

Posted copy to Mrs. Jayasinghe on 5/8/19



NEWS LETTER

JUNE 2019

Issue No.43

ASSOCIATION OF PAST EMPLOYEES OF SINGER

80, Nawam Mawatha, Colombo 2

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Members,

It was just seven days after the Sinhalese and Tamils celebrated the New Year, visiting temples and Kovils to perform their respective religious rituals that the Christian and Catholic devotees flocked to their respective churches to attend the Easter Sunday morning prayers that explosions occurred at the three respected churches and three five star hotels in Colombo City, resulting in the death of over 300 persons and causing injuries to over 500 persons.

In view of this tragedy, as a mark of respect to those who perished, we cancelled the monthly Executive Committee meeting scheduled to be held on 23rd April and also the Musical Evening 'Sing-a-Long' scheduled to be held on 27th April. Furthermore, due to the security conditions which prevailed in May, we were reluctantly compelled to cancel the Executive Committee Meeting and also the Cricket Match and Get-together scheduled to be held on 26th May at the Moors Cricket Grounds.

The next event planned for the current year is the Cricket Match Get-together is planned for Sunday, 21st July 2019. Details will be notified in due course.

Let us hope that the country returns to normal and peace prevails to enable all Sri Lankans to engage themselves in their day to day activities without fear or anxiety



A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE HARRY JAYASINGHE - FORMER MARKETING MANAGER

At a time when Singer Sewing Machine Company was struggling for existence in Sri Lanka, due to import restrictions imposed by the then Government, the Regnis Sewing Machine was introduced to the market at the 1976 Marketing Convention. The man who launched and introduced the machine Mr. Harry Jayasinghe, the former Marketing Manager is no more. He passed away on April 21st in California, USA. The funeral took place a few days later.

Those past employees of Singer who associated with him will no doubt remember the professional manner in which he conducted this memorable event. They will certainly be saddened by his demise.

May his Sole Rest in Peace.

Wasalathanthri

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - JULY TO DECEMBER 2019

- July 21st - Cricket Match & Get-together. - Venue to be confirmed
- Sept. - One Day Outing. - Date & Venue to be confirmed
- Nov. 16th. - Sing-A-Long. - Venue to be confirmed
- Dec. 15th. - A.G.M. - Venue to be confirmed

IN JULY 1983 AT SINGER SRI LANKA IN 83, CHATHAM STREET

I am unable to stop thinking of my good luck by meeting certain colleagues 36 years ago. The myth unfolds that on the fateful day of 25th, Monday of July 1983, my colleague Mr. LalDevarajah and I (22 yo) travelled to work in the early hours by a bus from Dehiwala to Colombo 1. On that day of the journey on the bus, it was not the same as before but I was concerned. The atmosphere was found to be disturbing due to some terrorism in the previous days in the northern part of Sri Lanka. I felt the uneasy calm until we reached the office.

Reaching the office of Singer Sri Lanka, 83, Chatham Street, I felt some moral and mutual strength by meeting the colleagues. But unfortunately, on the same day by mid-morning, all were told of a build-up of a conflict zone in and around the Colombo Fort area and were advised to reverse back to safer places as fast as possible.

At this juncture, Lal, Ms. Marini Machado and myself were in a confused state thinking of our own safety up to our boarding place in Dehiwala. We were waiting at the entrance of Singer Sri Lanka without finding any route buses moving outward in the Chatham Street. At this time, we were spoken to gently and politely by Mr. Dickman, the Personal Assistant "Haven't you all gone home?" and he continues to speak in a graceful manner to say "I am about to close the roller shutter within a couple of minutes once our madam leaves the office now."

At that instant, we could hear the passive voices of Mrs. Savithri de Silva and her husband Mr. Vasantha De Silva walking down the wooden staircase, softly. When she sighted our presence at the entrance, she had a number of questions for us. How are these folks going to end up like two of us to Dehiwala???

Pin drop silence prevailed.

Immediately, Mrs. Savithri took the lead and gave us instructions to get into the back seats of the light blue coloured beetle Volkswagen car including Mr. Dickman and three of us. The car was driven by Mr. Vasantha de Silva. Mr. Dickman said goodbye to us at the nearby fuel station. The journey continued with great uncertainty in our minds. As we were just passing the

Colpety Junction, we could proceed no further on Galle Road. We could see many people were running for life/burning of shops, atrocities to humans on both sides of the roads. Mrs. Savithri and her husband used a different route plan courageously ending up in Dehiwala within a couple of horrid hours. We continued to walk in the midst of the smoke. After all this, the two of us were hiding under the beds and other objects for a couple of days at Ms. Marini's residence. The rest of our journey was finding the nearest refugee camps in Colombo and ending up at the Methodist College, Colpety.

