



NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 6

ASSOCIATION OF PAST EMPLOYEES' OF SINGER

320, Dr. Colvin R. De Silva Mawatha, Colombo 2

March 2004

Dear Members,

First and foremost let us wish you and your families a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year.

With the dawn of a New Year, it is customary for most positive thinking people throughout the world, in whatever sphere of activity to look back with an enquiring mind and review their achievements, failures and successes. We also take this opportunity to review our performance during the previous year.

The most significant achievement as far as the members are concerned is the setting up of the Members' Benevolent Fund fulfilling the aspirations of most members of the Association. It was no easy task to raise funds for the Benevolent Fund Project but due to the untiring efforts of the members of the Executive Committee who left no stone unturned to collect a reasonable amount of money, we were able to commence operating the fund on 14 December 2003, the day of the Annual General Meeting.

Whilst there were generous contributions from some members, the main source of income to bring the fund to an operational level were the contributions made by Singer Sri Lanka, Late Mr. M.Y.A. Dastakeer and Mr. Hemaka Amarasuriya. In addition, the proceeds from staging 'Charitha Hathak' at Elphinston Theatre on 27 September

2003 helped us to enhance the fund to Rs.385,000, although our target is Rs.500,000.

The main objective for raising such a fund is to help our needy members who require financial assistance for urgent medical needs. It is our firm belief that every one of you will contribute generously towards this fund which is for a worthy cause. The main contributions were from:

Charitha Hathak	-	Rs.170,000
Late Mr.M.Y.A.Dasakeer-	Rs.	50,000
Mr. H.D.S. Amarasuriya -	Rs.	25,000
Singer (Sri Lanka) Ltd. -	Rs.	75,000
		<u>Rs.320,000</u>

OFFICE BEARERS FOR THE YEAR 2004

Patron : Mr. Hemaka Amarasuriya
Chairman, Singer Group

President : Mr. Berty.Fernando

Vice Presidents:

Mr.Gamini Wasalathanthri
Mr. Nelson Mendis

Secretary : Mr. Ananda Epa

Asst. Secretary:

Mrs. Vijitha Jayawardena

Treasurer : Mr. A.M.M. Nissar**Asst. Treasurer:**

Mr. Kalyana Dhirasekera

Committee Members:

Mrs. Kaushaliya Murugadasan

Mrs. Judith Vannitamby

Mr. Lasantha Perera

Mr. John Emmanuel

Mr. Vincent Dabara

Mr. Jaminda Mendis

Mrs. Chandrani Gunawardana

Mr. M. Ghouse

At the first Executive Committee Meeting held on 18th January 2004, the following Sub-Committees were appointed to plan and implement the activities of the Association for the current year:

Social & Entertainment Committee:

Mr. Nelson Mendis

Mr. Vincent Dabara

Ms. Kaushaliya Murugadasan

Mr. Jaminda Mendis

Mr. John Emmanuel

News Letter and Publicity Committee:

Mr. G.C. Wasalathanthri

Mrs. Judith Vannitamby

Fund Raising Committee:

Mr. Kalyana Dhirasekera

Mr. Lasantha Perera

Mrs. Chandrani Gunawardana

Mr. M. Ghouse

Membership Drive:

Mr. Jaminda Mendis

Mrs. Vijitha Jayawardena

Calendar of Events & Activities - 2004

March 14 : Get together of Members, Spouses, Children and Grandchildren – Malay Cricket Ground, Colombo 2

August/

Sept : Day outing for Members, Spouses and Children
(Date/Venue to be decided)

October/

Nov: : Get-together & Dinner
(Date/Venue to be decided)

December 12: Annual General Meeting
(Venue to be decided)

NEWS FROM SINGER*We are the Champion of Champions*

Singer Sri Lanka has created history by winning the prestigious 'SINGER INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR SUPER CHAMPIONS' for year 2002 and first half of 2003 from among 36 countries the world over. We were declared the winner of the Highest Overall Achievement in Retail.

This is the first time ever that the Company won such an esteemed award given in recognition of Outstanding Performance exhibiting the Best Principles in Marketing Professionalism which led to Plan Profit Achievement.'

The Award was given at the International Marketing Conference held in Vancouver, Canada last August. Our team led by Chairman Hemaka Amarasuriya was on hand to receive the Award from Stephen Goodman, Chairman, President & Chief Executive Officer, Singer NV.

