



NEWS LETTER

SPECIAL ISSUE – MARCH 2021

Issue No.45

ASSOCIATION OF PAST EMPLOYEES OF SINGER

112, Havelock Road, Colombo 5.

PUBLISHED IN MEMORY OF LATE MR. BERTIE FERNANDO



March 1936 – December 2020

Mr. Bertie Fernando, a true friend and legend of Singer

Hewawasan Sarikkalage Bertie Fernando was born on 16th March, 1936, at Dharga Town, Aluthgama. He was the youngest of ten siblings. Mr. Bertie Fernando was educated at Richmond College, Galle, where he excelled in studies and Cricket. A top class left arm orthodox spinner, he represented the college 1st XI for three years, and also played in their big match with Mahinda College. Later, he played for Moratuwa Cricket Club in the 1st Division Cricket Tournament (Sara Trophy) for several years with success.

Having completed a Course of Training at G.T.C. Maharagama, he joined the tutorial staff of Ananda College, Colombo, and served nearly 12 years as an exemplary teacher, specializing in Mathematics. During this period, he did yeoman service as a Prefect of Games, Warden of the College Hostel and Master in Charge of Discipline. Mr. Fernando, was also the Officer Commanding the College Cadet Contingent and was instrumental in winning the prestigious "Herman Loos" Challenge Trophy, under his command. To his impressive record, Bertie had guided, trained and mentored dozens of top grade military officers who were leaders in the battles and the final victory against terrorism, which shook the country for 30 long years. Leading them was the highest decorated officers in the services, Field Marshal SarathFonseka, followed by Admiral of the Fleet, WasanthaKarannagoda, Major General Nanda Mallawarachchi, (Former Army Commander) Jagath Dias, Kamal Gunarathne (present Secretary of Defence), Rear Admiral AnandaPeiris, Rear Admiral SarathWeerasekera (present Cabinet Minister), former I.G.P. Mr. MahindaBalasuriya and many more officers of the three forces and Police. Apart from the military leaders, he also produced a galaxy of Professors, Diplomats, Principals, Teachers, Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Marketers, I.T. Big Wigs, Sportsmen, Politicians and many other distinguished citizens who served Mother Sri Lanka with pride.

In 1974, saying good-bye to Ananda College, Bertie joined Singer Industries (Ceylon) Ltd. Ratmalana, as Security and Welfare Manager. Soon he got promoted as Materials Manager, and later as Commercial Manager of Regnis Lanka Ltd. Here, he along with Mr. VidyaVidyarathne, the Factory Manager, was instrumental in turning out our own refrigerators of high quality. Next he was appointed as the Factory Manager of the Singer Furniture Factory at Piliyandala. Finally, Mr. Bertie Fernando, retired as Commercial Director of the Singer Group of Companies, after 26 long years of committed service. He was a very much respected Manager for his honesty and integrity. He was also a very hardworking, committed and loyal employee, who earned the respect and admiration of everyone at Singer.

On his retirement, Mr. Bertie Fernando with the initiative and support of Chairman, Mr. Hemaka Amarasuriya took steps to form the Association of Past Employees of Singer in the year 2000. Since then, till his demise, he held the post of President and served its members with full devotion and sacrifice, and commitment of a true leader. Many are the benefits and events he organized for the betterment of the members, and the community. Among them was a Scholarship Fund, Medical & Health Scheme for members, Get-together and other social events for members, spouses and their families like Day outings, Sing-a-Long nights, etc, took precedence.

Mr. Bertie Fernando, apart from his numerous obligations to the Society, which he carried out with a sincere concern and feeling, which kept him much occupied during his working days, and to a lesser extent after retirement, yet he never neglected his loving family. He was always supportive of his immediate family and relatives, specially looking after his beloved wife Kumudini, who fell ill recently, his son Udana, daughter Nadee, and his loving grandchildren – all of whom lost a loving person. I lost my best friend. We all lost a true friend, a good leader, a great gentleman. Farewell, my dear friend, Bertie, may your journey in Samsara "be short and finally attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana." Adios Amigo

Nelson Mendis



Mr. Bertie Fernando President of A.P.E.S. addressing the Members at the last AGM held on 15th December, 2019.

A True Legend of Singer

My good friend Bertie is no longer amongst us but his good name will live forever.