The breathtaking stewardship of Mr. & Mrs. Savithri & Vasantha De Silva, Mr. Dickman and Ms. Marini Machado is a revelation. So just in the second year of my work experience at Singer Sri Lanka, I had the great opportunity to learn about emotional leadership skills from these role models. Their transfer-able skills backed me for a reasonable 14 years (1987-2001) of strength and courage to transform the eastern terrorized landscapes into profitability and growth

Mrs. Savithri De Silva was working as a Confidential Secretary for the Managing Director, Mr. Hema Amarasuriya at the time. If anyone of you happens to meet Mr. & Ms. Savithri Vasantha De Silva or Mr. Dickman, please extend my thoughts to them. I am in touch with Mr. Lal Devarajah in Canada. The Google.com helped me to have the views of Mr. & Mrs. Savithri Vasantha De Silva to remember and recollect.

Elmo B. Joseph

A BENEVOLENT WISH

On evaluating the recent heart-rending events created by sudden explosions in the several churches and hotels on a respected religious day, it was unbelievable to note the deterioration in human qualities in our motherland.

The world rejoices at the advancement of technology not realizing the decreasing humanity on the other hand. How could people embrace morbidity, when almost all the prevailing religions preach them to be kind and loving towards fellow human beings?

This is really an eye-opener to foster goodwill and kindness among the next generation. Therefore, elders and authorities concerned should take steps to inculcate soft-hearted qualities from early childhood in order to eradicate gruesome activities in the future. Dhamma schools can play a big role in this respect.

In my opinion, it is not advisable to expose kids in their formative years to watch meaningless harsh cartoons promoting bad heroism. Natural calamities can occur in any country, whether developed or not and people are doomed to bear such. Yet, man-made destruction can be avoided with proper measures.

Let us fervently hope that peace and harmony will be restored soon.

Pushpa Fonseka

AN ENCOUNTER WITH J.V.P. TERRORISTS - DEAD AND ALIVE

The recent terrorist attack on Easter Sunday prompted me to write this article on JVP insurrections way back in 1972 (if I can remember correct). I was the District Manager, Kegalle District based in Kegalle itself. After a decade of inactivity, the JVP was now waging a brutal campaign to overthrow the Sri Lanka Government. The Sri Lanka Government retaliated to crush the JVP insurrection even with a more brutal campaign using all the armed resources available.

In Kandy, it was a war between the JVP and Government forces and these terrorist activities were not confined only to Kandy and its suburbs. It gradually spread to neighbouring cities such as Kegalle, Matale and Kurunegala. With the curfew being temporarily lifted, it was a normal working day and hence I decided to check whether Warakapola Shop was opened for business and whether the shop manager the late Mr. Alavi was present. Mr. Alavi was in the habit of spending more time with his family in Negombo than at Warakapola leaving the shop in the hands of his assistant Tudor Perera. That particular morning, I had proceeded only a few miles, when I saw a convoy of Army vehicles was proceeding in the opposite direction towards Kegalle. The canvas covering of the roof of one of the trucks following an Army Jeep had been completely removed and the rear of the truck was quite visible. A closer look inside the truck revealed a gruesome sight. There were about seven to eight bodies of young men lying on the floor board of the truck tied together. They were between eighteen and twenty five years old. Around each man's neck was partly burnt car tyre. There was evidence that the men had been tortured before they were killed. In addition, there were five or six terrorists, legs tied together and hanging from a cross bar in the truck, awaiting the usual punishment and death.

The Army jeep stopped and I was signalled to stop. Thereafter, an Army Officer and three soldiers approached my vehicle. The Army Officer started questioning me as to where I was going and for what purpose. I showed him my NIC and Company Identity Card. I told the Army Officer that I was going to the Warakapola Singer Shop on business and would return to Kegalle within an hour or two. Then they thoroughly checked my vehicle and gave me the OK to proceed but with a warning that I was taking a big risk and to return to Kegalle as early as possible. Half an hour later, I reached Warakapola to find the town deserted. Not a single shop was opened. Except for a few private vehicles, no other vehicles were seen on the road.

As expected, our Singer Shop was also closed and I returned to Kegalle within an hour.

Wasalathanthri

THE CASE OF THE WOOD WORK WHITE

BY T.V. PERERA

The changed facade of Singer Industries is clearly attestable. Having embraced changing times, it is redolent of yesterday. The physical substances in the structure that was the factory oddly enough to me, transform the items therein into a story-telling sanctuary which begins from the Cabinets Department whose manager 'Thanikasalam' was respected by all for his gentle and conciliatory approach to work-related matters until cirrhosis claimed his life early.

The Singer factory which commenced operations in 1961 comprised the Cabinets Department consisting Yard, Kiln, White and Finishing Sections. In the Yard, stacked on implanted concrete blocks in 12 ft. high heaps were ginsapu planks awaiting transportation to the kiln for air-drying and seasoning, and thereafter to the White for processing – on a trolley which moved on a rail track built especially for the purpose. Yard casual workman 'Tilakarane', on completing his day's work clambered atop a stack to rest in the best way known to him. The protruding ends of the wooden crossbars between each layer of planks helped him reach the top. Stretching himself on the bed of planks after his Spider Man act, he found solitude and comfort beneath a crystal clear sky lit up with vibrant stars, and in the gently breeze that wafted across the Yard fell asleep during which he rolled and crashed onto the ground from the 12 foot height between concrete stumps, prodigiously escaping a cracked skull or broken bones.

