

Rationale - Behind the scenes of *Teman-teman from the start* By E Sally Vickery

The beginning of the story

Teman-teman from the start began in the Museum Sumatera Utara in Medan, when I was given a copy of a program for an exhibition of photographs depicting the beginning of the relationship between Australia and Indonesia. I was asked if I knew anything about the story it portrayed. I replied that sadly I knew very little, but I certainly intended to find out as much as I could upon my return to Australia.

I was reasonably certain this was not material routinely included in curricula for Australian students, but thought maybe it was regularly taught in Indonesia. Therefore I showed it to my friend Dr Siti Zulaiha (Izul), then President of the University of Queensland Indonesian Students' Association, asking her if she had been taught the story.

When I learnt that Izul was also not familiar with it, I proposed to her that, when her studies came to a close in Australia, she join with me in ensuring that young Indonesians and Australians had the opportunity of learning how our two nations' relationship began.

Finding a way to tell the story

I was familiar with some of Mohamad Goenawan's poetry and when I was trying to find an appropriate way to tell *Teman-teman from the start*, a recurring line from his highly acclaimed poem, *A man murdered near the day of the Indonesian general elections*, kept coming to mind. It is, "Dear God, give to me your voice".

Ironically, in writing a foreword to O'Hare's and Reid's book, *Australia dan perjuangan kemerdekaan Indonesia: Australia and Indonesia's struggle for independence*, (which documents that original photographic exhibition), Goenawan mentions that his parents had been for a time exiled to Tanah Merah.

At the beginning, Izul and I thought we would write a book; but that was problematical. We knew a number of good books had already been written before on the subject. Unfortunately, they were, in the main, languishing unread on the shelves of libraries. Therefore, we were not sure that writing a book was the correct way to proceed. For us, the most important thing was to tell the story to as many people as possible.

To find the answer, I enlisted the help of a wonderful Indonesian friend, Ibu Enni Cotan, (wife of the then Ambassador to Australia for the Republic of Indonesia, His Excellency Bapak Imron Cotan). She introduced me to some of her friends, particularly Ibu Caecilia Legowo, Ibu Joyce Ansory and Ibu Dewi Suryo Dipura. I explained my problem to them and they came up with the solution. The story should be put on a free website, where everyone could read it.

The formation of *Team Teman-teman*

Neither Izul nor I had any experience in website publishing. Clearly, a team approach was needed. We set about assembling a team of Indonesians and Australians whose training and capacity for innovation would enable us to collectively achieve a work that would be, in itself, a modern cultural expression of the friendship that continues to exist between our two nations.

Also, I particularly wanted to give the Indonesian members of our team an opportunity to participate with Australians in shared creativity, using skills acquired in the Australian educational environment.

We are indeed a team, and the website is a team effort. Each member has special skills and experience that he or she has brought to the process of creating *Teman-teman from the start*. I have learnt so much from each of them.

Thank you

We have had generous help in many different ways from our families and friends, and we thank them all for this. I would particularly like to acknowledge the simply wonderful support of my husband, Mr Greg Vickery AM, former Honorary Consul for the Republic of Indonesia in Queensland, without whom the development of this website would never have happened.

I would like to conclude by thanking all my fellow members of *Team Teman-teman* for sharing my vision and for enabling me to have a “voice”.

In conclusion

CS Lewis said: “What you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing; it also depends on what kind of a person you are.”

Each and every Indonesian and Australian who began the Australian Indonesian friendship was a very special “kind of a person”. It has been a privilege and an honour to tell their story.