

Frankie Was the First True ASEAN Citizen

Edwin Thumboo

I myself am in my 89th year and have slowed down somewhat since Covid. Frankie was a great man but more importantly, his greatness rested on kindness. He was always there when he spoke with me. I learnt a great deal from him. Being of mixed parentage myself, I was able to ask him quite a great deal of the new societies that were emerging slowly in South East Asia

Frankie was the first true ASEAN citizen. He saw us as region well before most politicians. That is something I have not forgotten. He always thought of ASEAN as a singularity, wanting a commonness that we shared but at the same time fully aware of our differences, some of which were virtually impossible to reconcile. The sadness of Burma is one example of the kind of problems we face.

I feel so sorry that I was not able to see him before he left us. Every time I was in the Philippines, I stayed with him, his wife and family. I still remember the comforts of his home, the mixture of family and privacy.

I miss him very much. Although he was not much older than I am, I saw him as a teacher and in a quiet way, as a fabulous, quiet Christian.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts about Frankie.