-Courtesy : Sinera December 2003.

The Executive Committee and Members of the Association of Past Employees of Singer offer their heartiest congratulations to the Singer Sri Lanka Team for their excellent performance and for winning this prestigious award. We are proud of you!

Four Get into Singer President's Club

Another first was scored by Singer Sri Lanka when four from our field management staff were admitted to the Singer President's Club, an annual recognition programme for outstanding achievement in Retail Sales Management, inaugurated this year at the International Marketing Conference.

Of them, Arumugam Karikalan, District Manager, Vavuniya had the rare distinction of being selected to the exclusive President's Club. The other three from Sri Lanka in the President's Club are Sujith Sirimanne, Senior District Manager, Peliyagoda, District Manager Ruwan Jayasuriya (Anuradhapura) and Vajira Tennekoon (Kegalle).

Courtesy: Sinera, December 2003

The Association of Past Employees of Singer extends to them the warmest greetings on their superb effort.

ISO 9001 Certification for After-Sales-Service

Singer Sri Lanka has been awarded ISO 9001 Certification from SGS, U.K. for after-sales - service. `Singer is the first company in appliances in Sri Lanka to be awarded this certification and one of the first companies to have won such recognition for after-sales-service'. The Chairman Hemaka Amarasuriya said "Normally, ISO Certification is given for

manufacturing and industry. Singer has moved one step beyond."

The ISO Certification covers the quality of the operating systems of our after - sales - service at our four Regional Service Centres - Colombo , Matara, Kandy and Anuradhapura.

"This shows our commitment towards the consumer. We don't walk away after a product is sold. We care for the product and the customer throughout its life. That is how we have built up a tradition of trust, excellence and confidence" commenting on the success, Chairman Amarasuriya has said.

- Courtesy: Sinera, December 2003.

The Association of Past Employees of Singer congratulates Commercial Manager Mahesh Wijewardena, Senior Service Manager, Anil Samarasekera and their staff for the excellent achievement.

A PEEP INTO THE PAST

The incidents related below are just a few happenings in the life of a District Manager about three decades back when Singers' product portfolio was just one product - the Singer Sewing Machine manufactured by Singer Sewing Machine Company, Clydebank, United Kingdom.

WARNING : Those past employees with a history of Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) or Myocardial Infarction (Heart Attacks) please do not read. The stories related here, may be too much for them to digest.

The life of a District Manager then, was not a `bed of roses'. In addition to maintaining a high level of administration, he had to achieve Sales as well as Asset Control targets set by

the Management. Failure to reach the expected level of performance meant 'sudden death' as the hierarchy of European Managers at the top believed firmly and practiced ruthlessly the 'hire and fire' policy to eliminate the weaklings. To survive the first year working for Singer then, was a major challenge and a lifetime achievement every new recruit faced.

BITE OFF A FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Reducing arrears in hire purchase accounts was an integral part of Asset Control. This first story relates an incident which happened whilst on an arrears reduction program at Mawathagama. If I remember correct, the hirer was a Field Overseer working at the Public Works Department (PWD), Kurunegala. He was married and living with his wife in a medium-size house a few miles off the Kurunegala-Kandy main road.

Accompanied by the Shop Manager's Assistant, I visited the house around 11 a.m. The front door of the house was half opened but the windows were closed. I was reluctant to enter the house immediately. Standing at the entrance, I tapped on the half opened door to invite the attention of the occupants. There was no response. I tapped on the door once again and my repeated tapping thereafter, widened the door, sufficient for me to enter the house but I continued to stand at the entrance expecting someone to emerge from inside the house. A minute or two later, out came a young woman, may be in her late twenties or early thirties. She was about five feet tall, well built, fair in complexion and had a shapely body. Her hair was dishevelled. The cloth she wore around her waist was loose. The jacket she wore to cover the upper

portion of her body was wide open exposing her shapely breasts. In my mind, I could visualize what would have happened a few minutes ago, but I pretended I was not interested. Her private life was not my concern. The objective of my visit was to collect the three months arrears on this account or repossess the machine, not let my mind succumb to the contours of a young female body.

