



NEWSLETTER

July 2015

Issue No 31

ASSOCIATION OF PAST EMPLOYEES OF SINGER

80, Nawam Mawatha, Colombo 2

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Members,

We are now pleased to present to you the third issue of our Newsletter for the current year.

Contrary to our expectations, we have received only a few articles for publication from members. I have once again to reiterate that the Newsletter is the best medium through which we could provide valuable and important information of the Association activities to the membership. It is therefore, absolutely necessary that all members think back a little bit and share their past experiences at Singer with their friends and colleagues.

We hope all members will give serious thought to this request and help us to achieve the objectives of publishing a Newsletter.

MEMBERS' GET-TOGETHER – 31-05-2015

As planned the Members' Get-together was held at Shalika Hall, Narhenpita on 31st May 2015.

In the absence of the President Mr. Bertie Fernando who was sick, Mr. Nelson Mendis assisted by Mr. John Emmanuel organized and conducted the event very well. The day's program began with Mr. Nelson Mendis welcoming the members on behalf of the President.

52 members inclusive of spouses and children participated in this Get-together. In addition, Mr. Shyam Ramanathan and Mr. Chitral Perera – Directors graced the occasion as invitees. Mr. Hemaka Amarasuriya and Mr. Asoka Peiris who were also invited, could not make it due to other commitments.

A very exciting and entertaining program had been arranged with items such as Musical Chairs, Balancing the Balloon Passing the Ball and Tombola, but we were compelled to restrict the activities only to Tombola as the majority of members arrived late, close to 12 noon.

Participation in the events organized by the Executive Committee is very important, and equally important is for the participants to arrive at the venues in time, to enable the organizers to commence the day's program without any delay.

A Band comprising 3 musicians playing Piano Accordion, Guitar and Drums made the event lively and entertaining. At the conclusion of Tombola the members after quenching their thirst with the 'hot stuff' flowing freely from the bottles, and the ladies with their chatter boxes enjoyed the buffet lunch before leaving the Hall around 3.30 p.m., thanking the organizers for a happy Get-together.

YEAR 2015 - FORTHCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST	-	One Day Outing for members & Families - August 23rd to be confirmed
SEPTEMBER	-	Medical Camp - September 13th or 20th to be confirmed
NOVEMBER	-	Sing-A-Long' - Date & Venue to be fixed
DECEMBER	-	A.G.M. - Date: 13 th December (Fixed) Venue to be fixed

Poorer but Happier

The recent speech of President Maithripala Sirisena made reference to the abolition of Slavery in America by Abraham Lincoln. He went on to say that some slaves preferred to remain as slaves despite being freed, as that was the way of life they knew. This reminded me of an incident that happened at Singer.

Shiran Rubera was our Warehouse Manager at Piliyandala. He lived in Hendala and sometimes travelled to work by train via Hunupitiya Station. At the station he met this old man (a beggar in rags, living off the handouts from passers by and sleeping on the cement floor at the station). Shiran got talking to the man and discovered that he was an ex Singer employee, a sewing machine repairman.

Shiran related this story to us at the factory and I requested Shiran to bring him here. When he arrived, we gave him a good meal, got him to take a shower, gave him new clothes and took him to the Home for the Aged at Piliyandala. This home for the aged was known to us as we have helped them before. They gladly accepted the old man and he was given a new bed, clean sheets, pillow etc. and we gave him Rs.1000/- for out of pocket expenses. Just before we left him he cried and thanked us profusely. We went away with a warm feeling of having done something good for a fellow human being.

Several weeks later we went to see him and he was not happy. We cheered him up and left. After several more weeks we got a frantic call asking us to come at once to the home for the aged. The old man then cried and insisted that we return him to the Hunupitiya station where he was before. We learnt that he did not like the disciplined life routine of the Institute. Times to get up, eat, sleep etc. was detested by him. More importantly, when he was at the station, when he got some money he used to take a "shot" and that was a paramount aspect of his that was sadly missing at this place. So he went back to his place at the station with less material comforts but much happier in mind.

There is a moral to this story. We from our pedestals look upon some poor people as going through hard times, when in fact they are living their normal lives oblivious to the comforts enjoyed by many others. In fact they may be much happier than we are and are certainly not worried about the fluctuations of the dollar against the rupee.

Sent by Ananda M.N. Perera

BIRTHDAYS

We wish 'Happy Birthday' to the following members who are celebrating their birthdays in July and August. Have we missed anyone? Please let us know.