It was on the morning of 16th December that I heard of the passing away of Bertie after a brief illness. The news brought me immense grief as I had closely associated with him since the year 2000 when we inaugurated the Association of Past Employee of Singer. I knew he was not in his best health but least expected him to say 'Good Bye' to all of us so suddenly.

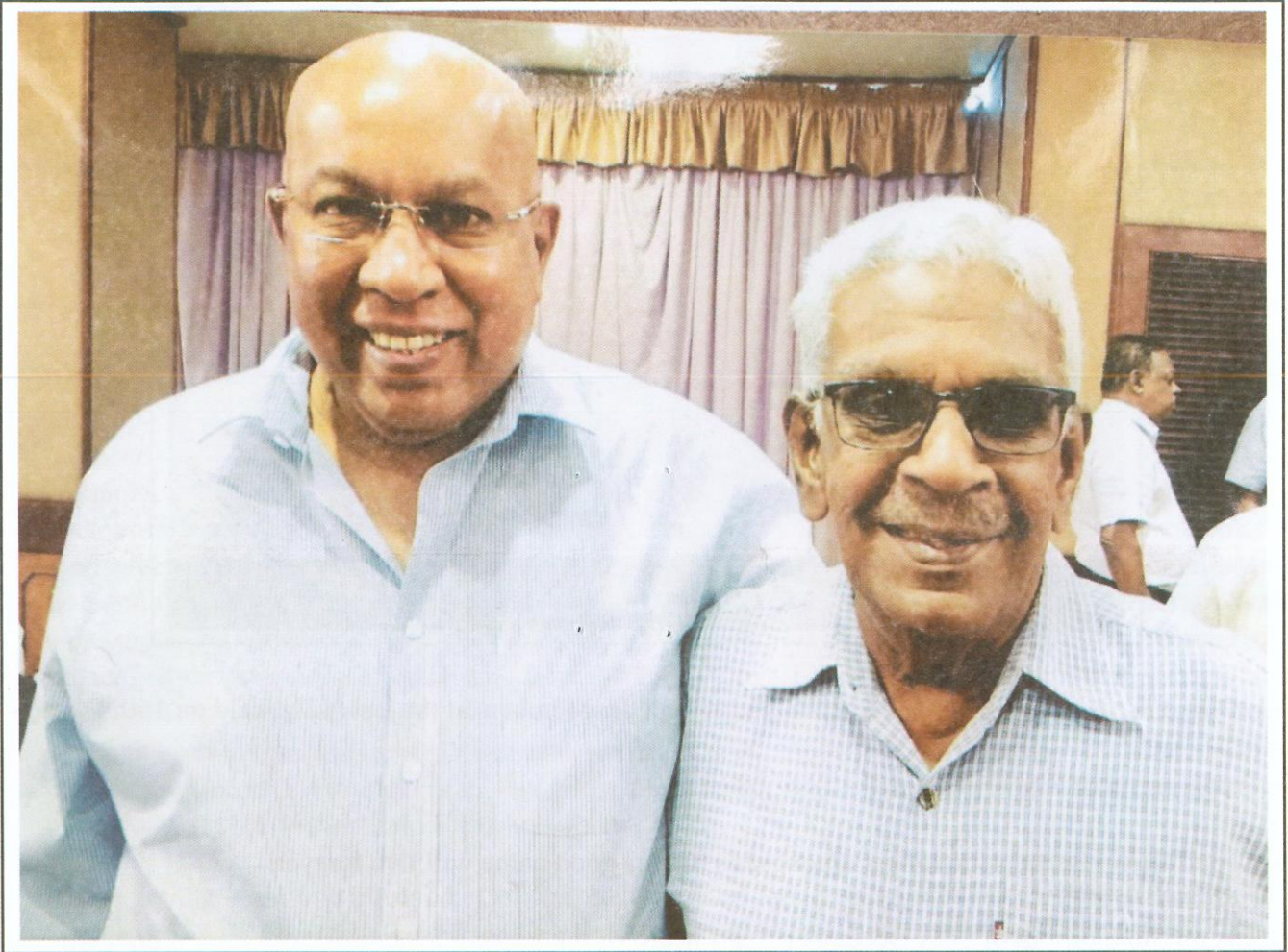
Bertie was a true legend of Singer and the livewire of the Association of Past Employee of Singer. His dedication to the Association as the President for 20 long years since the day the Association was formed and to the welfare of its members is immeasurable.