The Yard charge hand in the early 1970s was dark and stocky Rajendra with a 'Bombay-looking-Ma-dras-seeing' squint, occasionally seen in the washroom brushing his teeth. If questioned, he would blurt out, "What, thinking water having in boarding? Water cut no men, everywhere". Or the mild excuse would be, "Water coming boarding tap, weak men. Can't wash face or go to lat, no. How to without face washing?" On certain Saturdays, Rajendra, with bag of soiled clothes slung over shoulder, would rush to the Ratmalana airport to catch the Avro flight to Palali and home. The flight then cost Rs. 60 one way.

Seasoned planks underwent transformation into machine cabinets in the Wood Work White. Gardener GamiGunaratne generously loaded the saw dust which arose, into a tractor which carried it away to reclaim the marshy land on which the Soysarama temple was built with a colossal white granite image of the Buddha sitting peacefully facing the Galle Road. Gamiini spearheaded ragging newly-confirmed factory floor employees by emptying tins of paints on their stripped bodies. The paint had to be scrubbed hard with thinner, which on contact with the sensitive human skin produced burning sensations for days. Despite experience, machine operators stood prone to accidents. Semi-skilled workman Somindupala Wijunge who retired as stores manager, had a phalange of his ring finger ripped off by the fret saw in similar fashion as the band saw did to Basil Dias' index finger. The rip saw caused a groove in ex-mer-chant vessel Jack tar Anton Alexander's forearm. George Suwaris made the sanding machine back-fires an excuse to drown his pains in alcohol every evening while my

erstwhile friend KalyanaBoteju who underwent the same suffocation sought Wintogeno relief. In addition to captaining the Singer Sports Club team, Boteju studied the laws of the game out-and-out ending up a professional cricket umpire. Balasinghe faced a major calamitous accident when the router machine blade separated his little finger and the fleshy part, from the rest of his palm. Bleeding profusely, he switched off the machine before resting his swirling head on the machine.

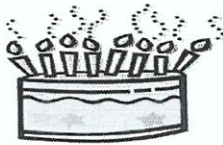
* Denotes not living. (TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT NEWSLETTER)

NEW MEMBERS

Four new members have joined the Association as follows:

Mr. ChannaPathirana	–	Member No. 256
Mr. M.A.T. Kehelhena	–	Member No.257
Ms. KeerthiWijekulasuriya	–	Member No.258
Mr. Elmo Joseph	–	Member No.259

BIRTHDAYS



Following members will be celebrating their birthdays in June and July and August. We wish them 'Happy Birthday' and a bright future. Trust we have not missed anyone.

June		July		August	
Salinda Samarakoon	1st	Asita Abeysekera	1st	Khalid M Farouk	1st
Hugh Samarasinghe	3rd	Vipula Fernando	2nd	D.J. Nandasiri	1st
Zubair Hassen	4th	M.A.D. Jinadasa	6th	Upul Rajapakse	4th
P.H. Bandusena	8th	Mahendra Amarasekera	9th	Ananda Dissaayake	9th
Irene Indraratne	10th	M.H.M. Ghouse	11th	Ruan Abeyratne	11th
Sandya Ambalangod	12th	Mala Gunaratne	11th	Varuni Sagarika	11th
Irangani Dhanapala	14th	Renuka Gunasekera	11th	P. Manawadu	12th
Wincent Dabara	18th	Nasser Majeed	12th	Vimerica Fernando	13th
Janaka Kaluhendiwela	19th	Chitral Perera	14th	Gwemdaom Davod	13th
A.J. Piger	19th	Jackie Gunasekera	17th	Prakash Murali	17th
Priyath Salgado	25th	Gemunu Mendis	19th	Suren De S Wijeratne	21st
Alfred de Silva	25th	Himani Rajasuriya	20th	G.P. Katugampola	23rd

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We propose to publish the next Newsletter in October 2019 subject to availability of sufficient articles to fill in at least 6 x A4 pages. Therefore, please send your articles for publication not later than 20th September 2019 to the following address:

Next Newsletter

W.A.R. Ravindra	28th	A.M.M. Nissar	22nd	George Hettiarachchi	24th
SanathJayasuriya	30th	M.I.M. Nizar	24th	Gamini Wasalathanthri	25th
		Mano Sekeram	25th	Sarath Bandara	28th
		Adithiya De Silva	27th	Chandrani Gunawardena	28th
		Srinath Dissanayake	27th		
		Senarath Gunaratne	28th		
		Ajith Paranavithane	29th		
		Nilanthi Palihawadana	31st		