July		August	
Asita Abeysekera	1 st	Khalid M. Farouk	1 st
Vipula Fernando	2 nd	D.J. Nandasiri	1 st
Mahendra Amarasekera	9 th	Lawrence Peiris	2 nd
M.H.M. Ghouse	11 th	Upul Rajapakse	4 th
Mala Gunaratne	11 th	Ananda Dissanayake	9 th
Renuka Gunasekera	11 th	Ruan Abeyratne	11 th
Nasser Majeed	12 th	Varuni Sagariia	11 th
Jackie Gunasekera	17 th	P. Manawadu	11 th
Ranjan Dissanayake	17 th	Vimericia Fernando	13 th
Gemunu Mendis (Canada)	19 th	Gwendalin David	13 th
Himani Rajasuriya	20 th	Murali Prakash	17 th
A.M.M. Nissar	22 nd	Suren De S. Wijeratne	21 st
M.I.M. Nizar	24 th	George Hettiarachchi	24 th
Mano Sekeram	25 th	Gamini Wasalathanthri	25 th
Adithya de Silva	27 th	Sarath Bandara	28 th
Srinath Dissanayake	27 th	Chandrani Gunawardena	28 th
Senarath Gunaratne	28 th		
Antionette Fernando	28 th		
Nilanthi Palihawadana	31 st		

FIST KISSED GOLIATH'S MOUTH

Anton Alexander who had earlier been a merchant vessel sailor, remained rough-hewn even throughout his period at SIC. He was conspicuous for his 6'3" height, foul mouth and temperamental nature. He had a grip of steel, and certainly was not a man to tangle with. None approached him when after liquor as his motto then was 'Hammer every friend and foe in sight'. Since this Vesuvius of a man couldn't be met with a show of arms, everybody kept him at bay.

In contrast short statured Dudley Parry was endeared not only because he was the 'Maradona' in the Singer team and Santa Clause at X'mas parties but also for his camaraderie and joviality. Although the two were at the extreme ends of a baton, they shared the common trait of getting into brawls at the Belek-kade junction. While Anton would emerge unscattered, Parry most often ended with cuts and bruises, black eye or broken limb.

Once when Parry exhibited a face like a rag doll after an injudicious encounter with a steamroller, Singer factory workers decided it shameful to the Company, and under the command of workman L.P. Austin, 82 marched to Belek-kade Podiralahamy's firewood shed challenging the *Chandiya* to come out from wherever he was hiding. They shouted loud warnings of the dire consequences if any of his gang ever touched a Singer employee again. The force included *Attidiye Ganankaraya* Raja Dharmakeerthi who broke the neck of an orange barley bottle which he grabbed from a display rack in a boutique, to be used as a weapon. The poor *Mudalali* looked on helpless but did dare to protest.

While on the Annual Excursion in 1968 Anton stole into a pears orchard in Nuwara Eliya and stuffed his pockets and shirt with the fruits. His weight was but too much for the branch, and the inevitable happened. The watcher picked him up, yet Anton brushed him aside and crept through the barbed wire fence to safety. However he could not free himself from the disciplinary inquiry held following the complaint made by the orchard owner.

One evening Leonard Martyn- a timid man who wrote all manners of squiggles in ledgers, and I were relaxing at the Belek-kade Shining Stars Club when Anton appeared and sat at our table. Through courtesy I ordered drinks for him as well and after the second round when he cracked like one of Macbeth's witches, I drew the line and we moved out, all in high spirits. Thereafter I remember we were standing under Manchi Akka's balcony at the junction waiting for a bus. Manchi Akka was the owner of an upstairs building where two or three SIC employees found lodgings and can be described as an extremely fat, bossy, loud mouthed fishwife of a woman - a *Bargiwallah* as Indians say - with a temper that kept her in a permanent state of explosion. I also remember Anton grimace and spit out blood onto his palm.

The following morning at seven Leonard and workman Jeyarajasingham were at my side with their eyes on their brows telling me that I was 'One helluva bugger'. Anton had used his loud mouth to utter something offensive and once again the inevitable had happened. My clenched fist had kissed the mouth of this Goliath.

Sent by : T.V. Perera

APPRECIATION

MRS. RUTH DE SILVA



Ruth de Silva managed matters very commendably

It is with much sadness that I write this appreciation on Ruth de Silva whom I first met in 1969, having been introduced to her by Chatham Street Shop Manager Lal Jayasuriya. I was very impressed by her smart appearance and intelligent look and knew that she had all the makings to climb up the SINGER ladder.

Ruth hailed from a Catholic family in Moratuwa and had her education at Our Lady of Victories Convent where she displayed talents in music, singing, dancing and drama. She later went on to exhibit her skills in the art of sewing and culinary. She was just 19 years when Quintus led her to the altar at St. Sebastian's Church and enjoyed 55 years of wedded bliss.

