

Healing Hands, Humble Heart: A Tribute to Dr. Anuar Masduki

Dato' Setia Dr Anuar Masduki a much-loved husband, father, passionate and dedicated doctor and a friend to all who knew him passed away on the 2nd of March 2025. Aged 79, he was Malaysia's most senior practicing interventional cardiologist. Though his clinical skills were unparalleled, the memorials written about him focused more on his qualities as an exemplary human being and on his humility and humanity. He was the quintessential gentleman. His soft spoken and gentle ways are legendary. Anuar Masduki was cardiologist and physician to two generations of the Selangor Royal House, but he treated everyone who came his way equally and politely. He was held in very high esteem by all who knew him, especially for his ethics and honesty. So long as you gave it your due at work, you would win his approval. But if you were a shirker, and especially if you were disrespectful and rude, without raising his voice, he would give you a firm telling off, which would really hurt and make you correct your ways. Testimony to Anuar the kind and polite master was exemplified by the many multiracial paramedics from different hospitals who turned up for his funeral both at the mosque and grave site. All these paramedics had worked with him at some point in time at the Subang Jaya Medical Centre and they all had very fond memories. When news spread of his passing that Sunday morning, they all felt the need to come and say their final goodbyes. For his services to the royal household, his Royal Highness, the Sultan of Selangor was present. It was Tuanku's wish that Anuar be buried in the Makam Diraja Shah Alam. For many of us non-Muslims, it was the first time witnessing a Muslim burial. We watched with heavy hearts as his body was laid into his final resting place by his son Dr Ainur Rahman, assisted by 2 others – the simplicity and finality of the ceremony, a reminder that this life is transient and temporary and that no material things accompany us when we leave this world.

I have known Datuk Dr Anuar Masduki, for more than 50 years. He was my lecturer when I was a medical student, and I continued learning from him throughout his life.

He was born in Sabak Bernam on the 29th April 1945 to Haji Masduki bin Haji Rais an Imam and Hatijah Binte Hassan, the second of 4 boys born to the couple. Datuk Salleh his elder brother recalls happy memories of swimming in the canals lined by swaying coconut trees and fishing for ikan sepat and ikan puyu in their youth. Daughter Norma Syaneda recalls Anuar saying that he played cricket in school and tennis in university. Dr Ainur said Daddy loved gardening and would miss seeing him mowing the lawn or painting the house. The Masduki boys were sent out of their hometown to seek a better education in the nation's better schools in their early teens because Haji Masduki believed that the only inheritance, he could give his sons was a good education. Datuk Anuar attended the prestigious Malay

College Kuala Kangsar. He was the 3rd batch of students to be accepted into the Faculty of Medicine University Malaya. I know that he won a special place in the heart of our foundation dean, Professor TJ Danaraj, no doubt because the wise Professor saw all the qualities of a good physician in Anuar Masduki.

Datuk Anuar's wife, Datin Rohana Maimunah Binti Tun Ahmad Zaidi Adruce, told us of Anuar's dedication to serving his patients. Even in his 70s, after being up at night to care for a sick patient, he would get up tirelessly early the next morning to go to work – she believed that this energy was driven by his dedication and sense of responsibility over his own needs. Norma said that “Daddy is the only person I know who can go to work after a cup of coffee and a slice of toast and work the whole day”. Datin recalled the simple man with simple tastes that her husband had been. Though he never went shopping for clothes (she did all the shopping for him) he was meticulous in how he was groomed and dressed – not ostentatiously but smartly. Once up from sleep in the morning, he always made up his bed neatly. Datin believed that this was due to the regimental training in his youth at Malay College Kuala Kangsar. Anuar dressed smartly for work but felt just as comfortable in old, paint-stained clothes or a sarong hiked up to his knees while doing odd jobs at home or in the garden. Dressed as such he was mistaken more than once by delivery men who would call him from the gate and ask “where is your Boss?” He would always reply with a smile and never took offense.

The story of how Anuar and Rohana met and married is also very heart warming. Anuar's housemate when he was a 3rd year medical student, was a photographer. Anuar saw Rohana, in one photograph of a group of MARA college girls at a Raya gathering and was certain that this was his dream girl. However, none of his friends knew who she was or how to find her. A search for “the girl in the photo” began and after a period of 6 months she was finally found. After he completed his final year student exchange program in Glasgow, Anuar flew to Sibu, Sarawak to ask Rohana's father for her hand in marriage. During their 3-year courtship, Anuar wrote her a letter daily. There is no doubt that among the many blessings that Anuar Masduki had in his life, one was meeting and marrying his soulmate who kept him happy till the end of his days.

We will all miss Datuk Anuar, especially his gentle and friendly ways. His patients will find him irreplaceable. But as all of us process our loss, we take great pride and find solace in the unenviable legacy that he has left behind. I will quote Abbi Kanthasamy, one of Anuar's old patients who wrote a memorial about him, published in the Malay Mail, the evening that he died. Abbi wrote “his legacy is not in words, nor the medical degrees that lined his office walls. It is in every life he restored, in every heartbeat that still echoes because of his work”.

We all also take solace in the knowledge that Anuar Masduki passed on the first day of Ramadan — considered one of the most blessed days to pass on to the hereafter. God has definitely blessed Anuar Masduki for the good work that he has done in this world. May God bless his soul.

By Kannan Pasamanickam