He was a perfect gentleman of the highest calibre who demonstrated the qualities of a great leader. He was honest and sincere in whatever he said and did. The welfare of the members of the Association, was his primary concern and to ensure that members who were in distress were well looked after, he appointed a sub-committee each year comprising himself and a few members of the Executive Committee to visit sick members at their residences and find out their most urgent needs and help if necessary.

Bertie was never greedy of positions. After having laid a firm and solid foundation for the Association, he wanted on numerous occasions, to relinquish the Presidency and hand over the reins to young blood but all his attempts proved futile as the members knowing his dedication to the Association and his organising capabilities, unanimously rejected his requests and thus he continue to be the President up to the day of his departure. I am not touching on his professional career much as been said in the articles appearing elsewhere.

Death is inevitable but when it happens to one who is close to your heart, it is unbearable. To replace the vacuum created by him is extremely difficult.

May he attain the supreme bliss of Nibbana



Mr. Bertie Fernando with Mr. Mohan Pandithage, the present Chairman of Singer Group.'

A Leader par excellence

I am Kaushalya Murugadasan and I am so honoured to take the opportunity to pay tribute to my Boss Mr. Bertie Fernando through this message, who had been my superior at work. Working for Singers was my first job and I continued to work under Mr. Bertie Fernando for 4 years, which was from 1979 to 1983.

Learning the news of his demise during the early hours of that morning through Mr. Nelson Mendis was shocking and sad filling. I still can't fully accept that he is no more with us.

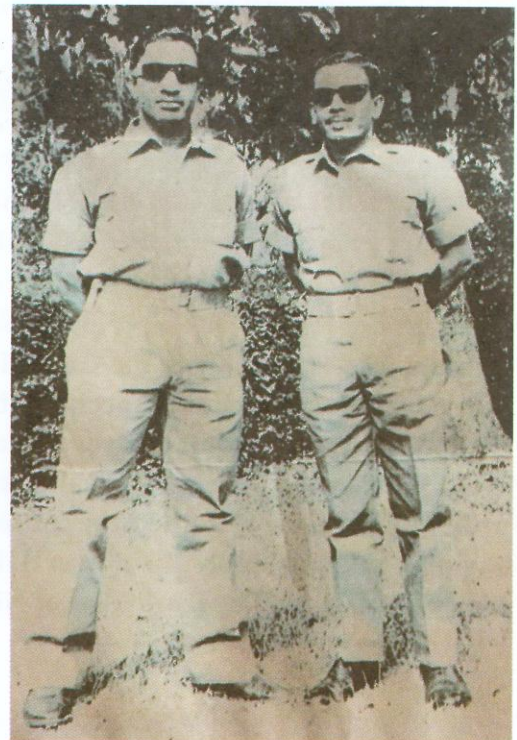
Though I had worked with him for only 4 years and that was my first job, his contribution towards my work experience was tremendous. His availability for clarifications while working there and the way he courteously dealt me on any of my inadequate experiences were sure to be mentioned and remembered. Since 2000 I had been a member of Association of Past Employees of Singers, which had been led by Mr. Bertie Fernando, gave me a chance to renew the bona fide friendship with him and his family.

He was such a wonderful person to have worked with for his possession of a treasurable friendship.

May his soul rest in peace.



Lieutenant Bertie Fernando



Nelson and Bertie at Army Camp, Diyatalawa

Military & Navy Leaders moulded by
Mr. Bertie Fernando
Left to Right-Front Row;Gotabaya, Balagalla,
Daluwatte, Fonseka,Karannagoda,
Weerasekera and Pieris
Second Row; Nanda, Jagath, Kamal, Prasanna
and Charlie

A Great Personality

Bertie Fernando who passed away peacefully on the 16th December 2020 after a brief illness, hailed from a distinguished family from Aluthgama. He was a spirited, amusing, warm, capable, loyal and dedicated personality. With his radiant smile he sparkled establishing immediate rapport and inspiring everyone to give their best to Singer Industries Ltd. He was loved by all employees .He was a strict disciplinarian and a great friend.

Bertie completed each and every task as President of Singer(Sri Lanka) Ex- Employees Association and President of Mercantile Cricket Association. With dedicated and organising skills he had immense capacity in team building. He was an honest, loyal, committed, dedicated and outstanding leader.