During their courtship period Quintus presented her a Singer Automatic sewing machine which he procured for Rs.650/- on the hire-purchase scheme and induced Ruth to enroll for sewing classes at the Panadura Singer Sewing School and thereafter at the Colpetty Centre where she did her Diploma in Sewing. At the time Sewing Instructress Mrs. Perera was about to retire, and she strongly recommended Ruth as her successor, and that paved the way for Ruth to join the Singer Company. She was in no time, handling matters very commendably and to better her knowledge she was sent on a round-the-world study seminar, but in New York she was classified to be so thorough in her field that she was entrusted to conduct seminars in India, Pakistan, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Hongkong and Mexico, which earned her great reputation.

On arrival after the mission, Ruth was appointed Merchandising Manager in addition to her already being promoted as Manager- Educational Services and was in charge of all the Company's outlets in the country. It was at this stage that she published a book pertaining to her field of over 40 years. At the height of her career Ruth resigned from Singer (Sri Lanka) Ltd. which she had served loyally and with dedication and went on her own into business. Because she was well recognized in her field, other companies were quick in offering her Agencies which numbered seven in all, and perhaps she was the first to start the Mega concept. With financial backing from banks she started selling her merchandise to members of the Army, Navy and Air Force on instalment schemes during the war period.

To keep the forces content, the Navy transported her items to Jaffna by sea and hence she had to visit Jaffna often in the face of conflicts with the LTTE. She also conducted sales in Batticaloa when tension was high, and was once hauled before the sub-office of the LTTE under motor cycle escort to answer charges of black-marketing framed against her. But she established that her rates were even lesser than company stipulated prices which the LTTE verified was true and was exonerated. The tigers showed their gratitude to her by serving her with sweetmeats and gave her permission to continue her sales campaign, pledging their full support to her. Once at the Air Force in Vavuniya Ruth had to take shelter in a bunker, a concrete underground hideout structure.

Ruth was a fantastic host and often served guests eastern as well as western meals prepared by herself. Everybody adored her sincerity in this aspect. She had a bit of aristocracy within her and never left the bedroom without grooming herself. She detested anyone including husband Quintus sitting on her bed. Being a determined character and a real go-getter and a woman of substance in every sense of the word, Ruth never took 'no' for an answer. Since Quintus loved piano music she learnt it for his sake and entertained him even when she had passed 70, keeping the marriage vows to the very letter. To Quintus she was a devoted wife and on three occasions when he was between life and death, nursed him back to perfect health. To Sandra, Radhika and son Johanna she was a loving mother and to her grand-children an adorable grandmother.

Ruth was born glamorous and that glamour lasted to her final day. She passed away following a brain surgery, with a smile on her face and her family at her side. Her services to Singer (Sri Lanka) will be remembered for a long time. Although Ruth is no more, memories of her will remain with us for long years to come. May her Soul Rest in Peace !

Sent by T.V. Perera

Hulftsdorp: From Courts to quotable quotes (By Mr. Ranjan Gooneratne)

(Excerpts from an article which appeared in the Sunday Times of 22nd March 2015. I am sure our members will enjoy reading, as much as I did)

1. I begin with Charles Ambrose Lorenz. He was known as the 'morning star of Hulftsdorp' He was arguing a case before Justice Carpenter Garnier when the ceiling crashed to the ground. Adapting the words attributed to Seneca the Younger, a stoic philosopher, "Ruat Caelum fiat justitia (even if the heavens break asunder, let there be justice), he said Ruat ceiling fiat justitia (even if the ceiling falls let there be justice)

Lorenz died at the age of 43. When he came to Hultsdorp for the last time Judge Berwick was hearing a defamation case between Eddington and the Editor of the Ceylon Observer. Richard Cayley who later became Chief Justice appeared for the plaintiff, and Richard Morgan who refused the office of Chief Justice offered by Governor William Gregory, appeared for the defendant. The entire court including the Judge rose to greet him or rather to bid farewell to him.

Judge Berwick, a Scotsman told Advocate Dharmaratne "Trouble with you Sinhalese is that you all cannot pronounce English words correctly." "Neither can the Scots" replied Mr. Dharmaratne and said "I challenge you to pronounce the word "Burn". "Returrrrrn to your seat" said Judge Berwick, rolling his R. "There you are," said Mr. Dharmaratne triumphantly.

