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ASSOCIATION OF PAST EMPLOYEES OF SINGER

From the Editor's Desk

Dear Members,

The response to our request for articles to be published in the Newsletter is fairly encouraging. Three more members have taxed their memory to recollect interesting events of the past and put them on paper for the reading pleasure of their friends. We trust this trend will continue and many more members will come out with their secrets of the past.

We are also happy to announce that several interesting events have been planned for the second half of this year commencing with the Annual Cricket Match and Get-together scheduled to be held on June 24th at the MCA Grounds – details of these events appear elsewhere in this Newsletter. Please note that it is your participation that will make these events enjoyable and memorable.

So, please keep the dates free and join the fun with your spouses, children and grandchildren, if you have any.

We also plan to introduce a new item to this Newsletter, commencing from the next issue – a quiz competition based on facts and figures of the Singer Organisation.

MR. DAMITH SHAMINDRA AMARASURIYA



We were deeply grieved and shocked when we heard of the untimely death of Mr. Damith Shamindra Amarasuriya beloved younger son of our Patron Mr. Hemaka Amarasuriya and Mrs. Amarasuriya.

Damith suddenly fell ill in the morning of 22nd May 2012 and as his condition was unsatisfactory, he was rushed to the Central Hospital. Despite all the efforts of Doctors at the Central Hospital to save Damith, he bid farewell forever to his parents, brother, sister, relations and friends at about 5 pm the same evening. To lose Damith at the prime age of 28 years, brings immense sorrow to everyone who was close to him, especially to his parents.

I vividly remember Damith as a young boy of about 10 to 12 years following Mr. Amarasuriya when the Chairman was walking towards his office from the rear entrance at No. 320, Union Place. He was such a well mannered boy that whenever he saw me he never forgot to greet me with his charming smile and say 'Good Morning or Good Afternoon uncle'

It was just six months ago, when the Annual Musical event 'Sing-A-Long' was held at the Lions Club premises, Wijerama Mawatha, Damith who graced the occasion with his parents and sister made best use of the opportunity to enjoy by joining the members in dancing to the music provided by the Calipso Band. Did anyone who saw him that evening ever think death would befall him so soon?

We, the members of the Association of Past Employees of Singer, share with Mr. & Mrs. Amarasuriya and other family members the sorrow this sudden death has brought to them.

G.C. Wasalathanthri

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR THE YEAR 2012

Cricket match / Get-Together – June 24th
One day outing for members & families – July
Medical Presentation – September
Sing-A-Long Musical Evening – Early November
Annual General Meeting – 9th December (Fixed)

Dates and Venues to be decided

New Members

No new members have joined the Association since March 2012. This is rather disappointing. We need to strengthen the Association further by increasing the membership. With this in view, we urge each and every member to make a determined effort to persuade at least one past employee who is not a member to join the Association. Merely handing over or posting an application form will not suffice. Follow up and keep on worrying him/her until you receive the duly perfected application and the life membership fee. At present the membership stands at 188. We need to achieve the year-end target of at least 250 members. We are certain with your dedication, perseverance and determination this target could be achieved without much difficulty.

Singer Sewing Machine Company in Mid-Fifties

I am writing this article to bring awareness to the members of this Association who joined this Company after diversifying the product portfolio and after the expansion of business by marketing various household products. The writer joined the Company on 26th October 1955, a teen-ager, as a Junior Clerk. The Company at that stage was known as 'SINGER SEWING MACHINE COMPANY,' Central Agency exclusively controlled by the Bombay Management. The C.E.O. was known as The Agent and late Mr. John Hartley was holding this position. The Central Agency office was situated on the 2nd Floor, at 83, Chatham Street, Colombo 1 with a strength of nearly 50 to 55 staff. The Agency Office was managed by the Chief Clerk and the Assistant Chief Clerk, Senior Officers and the Cashier were responsible for preparing the monthly business results, and mailed same to Bombay Management for onward transmission to the Headquarters in New York, U.S.A.

