

A tribute to a close friend and colleague of Aden College Abubaker Mohsin Al Attas

By Ashraf Girgrah

Gone but not forgotten. Few people really knew Abubaker Mohsin Al Attas. He was a shy gentleman, quiet in his temper, compassionate in his feelings, positive in his attitude and humorous with his jokes. He loved to write and had strong views about life and society. He was strong in Arabic language grammar.

I knew Abubaker as a Prefect in Aden College. He was in the fourth secondary grade and I was in grade one. He did not use his authority as a Prefect to take advantage. He was a simple alumnus who went about his assignment.

I came to know him better when I was hired as an Assistant Programmer at Aden Broadcasting Station in 1959. He joined the radio station before me and followed the footsteps of Aden College alumni the late Munawar Al Hazmi, the late Alawai Al Sakaff, the late Abdulla Azazi and Mohamed Omer Balgoon.

We were a group of broadcasters who were recruited from Aden College by the late Hussein Al Safi to improve radio programming at that time.

At the radio station Abubaker was a news caster and later appointed in-charge of school education broadcasts, an appointment which he resented at the beginning but settled well in that position.

We were a close Aden College bunch, both at work and outside of work. We often lunched or dined together enjoying our youth in life, sharing ideas and discussing radio programming. We were treated as stars by Aden community.

We were later joined by other Aden College alumni like the late Abdul Rahman Bagunaid, the late Gamal Al Khatib, Omar Al Shatri and Abdul Rahman Thabet. Yet our radio group split upon the arrival of Aden Television in 1960s. Some of us stayed at the radio station and others found careers in TV. Abubaker participated in news casts and prepared and produced educational TV programmes.

The continuity of our contacts at work became weaker due to our new job careers, overseas training and our married life. But we kept in-touch outside the perimeters of work. Abubaker was not happy at Educational TV and soon tried his hands at bookshop business. He opened a library by the name of his eldest son "Mazin". The bookshop did not do well and as the political and economical situation in Aden and South Arabia became difficult and unsafe after independence because of the unruly one party state of the National Front of Liberation he opted like many educated Adenis and South Arabians to run for their life to North Yemen and then to Abu Dhabi.

He spoke of how harsh his journey on foot was through the mountains from Aden to North Yemen. It was a bitter and tough experience which he never forgot.

Years later, we met in Abu Dhabi again and we kept in-touch most of the time. He became a citizen of the UAE and worked as a Personnel Manager in the Abu Dhabi Gasco oil company. While in Gasco he wrote a small booklet for non-Arabic speaking foreigners who joined the company in Abu Dhabi. Unfortunately, Abubaker did not catch up with computer technology. He insisted on writing with his pen rather than type on a computer. He wrote articles for Abu Dhabi newspapers.

I surely appreciated his friendship and will never forget him. If he were here today he would tell us to cheer up, smile and remember all of the great memories we all shared. We will miss his wit, laughter and smiles.

May Allah bless his soul and rest him in peace.