



D.H. ROBINSON

MILD MAN GOES NORTH

D.H. Robinson is anything but mild. Born in 1917 in Woodford, Essex, Robinson is now 90 but his lust for travel and adventure has not waned. He tells his stories best in his books *Mild Man in Borneo* and the sequel, *Mild Man Goes North (A Tale of Old Sabah)*. Robinson was recently in Kota Kinabalu for the launching of *Mild Man Goes North*, and his enthusiasm for his publication was infectious. The book tells of his time in Sabah, where he was engaged in road and construction works for several years. His stories are sprinkled with humour and dry wit, told in a nonchalant manner that makes the reader feel as if Robinson was sitting across the table relating the story himself. His attention to detail is commendable, as are his description of the many colourful characters who crossed his path during his time in Borneo. The book also features several black and white photos of 'old' Sabah, including the famous Gaya Street in Kota Kinabalu and the Sandakan Fish Market.

Although it has been years since he left Borneo for good, Robinson always seems to find his way back. "For the last 9 years particularly, I have been coming back to Borneo to avoid the winter," says Robinson, who now resides in a cottage in southwest France. His trips last for approximately 2–3 weeks at a time. Sabah holds many memories for him, including the birth of his twins on 10 September 1962. "It was my children who

inspired me to write my stories," he says, adding that the books are a way of letting his children know what he's 'been up to'. But writing his memoirs was no easy feat. "The first book (*Mild Man in Borneo*) which talks about both Sabah and Sarawak where I was stationed for several years, took 15 years to complete!" he confessed. However, the sequel took only 2 years to compile and complete. Although decades have passed since he lived in this part of the world, Robinson is in touch with many of his friends here and is surprised at how many people still remember this 'Orang Putih'! "I was in Kuching recently and an Indian man came up to me. At first, I completely did not remember him but I was amazed that after 40 years, he could still recognize me," he laughs.

So apart from escaping the harsh winters of the northern hemisphere, what makes Robinson a frequent visitor to Borneo? "I love the people," he immediately replies. "The people of Sabah are so likeable and friendly – It's hard not to love them!" Anything else?

"The girls," he concludes, with a twinkle in his eye, "The ladies here are so good looking!" Robinson's books are a great way to step back in time to explore the charm of old Sabah but in the heart and mind of D.H. Robinson, his love affair with Borneo is timeless.