2. Justice Clarence was presiding at the Kandy Assizes. In one case, a well known, or rather notorious prostitute came to give evidence. Justice Clarence was impressed with her evidence. At the end of her evidence he directed the Mudaliyar to tell her that "the court is ever grateful to the good lady for having taken the trouble to come to court and give this valuable item of evidence. Instead of telling her this, the Mudaliyar only said "*Bahapan Vesiyē*". Then Justice Clarence questioned him "Did you tell the good lady what I told you", the Mudaliyar replied in the affirmative. Justice Clarence remarked "What a remarkable command you have of a remarkable language".
3. In another case, an old man was accused of raping a young girl. To the defence counsels' question "Far from raping you, even the very thought of having any sexual relationship did not cross the accused' mind" She replied "*Ekane kiyanne naki vise getath usay*" The Mudaliyar translated this sentence in this way "The witness says, my lord ancient erections go over the roof top".
4. R.R. Crosette Thambiah in his book "Counsel and Judge" refers to a rape case where one of the witnesses in this statement to the Police stated that he happened to be on a tree, when he saw the accused bring the woman forcibly, put her on the ground and raped her. An overzealous Crown Counsel wrote to the Magistrate and asked him to test the veracity of the witness, to get one of his peons to climb the tree, let a woman to lie on the ground, and find out from the position the witness says he was, whether he could see the offence being committed. The Magistrate replied "My peons are willing to climb the woman and not the tree. Get one of your peons to climb the tree".
5. E.H.T. Gunasekera, father of S.I. Gunasekera was prosecuting before Justice E.W. Jayawardene, the father of J.R. Jayawardene. A man by the name of William came to give evidence before him "I cannot understand" said the Judge, "when the Sinhalese have such lovely names, the parents give English names to their children" I suppose they follow the good example of their English educated brethren who called their children Junius and Corbett" replied Mr. Gunasekera.
6. The trial with regard to the murder of a basket woman also came up before Justice Jayawardene. One of the productions was a chemise. Justice Jayawardene asked Mr. Gunasekera "Do basket women wear these chemises?" "I am not acquainted with under garments of basket women" replied Mr. Gunasekera.
7. When Justice Dias was District Judge Colombo, a man who bore a striking resemblance to his, appeared before him. Justice Dias thought he would have some fun with him and asked him "did your mother work in any of the Siyane Korale Walauwas". "No" he said "It was my father who worked there."
8. It was a well known fact that Justice O.L. De Kretser had a mistress. Her first name was Primrose. In a jury trial before him R.L. Pereira was cross-examining a prosecution witness. His client, the accused whispered to him "*Ahanna Hamuduruwane meyata hora ganiyek innawada kiya*". "*Pissuda Yako?*" said R.L. "*Rajjuruwantath hora ganiyek innawa*".
9. Nomie Weerasuriya was also a leading silk, and a supreme strategist in the District Court. He had a vast outstation practice. One of the lawyers in Gampaha took a bet with his fellow lawyers that the next time Mr. Weerasuriya comes to Gampaha Courts he would squeeze his private parts. Within a few weeks Mr. Weerasuriya turned up in Gampaha and walked into the lawyers' lounge. There, this lawyer walked up to him and said "Sir, I am in this difficulty. I have taken this bet. What am I to do?" Mr. Weerasuriya said "My dear fellow I do not want to stand in the way of your making a little money, but do it gently".

10. Ms. Seneviratne as a raw junior appeared before B.G.S. David, the chief Magistrate, Colombo. Her accused was convicted of the offence. David then asked Ms. Seneviratne "what have you to say about the sentence?" "I place myself entirely in your hands" said Ms. Seneviratne. "What a pleasure" said the judge "You can be in that position as long as you like".
11. In the Bentara Election petition case Mr. Wickramanayake appeared for the respondent. Unlike a District Court trial, an election petition case goes from day to day. Invariably Mr. Wickramanayake walks into court after the judge takes his seat on the bench. One day he happened to be in Court when the Judge walked in. As the Judge walked into court, all in the well of the court had to rise. As the judge, Justice Sri Skandarajah resumed his seat he said, "I am glad Mr. Wickramanayake you bowed and showed some respect to Court". "I never bow to court my lord. I was merely looking for my spectacle case".
12. When Sir Alan Rose was the Attorney General, the crown counsel who acted as the office assistant used to get nuisance calls. One day the Minister Sir Lalitha Rajapakse phoned the O.A. He thought it was another nuisance call and abused him roundly. Sir Lalitha immediately complained to Sir Alan and said the young crown counsel abused and set out the words of abuse. Sir Alan summoned the crown counsel and told him that the Minister had complained that he had abused the minister, and before he gave his explanation Sir Alan said "Well done young man, I too wanted to express similar sentiments to the minister."
13. R.L. Pereira led the evidence of his only eye witness who was blind as a bat. Counsel for the prosecution, before he cross-examined the witness, said "I am going to first test your eye sight". "Tell me what I am doing" and began to scratch his nose. At that point R.L. shouted to witness from the bar table and said "*Kiyapan yako p*** kasanavai kiyala*"

Sent by: G.C. Wasalathanthri

NEXT NEWSLETTER

We propose releasing our next Newsletter in October 2015. Please send in your contributions to reach us by 30th September addressed to:

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