Bertie started his primary education at AluthgamaVidyalaya ,Aluthgama and later on at Richmond College in Galle until he completed his G. C. E . O' level. Thereafter he joined St Sebastian College Moratuwa to complete his G.C. E Advanced Level. He worked for three years for the Ceylon Tea Board as Junior Executive and joined the Teachers Training College Maharagama . After completing his training he joined the staff of Ananda College in 1961 and was assigned to teach Mathematics and Physics to GCE O level students and also served as Master in Charge of Senior Cadets. He was Sub warden of the hostel and later on assumed duties of Warden . He was also the Prefect of Games, teaching and training students in discipline and sports with kindness and care.

He joined Singer Sri Lanka Ltd as Security and Administrative Manager and in 1993 and was later promoted as Commercial Director. He captained Singer Industries cricket team In the Mercantile Cricket tournaments . He was a stubborn batsman and a very good left arm bowler. He also represented YMCA tennis team in the annual tennis tournaments organised by SLTA.
 He leaves behind his wife Kumudini and his two children. May his soul rest in peace.

Ranjit David

I came to know Mr.Bertie Fernando in 1978 when I joined Singer Industries as Secretary to the Factory Director. After 4 years, when I got a transfer to the Head Office, I almost lost touch with him until one day in year 2000 he called me and informed me about forming an Association of Past Employees and requested me to attend the inaugural meeting. I was there for the meeting. About 2 months later Mr. Fernando informed that I have been appointed as the Assistant Secretary of the Association. In 2009, I sent an article for the Association Newsletter published in December 2009 which conveyed my appreciation of our lost hero reading thus:-

OUR PRESIDENT

Active, Personable and able is HSB
 Representing a battalion of One Seventy(170)
 Ever ready and willing to help the APES Committee
 Simple but steady a Commander carefree
 Developed career from Junior Mgt.to Middle and Senior latterly
 Ending up as Director and Consultant you see
 Now retired,still so busy as Head of Past Employees

Although I resigned from the Committee in 2015 on health grounds, I continued to attend most of the Association activities, especially the AGM every year. It is great that every year, in spite of his wish to step down and hand over the leadership to another, he was re-elected and has been the President for a full term of 20 years(expect for a short period after his heart surgery). He was a profound organizer and led the Association to success,through his leadership and guidance now having a total membership of over 310.

May he attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana
Vijitha Jayawardena

අමතක කල නොහැකි අපේ බර්ටි ප්‍රනාන්දු මහත්මයා

සිංගර් ශ්‍රී ලංකා සමූහ ව්‍යාපාරයේම සේවය කර සේවාකාලය අවසන් කල සියලුම සේවක සේවිකාවන් සමග පැවති සුභද සම්භන්ධතාවය රැකගැනීම වෙනුවෙන් ආදි සිංගර් සංවිධානය ගොඩනැගීමට මහත් වෙහෙසක් කැපකිරීමක් කල අපේ බර්ටි ප්‍රනාන්දු මහත්මයා අප අතරින් කායිකව වෙන්වුවද හදවතින් වෙන්කල නොහැක පීචනය යනු ඉපදෙනවා පීචන්වෙනවා මැරෙනවා එය ලෝක ස්වභාවයයි අපි හැමෝම මේ ලෝක ස්වභාවයට පිටින් නැතිනම් විරුද්ධව කිසිවක් කල නොහැකිය ඉපදන හැම දෙනාටම මරණය උරුමයි බර්ටි ප්‍රනාන්දු මහත්මයා පුරා අවුරුදු 19ක්ම අප සංවිධානයේ සභාපතිවරයා වසයෙන් කීර්තිමත් සේවයක් ඉතාම අවංක සිදුකල මහත්මයෙකි සැබෑ සභාපතිවරයෙකි කාලය ශ්‍රමය ධනය සංවිධානය වෙනුවෙන් දන්දන් කෙනෙකි

ඛොහෝ විට මෙවැන්නක් ලිවීමට ලැබුනේ සිංගර් නාමය අමතක නොකරමින් අප සංවිධානය ගොඩනැගීම නිසාමය සමාගමෙන් ඉවත් උවද අප සහෝදර පිරිසක් ලෙස නිතර හමුවන්නේ බර්ටි මහත්මයාගේ කැපවීම නිසාය