I introduced myself and informed her that I have come to audit her hire purchase account. I did not give her the slightest indication of my true intentions. I called for the payment receipts and requested her to allow me to check the machine number. She instantly agreed and requested me to follow her to the room where the machine was kept, momentarily forgetting that her paramour was still lying on the bed. A well-built man, strong and muscular, with only a sarong to cover the private parts of his anatomy, was sleeping on the only bed which was placed against the wall just below the side window. He did not take any notice of my presence in the room, neither did I. Having checked the machine number with the penlight torch, which I always carried when I was on my account checking errands, I walked out of the room followed by the shop assistant and the young woman. I explained to her that the account was three months in arrears and it was very necessary that she clear the arrears forthwith failing which, I will be left with no alternative but to take back the machine. She flatly refused saying she does not have that amount of money (Rs.180/-) to pay immediately. I did not take 'No' for an answer but exerted more pressure on the hirer's wife (not physically) capitalizing on the situation. I knew very well that if I insisted on her paying the arrears or

releasing the machine, the money would ultimately flow from her paramour's pocket. A little while later, she went into the house saying she would try to borrow the money from her neighbour. Five minutes passed, ten minutes passed but no signs of the woman returning except for whispering sounds emanating from the room inside. A few minutes later, the woman walked out with Rs.180/-, this time attired in a house coat, may be to give me the impression that she was returning from her neighbour's house. I thanked her for the payment, apologized for the inconvenience caused and proceeded to the next arrears account.

Even after nearly thirty years, I vividly remember this incident as I was then, a young man in his twenties bold enough to resist the temptations of a beautiful woman who exhibited the contours of her body with ulterior motives.

DISCRETION IS THE BETTER PART OF VALOUR

The background to my next story is similar to the previous one 'Bite off a Forbidden Fruit.'

The incident took place in the latter part of Sixties (if I remember correct) in a completely different environment. The location was Korlawella, a suburb of Moratuwa. The inhabitants of Korlawella, as you know are predominantly fishermen and their families, living in small and medium size thatched houses clustered between the railway line and the beach proper. Accompanied by the Shop manager's assistant Haniffa, I visited an account which was three months in arrears. According to Mr. Alavi, the Shop Manager (now deceased), the hirer had purposely avoided making payments complaining the machine was defective.

Since I was aware of the history of this account, I had planned my strategy before hand, in case the hirer came out with the same excuse but I was not quite sure whether it would work.

Arriving at the hirer's house, I made enquiries for Mary Nona, as I did not know who Mary Nona was. In a matter of minutes, women of various ages and sizes with small children, many in their birthday costumes, clinging on to their mothers or sisters converged near the entrance to Mary Nona's house virtually blocking the entrance. Moments later, out came Mary Nona, a tall, broad shouldered, strongly built woman about 40 years, resembling an Amazon. She was wearing a three-quarter length long sleeved jacket and a 'cheeththa' cloth around her waist. To adorn her neck, she had only a silver coloured chain with a cross hanging at the base. She was smoking a 'Jaffna Cigar' and puffing out the smoke, unconcerned who was around her.

"I am Mary Nona. What do you want and from where are you?" she asked me with a tough look and a rough voice. I told her that we were from the Singer Company and have come to collect the arrears on her hire purchase account.

"What arrears are you talking about?" she asked me. I don't have a sewing machine. What I have with me is a piece of steel junk. You people have sold me a dead product and now come to collect money. Get out of this house without disturbing the devil in me".

Whilst I was subjected to a verbal assault by the hirer, an army of women from the fishing community, young and old, was keenly following our

discussion, ready to go into action, if the situation demanded.

The facial expressions and the tone of Mary Nona's voice gave me clear signs of the dangers to follow. The volcano was about to erupt. Physically, I was no match to this female giant. With one blow she could make me taste the sandy soil. I had no alternative but to play cool and use my brains. Since the hirer had already condemned the product – the game she had played on numerous occasions earlier, I thought the time was ripe for me to implement the pre-planned strategy.

I made inquiries from the hirer as to what was wrong with the machine, she could not offer me a satisfactory explanation, probably she had hardly or never used the machine. My next move was to gain the confidence of the hirer before making any attempt to examine the machine. One wrong move would have ruined whatever chances I had even to take possession of the machine head. I told Mary Nona that the Singer Company never sold defective machines but if as she claims, the machine was defective, we would repair it at our Factory, free of charge. I also added, that the policy of the Company was not to take back a machine, once it is sold.

