) was named after my late father S.M. Zainul Abidin. I am his youngest son.

S.M. Zainul Abidin was one of Penang's pioneer educationists. Among his former students were Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail (Raja of Perlis), Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu and Tuan Yusoff Rawa.

He taught at the Penang Free School for 20 years before becoming headmaster of the Francis Light School in 1938. He retired as Inspector of Schools in Penang. Zainul Abidin was the first Malay to obtain a B.A. degree (externally) from London University in 1933.

He was also a founder member of Umno Penang and was responsible for getting a piece of land from his good friend, the late Hamid Khan, to build the Umno building in Penang.

S.M. Zainul Abidin was selected by Tunku to stand as a candidate in Malaya's first Parliamentary election in 1955. He won handsomely as an Umno candidate in the north-west constituency whilst Chee Swee Ee of MCA won in the north-east constituency.

One of S.M. Zainul Abidin's sons is the well-known broadcaster, the late Datuk Zainul Alam. Interestingly enough, my late father stayed at No 35, Jalan Zainal Abidin (Jalan Yahudi), two doors from the Jewish cemetery, from 1929 until his death in 1969.

The wrong Zainal Abdul Fared Abdul Gafoor writes: I am fan of history and naturally an avid leader of your Saturday articles. You wrote that Jalan Yahudi was re-named to Jalan Zainal Abidin in memory of Za'aba. However, I think it is not so. I think it was attributed to S.M. Zainal Abidin, who was a member of the 1955 Federation Legislative Assembly.

I am told by old-timers that Zainal Abidin's home was situated just behind the present Umno building at the junction of Macalister Road and Jalan Zainal Abidin.

Hence, lending credence that it was named after a local personality rather than Za'aba who originated from Negri Sembilan and had no real links to Penang.