During this period the sole business was selling only SINGER branded sewing machines, operated by hand and treadle, allied spare parts, needles, machine motors and Singer oil. All the above products were manufactured at the Singer factory in Clydebank, Scotland in the United Kingdom and were imported into this country. The Ceylon Central Agency had a total network of nearly 80 to 90 main outlets managed by the Managing Salesman as well as many sub branches known as Sales Points handled by Sales Agents, who reported to the Managing Salesman of the territory. As in the present days the sales outlets were supervised by District Managers and Supervisors (Area Managers).

The business in this era was very good for the simple reason the branded SINGER sewing machines were very durable and long lasting items among all people. Singer had its 100% market shares and held the sole monopoly for sewing machines business. In this connection the writer wish to refresh the memories of all Singer staff, past and present, to mention a few popular household models of sewing machines marketed five decades back viz: 99K30 & 128K (hand machine with base and cover) 15K80 & 88, 110KL 201K, 306K, 319K, and the tailoring models – 103K, 188K & 15KSV80. The 103K was well recommended by all male tailors around the island as it was a trouble free and long lasting machine and a good partner for their industry. I am not forgetting the marketing of various heavy duty machines used in the textile garments, leather industries etc. imported from Japan and U.S.A. of course a little expensive but long lasting.

Before I conclude this article, it is pertinent to bring to your notice that during 1970 to 1977 period all foreign imports were restricted by the then Government which included sewing machines as well. The Government imported a low cost sewing machine in components from India, in factory condition, on behalf of sewing machine importers and they had to purchase same from the Government. The Arm and Bedplate had to be polished and transfer the ornamentation (decalcomanias) and to assemble the under Bedplate component parts at our assembling plant. The assembled Machine Head, together with the locally turned out cast iron Stand and Table were marketed under the brand name as REGNIS. This period under review was not so healthy for foreign importers with the severe import restriction; many Companies started retrenching their staff. However, Singer employees never faced such a situation. Whoever employed at this crucial period must thank the top hierarchy of the Company for not taking this measure towards their dedicated employees.

SENT BY MR. SELLAH THİYAGARAJAH (26.10.1955 TO 31.12.1999)
ROBIN-eBERT
The Last e-MALE FROM SINGER
(A tribute to a colleague)

EPISODE I : I met him for the first time in dramatic circumstances. I was three days into my job as Legal Office (LO.) Singer Chatham Street (I was called "Ello" by my colleagues even today 16 years after retirement, except for the Chairman, Shop Managers, Dealers and Audit Manager. Most of us were branded with initials, like cattle in American cow boy country; there was a plethora of initials baffling to the novice – AM, DM, CM, FW, OM, MM and TM were some).

Here I was on a Monday morning feverishly collecting my case files for my weekly trip to Hulftsdorp to attend the Hire Purchase "roll", when the calm was shattered by a verbal assault in the official language from the room next door, I remembered the urgent message I had for him from the Chairman. I knocked on the door cautiously hoping for a "ceasefire" – but the cyclonic storm did not cease, except for a loud and curt "COME IN!" I opened the door nervously and stepped in – I was in the middle of a dressing down of a minor employee for lapse of duty. I waited with bated breath waiting for the rumpus to die down and though "so here was the man behind that blustering voice" – ex-Captain of the Royal Air Force Military Police, workaholic, disciplinarian, wiry in appearance with a slight slouch, pug-nosed (indicating a stubborn refusal to give up an argument on the flimsiest of subjects, especially in interpreting the Rules in the Singer Manual the Bible of every Singer Administrator!) a valley hakuru and plain tea connoisseur, a walking encyclopedia of Singer Rules and practices, reverter specialist of Sewing Machines, a terror to defaulting customers and "shorter" Shop Managers and to Dealers and weak-kneed sloppy Supervisory staff, a virtual Sherlock Holmes at Account Checking and last but not least a father figure and friend to every one and a true leader of men.

"So you are the new "ello"?"

"Yes" I said, name is one-years-income"

"Pleased to meet you", he answered back.

"I have an urgent message" I said

"from the Chairman, he wants you to meet him"

"O.K." he said and/beat a hasty retreat leaving him to resume his tirade.