The attitude of the hirer gradually changed and she decided to let me examine the machine. I sat on a wooden stool kept in front of the machine and started pedalling the treadle. Mary Nona with her hands on her hip, was standing by the side, close to the machine. A little while later, I requested her to give me a piece of fabric to sew. No sooner she left to fetch the fabric, I loosened the upper tension to let loose stitches from under the fabric. Mary Nona returned with a piece of fabric. Having threaded

the needle, I started sewing. After stitching about four inches, I lifted the piece of cloth and examined the formation of stitches under the cloth, closely watched by Mary Nona and Haniffa. I exposed the under side of the cloth to enable Mary Nona to see the loosely formed stitches.

“Ah! didn't I tell you that the machine was defective. What is the purpose of having a machine like this? If you cannot sew four inches, how can we?” Mary Non started again the free flow of words gesticulating with her outstretched hands. “Calm down” I said. “This is not a major problem. What has happened is the timing of your machine is incorrect”. Mary Nona was now listening. I knew the opportunity had come for me to elaborate a little more the ‘fake defect’ which I had created a little while ago to achieve the objective of my visit. I started explaining to her what is meant by ‘timing’. “To obtain a perfect stitch, the movement of the Balance Wheel (wheel on the machine head attached to the arm shaft) should be synchronized with the movement of the Band Wheel fixed to the stand.

“So, what do you propose to do?” Mary Nona asked me. I replied “Even though this is a minor defect, it could not be attended to either in her house or at the shop because electrically operated meters have to be used to re-set the timing. This defect could be attended to only at our Factory. If you agree, I could take only the machine head to the Factory and get the defect attended to without any delay. You need not pay the arrears until we repair the machine to your entire satisfaction. I will personally take the machine to the Factory and return it to you within one week”.

Mary Nona did not immediately respond to my suggestion. She had a hurried discussion with some elderly women who seemed to agree with my proposal. Convinced that I was not acting with some ulterior motive, Mary Nona finally agreed to release the machine head on one condition that I return the machine satisfactorily repaired within one week. She also promised to pay the arrears when I return the machine. Mission accomplished, I returned to the shop with the machine head in the rear of my Fiat 600 car. A battle between the brain and the brawn ending in a victory for the brain.

G.C. Wasalathanthri

- More to follow -

WORDS OF WISDOM

An extract from the Article "A Fractured Economy" – Lanka Monthly Digest: July 2001

"We saw our external assets plummeting last year, because there was additional expenditure on the war. There was also expenditure involved in the re-fleeting of SriLankan Airlines. Neither has brought any benefit to the country."

"The private sector cannot be the engine of growth, if it contributes a lower amount of the GDP than the government. Perhaps, that is the aspiration, but we are a long way from achieving it."

"When migrant workers go back to their homes for the holidays, they stay over for the weekends, and make it a long weekend – thus, most of the week is gone."

Singer's Regional Chief,

Hemaka Amarasuriya

Health Watch

Amazing Heart Facts

The heart is actually located almost in the center of the chest, between the lungs, not on the left side as we all think. It is tipped slightly so that a part of it sticks out and taps against the left side of the chest, which is what makes it seem as though it is located there.

Hold your hand and make a fist, your heart is about the same size as two fists.

Your heart beats about 100,000 times in one day and about 35 million times in a year! During an average lifetime, the human heart will beat more than 2.5 billion times!

Give a tennis ball a good, hard squeeze. You are using about the same amount of force your heart uses to pump blood out to the body. Even at rest, the muscles of the heart work hard – twice as hard as the leg muscles of a person sprinting!

The pulse you feel at your wrist is your blood as it moves through your arteries. As a child, your resting pulse might range from 90 to 120 beats per minute. As an adult, your pulse rate slows to approximately 72 beats per minute.

Your body has about 5.6 litres of blood. These 5.6 litres of blood circulate through the body three times every minute. In one day, the blood travels a total of 19,000 km, (122,000 miles) – that's nine times the distance from Delhi to Chennai!

The heart pumps about 1 million barrels of blood during an average lifetime – that's enough to fill more than 3 super-tankers!

Members are invited to make contributions towards the Newsletter by way of articles of interest, memorable moments at SINGER or towards our 'Wit and Humour ' column. Please send in your contributions by 30th June 2004 ,for the next Newsletter to be published in July to The Newsletter & Publicity Committee c/o Mr. G C Wasalathanthri, 6 A, 6th Lane, Pagoda Road, Nugegoda.

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