

A ride to remember

A daughter takes her parents on the MRT into the city and comes away with much more than a train ride.

By AZALIA ZAHARUDDIN

"LET'S take the MRT today." I looked at my 65-year-old mother with a puzzled look on my face. After more than 20 years, she finally decided she wanted to go on a train ride again. Always opting to drive instead, the old woman was suddenly giddy at the thought of taking the MRT into the city, and my 73-year-old father seemed to be just as excited. "But, where do you guys want to go?" I asked.

My parents have been to nearly every nook and cranny in this country, always mentioning some sort of memory of the places we drive by. This happened here, and that happened there. So, you can only imagine how difficult it was for me to come up with a place I could possibly take them to. "Anywhere lah. Plus senior citizens get discount!" they chorused. The two of them smiled at me as if the roles were reversed. "Okay, okay," I said. "We'll leave at 2.30," I conceded.

We hired an Uber ride to the TTDI MRT station and I asked the kakak sitting behind the glass counter about a potential stop that would be interesting, but not too tiring for two senior citizens.

After contemplating her suggestion, I bought the two of them tokens to Bukit Bintang. "Are you sure we're on the right platform?" "How do you know which trains go where?" "The train has

a driver right?" ... so went the million questions I was fielded.

I was elated at how quickly the passengers gave their seats away at the sight of my parents entering the carriage. I nodded appreciatively while the both of them stared out the window, discussing the change in landscape that has occurred over the years. After 20 minutes, we reached our stop and took the escalator up to the busy streets of Lot 10.

Babah (my dad) commented how the journey up and out of the station reminded him of the ones they took when they were in Moscow.

The old couple seemed to be awestruck as we strolled down the rows of shops and skyscrapers. Sure, they have been here countless times before, but only driving by and never walking through. It was a completely different perspective for them. Parking was always a hassle in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, and they never had a reason to come all the way there to shop.

We have 1 Utama in Petaling Jaya, and that is enough. Mama got excited watching the Turkish ice-cream man playing tricks on his customers. One would think that she would already be familiar with that kind of fun having been to

Istanbul, but she stood there for a good 10 minutes enjoying the free show. Babah, on the hand, took the time to share his memories and pointed out the places he used to eat at.

"What's that over there?," he asked. "That's Pavilion." "The shopping mall?," he pressed. "Yes, the one with all the expensive stores," I retorted. "We've never been there! Quick take a picture!"

I could feel my heart warming up as they posed in front of the water fountain at the entrance of the mall.

It had been a while since I have seen them this way. For a second, they weren't the old grumpy couple that has been married for 38 years with five kids and seven grandchildren, overburdened by life and its obstacles. They seemed to have forgotten all of that. "Does it look like we're overseas?" I smiled and nodded.

We spent the rest of the day having tea at Pavilion's food court. Mama had the chance to buy some pastries while Babah sat at the table and enjoyed a bowl of ABC. Soon after, we walked back to the station and took the train home as their wobbly legs began to tire out. My sister was already waiting at the station to pick us up.

"So how was the trip?" she queried? "Good, good. Very good! And it only cost us 80 sen each!" they enthused.

I am really happy that the three of us got to go on the MRT trip together. Sure, it was simple, and didn't take more than two hours, but the feeling that it left in my heart made it more valuable than I could ever imagine.

The MRT is undoubtedly an important milestone for the country and I am grateful at having the chance to see it in operation. It creates more accessibility and opportunities for people to experience the same places and sights, but from a different perspective. It is amazing to see these developments come to life and I hope they will continue so that I can keep making MRT memories just like this one with my own children too, someday.