රූපය දිරයි නාමය නොදිරයි යන කියමන සත්‍ය ලෙස ඔප්පු වන්නේ මෙවැනි මානව නිතවාදීන් අපෙන් වෙන්වූ විටයදිය ඔහුගේ නාමය අප අතරින් අනිමිවන්නට කිසිදු අවස්ථාවක් නැත හේතුවක් ද නැත බර්ටි ප්‍රනාන්දු මහත්මයාගේ අවසාන කටයුතු වලට විශාල පිරිසකට සහභාගි වන්නට නොලැබුනේ රටපුරා පැතිරී ඇති වසංගතරෝගය නිසාවෙනි එම නිසා පවුලේ සැමදෙනා වෙත අපගේ බලවත් ශෝකය මෙම ලිපි යෙන් ප්‍රදානරමු

මබට නිවන් සුව පතමු මොක්සුවය පතමු
 මංගල වේලාරත්න

An epitome of gentility and geniality

BY T.V. PERERA

Was it a coincidence or a premonition that made Bertie Fernando say at the last 2019 AGM of the APES (Association of Past Employees of Singer) when he was re-elected President, "I am now in the departure lounge. Somebody else younger must now take over this position".

I write this appreciation on Bertram (affectionately known as Bertie) Fernando on whom although the curtains came down on December 16, 2020 at the age of 84, will be remembered by many with gratitude, for the fragrance of his yeoman service and exemplary life still lives on. I first met Bertie on the day he joined Singer Industries in 1974 as the Security & Welfare Officer.

Bertie's contribution to the company was recognized by him being with time, elevated as Personnel Officer, Materials Manager, Commercial Director at Regnis Lanka and finally Director at Singer Furniture in Piliyandala. A cricket enthusiast, he even played for Singer in the Over 35 Six-a-Side MCA Tournament with Hemaka Amarasuriya, Sriyan de Silva, Nelson Mendis, S. Mootatamby, and Adithiya De Silva comprising the team. While at Regnis, he formed the Regnis cricket team which plays in MCA tournaments. Gotabaya and Basil Rajapakse, Wasantha Karanagoda, Sarath Weerasekera, Prof. Ravindra Fernando, Arjuna Ranatunge, Nanda Mallawarachchi, Ranjith Madduma Bandara, Imtiaz Bakeer-Markar, and Mithra, Sunil, and Sidath Wettimuny count among Bertie's prominent pupils. He was also the President of the Ananda College Retired Teachers' Association. The affection his pupils had for Bertie Fernando was demonstrated when the Old Anandians in Victoria hosted a felicitation dinner to honour him when he visited Australia with his wife in 2010.

I observed Bertie as a figure of immense integrity sternly upholding the sanctity of truth and fair play not only as a matter of official duty but also as a requirement of his conscience. He discharged his duties with a will to do justice regardless of personal motives or prejudices. Rather than compromise and seek benefits, his moral fibre, courage of conviction and unflinching sense of justice were beacons in gathering darkness.

A quality I admired and respected in him was his epitome of generosity, indomitable spirit in facing challenges and sharing knowledge and experience. He committed his time in retirement participating in meritorious acts and being involved in layman associations that helped humanity.

He carved a niche in society not only by what he achieved but also by the noble and righteous way he lived demonstrating by example how a human life can be spent meaningfully. His best quality which I saw was his successful completion of any task which he undertook. Apart from his remarkable and enviable professional record, throughout his life he epitomized humanism, gentlemanliness and other good traits. In short, Bertie was an epitome of gentility and geniality who lived a good life. There will undoubtedly be many who read this tribute and share my sentiments and who have experienced the unique qualities, determination and sincerity with which Bertie carried out his functions.

At the 19th AGM of the APES at the time Bertie Fernando was re-elected President for the 18th time, addressing the membership he said, "I am now in the departure lounge...." Inviting others to come forward and take leadership, he continued: "Someone else younger must now take over this position". He leaves behind his wife Kumudinie, daughter Nadie, and son Udana. The APES will find his loss a void hard to fill. May the wonderful memories of Bertie Fernando be a source of strength and inspiration to all who associated with him. May his journey through samsara be short, and may he attain the supreme bliss of Nirvana



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