SENT BY T. VANNASINKAN

Birthdays



We take this opportunity to wish the following members who are celebrating their Birthdays in June and July. Have we missed any one? Please inform us:

JUNE		JULY	
Mr. Salinda Samarakoon	1/6	Mr. Vipula Fernando	2/7
Mr. Hugh Samarasinghe	3/6	Mr. M.H.M. Ghouse	8/7
Mr. Zubair Hassan	4/6	Ms. Mala Gunaratne	11/7
Ms. Irene Indraratne	10/6	Ms. Renuka Gunasekera	11/7
Ms. Irangani Dhanapala	14/6	Mr. J.A.C. Gunasekera	17/7
Mr. W.G.E. Dabara	18/6	Mr. Ranjan Dissanayake	17/7
Mr. Janaka Kaluhendiwela	19/6	Mr. Gemunu Mendis	19/7
Mr. W.W.A.R. Ravindra	28/6	Ms. Himani Rajasuriya	20/7
Mr. Sanath Jayasuriya	30/6	Mr. A.M.M. Nissar	22/7
		Mr. P.S.J. Karunaratne	22/7
		Mr. M.I.M. Nizar	24/7
		Mr. Mano Sekeram	25/7
		Mr. Adithya De Silva	27/7
		Mr. Srinath Dissanayake	27/7
		Ms. Antoinette Fernando	28/7
		Mr. Senarath Gunaratne	28/7
		Ms. Nilanthi Palihawadana	31/7

The saga continues.....

Contributed by former Distribution Manager J. Sadique

Another hilarious moment in a District Manager's life.

Especially the field staff will know the pressure created during the final months of the sales competition period. Every D/M will try by hook or crook to win the coveted "District manager of the Year Award".

This is an annual award given by Singer (Sri Lanka) for the best performing D/M who achieves and exceed the yearly sales target. I was fortunate to work with one of the best Area Managers Mr. Ravi De Silva whom I call as a smiling assassin. He can floor you with his smile.

The Area under his purview was West Area and my District was Pettah District which had some dynamic shop managers.

During the final phase of our sales competition Mr. Ravi de Silva and myself were travelling together in his car to Pettah shop to get late Mr. Dayananda, Pettah Shop Manager to get us more TV sales as the point awarded for TV sales was more and I badly needed few more points to become the Best D/M of the year. We were travelling all around my district demanding the shop managers and the approved dealers to give their 110%. I think it was about 6.30 p.m., and we were travelling from Fort Shop to Pettah Shop thru' Baron Jayathillaka Mawatha (now it is a high Security Zone). While passing the HSBC bank, I heard Ravi saying that my wife was standing outside the Bank. Oh God!! Only then it struck me that I was supposed to pick her from her office at HSBC at 5.30 p.m. that day. I never thought twice but told my AM to proceed to Pettah shop get our work done and pick her later.

From Pettah shop, I called my wife and asked her to go home in a three-wheeler.

Once I got home you can imagine what happened.....



This was the fun we enjoyed while working at Singer. The pressure of achieving your sales targets, the competitiveness between the D/Ms, A/Ms etc. The comradeship among the Managers and the Approved Dealers were great.

During the last month everything is forgotten even your wife and that year I won the Best District Manager's Award with the support of my entire Shop Managers and Ads and peace prevailed at home.

Quotable Quotes

The secret of management is never to make a decision that ordinary human being can't carry out. Peter Drucker

HUMOUR

There was a line of men standing in front of heaven, waiting to get in. A sign overhead read 'FOR MEN WHO HAVE BEEN DOMINATED ALL THEIR LIVES BY THEIR WIVES'. The line extended as far as the eye could see. There was another sign nearby 'FOR MEN WHO HAVE NEVER BEEN DOMINATED BY THEIR WIVES'. One man was standing under it. St. Peter came over to him and said "What are you standing here for?" The man said "I don't know my wife told me to stand here".

A Businessman was telling his friend that a rather disturbing thing happened to him recently. "I was reading the Annual Report of a company I own shares in" explained the man "and one of the items was CASH FLEW - \$300,000. So I wrote to the Chairman of the Board and said 'That's CASH FLOW. The Chairman wrote back and said "No that's CASH FLEW. OUR ACCOUNTANT IS IN BRAZIL".

NEXT NEWSLETTER

We have planned to publish the next issue of our Newsletter in September or early October. Members are kindly requested to send in contributions for publication not later than 15th September 2012.

Addressed to:

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