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NEWSLETTER

MARCH-JUNE 2020

Issue No.44

ASSOCIATION OF PAST EMPLOYEES OF SINGER

Singer Sri Lanka PLC 112, Havelok Road, Colombo 05

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Members,

By the time you receive this Newsletter, three months would have passed but our sincere wish is that every day of the New Year will glow with Good Cheer and Happiness for you and your family inclusive of grand children, if any. 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 and review their achievements, failures and successes. We also take this opportunity to review our performance during the previous year and find out what our successes and failures were.

To say the least, 2019 was a dismal year as far as the Association was concerned. Several interesting events had to be postponed and finally cancelled due to the situation which prevailed in the country after the Easter Sunday calamity. In addition, the publication of the News letter planned for May and October had to be cancelled due to insufficient articles.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The nineteenth Annual General Meeting of the Association was held on 15th December 2019 at Janaki Hotel, Fife Road, Colombo 05 with the participation of 96 members as against 77 the previous year. A significant feature of this AGM was the presence of several past employees who were keen to join the Association either by persuasion of a member or voluntarily. The Ex-Co welcome all those new members and invite them to participate in all the activities organized by the Committee. The President in his address to the members, welcomed Mr. Amarasuriya and Mr. Mohan Pandithage the present Chairman of the Singer group and thanked them for their presence. The President further said that Mr. Amarasuriya, the Patron of the Association has been a pillar of strength to the Association, participating in almost all the activities organized by the Executive Committee, continuing to strengthen the cordial relationship he had with the members in the past. In addition to the special guests, Mr. Mahesh Wijewardena - CEO and Mr. Kumar Samarasinghe, Marketing Director were present as special invitees along with Mr. Rohan Kulasuriya - Director, Human Resources, Mr. Irzan Mohamed - Head of Treasury and Dhammika Mayadunna. Mr. Mahesh Wijewardena and Mr. Kumar Samarasinghe have always supported the Association and have been present at the AGMs, if they were free of any other important

engagements. A special word of thanks to Mr. Kumar Samarasinghe for sponsoring the AGM in the past as well as this year.

For the benefit of Mr. Pandithage and the new members who joined the Association recently and to-day, the President and explained briefly the objectives of the Association and appealed to the members to contribute generously towards the Benevolent Fund to enable the Association to continue providing financial assistance to members for their medical needs. Concluding his address, the President emphasized the importance of members

informing the organizers of the AGM of their participation at the AGM to facilitate catering arrangements without any problems when the bell for lunch is rung.

The President next invited Mr. Pandithage to speak a few words. Mr. Pandithage in his address to the members said he had been invited for the AGM last year and year before but could not make it due to other engagements but was extremely happy to be present to-day. Mr. Pandithage continuing said he was impressed with the activities conducted by the Association, especially the assistance given to alleviate the suffering of our members due to illness and financial problems and also help poor students to continue their education without any hindrances by granting scholarships etc. Mr. Pandithage suggested that the venue of the next AGM should be changed to the Kingsbury Hotel and requested

the Association to organize the event there and that he would render whatever assistance possible.

The meeting ended with a raffle draw where valuable gifts were offered as prizes, some of them donated by members and namely Mr. Channa Pathirana, Mr. Murali Prakash, Mr. J. Sadique and Mr. Samitha Perera.

A re-chargeable lantern which could be used as a torch as well plus a plate with the 2020 calendar printed on the face of it was given away as gifts to all the members who attended the meeting. The plate was a donation by Mr. Murali Prakash and Mr. Zubair Hassen as usual undertook to pay Rs.3000/= towards the purchase of the lanterns.

Wasalathanthri

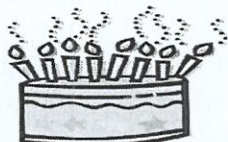
COMMITTEES MEMBERS -2020

Patron :	Mr. Hemaka Amarasinghe
President:	Mr. Bertie Fernando
Vice Presidents:	Mr. Nelson Mendis Mr. Chitra Perera
Secretary:	Mrs. Judith Vannitambay
Asst. Secretary:	Mrs. Kausaliya Murugadasan
Treasurer:	Mr. Nasser Majeed
Asst. Treasurer:	Mr. John Emmanuel
Committee Members	Mr. G.C. Wasalathanthri Mr. Ranjith David Mr. Zubair Hassan Mr. Russell De La Motte Mr. Lasantha Perera Ms. Kamalangani Perera Mr. Ruwan Kasturiaratchi Mr. Damith Jayasena
Hony. Auditor:	Mr. Priyath Salgoda
Appointment of Sub-Committees	
Social & Entertainment	Mr. Nelson Mendis Ms. Kausaliya Murugadasan Mr. John Emmanuel Mr. Russell De La Motte Mr. Lasantha Perera Ms. Kamalangani Perera Mr. Zubair Hassan Mr. Ranjith David Mr. G.C. Wasalathanthri Mrs. Judith Vannitambay Mr. Damith Jayasena Membership Drive
Welfare	Mr. Russell De La Motte Mr. Lasantha Perera Ms. Kamalangani Perera Mr. Ruwan Kasturiaratchi Mr. Damith Jayasena
Newsletter	Mr. G.C. Wasalathanthri
Scholarship Fund	Mr. Russell De La Motte Mr. John Emmanuel Mr. Lasantha Perera Ms. Kamalangani Perera Mr. Zubair Hassan Mr. Ranjith David Mr. G.C. Wasalathanthri Mrs. Judith Vannitambay Mr. Damith Jayasena Membership Drive
	Mr. Ruwan Kasturiaratchi

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - JAN - DEC. 2020

Lunch Get-together	-	29th March 2020
Cricket Match	-	May
Medical Lecture	-	July
Sing-a-Long	-	November
AGM	-	13th December 2020

BIRTHDAYS



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

MARCH		APRIL		MAY	
<i>Ms. PushpaFonseka</i>	01/03	<i>Mr. Ariyadasa D.A.</i>	03/04	<i>Ms. ArseculeratneJasmin</i>	04/05
<i>Mr. Elmo Basil Joseph</i>	02/03	<i>Mr. DissanayakeDeepthi</i>	03/04	<i>Mr. Russell C.M. de la Motte</i>	06/05
<i>Ms. PonnampereumaSusima</i>	03/03	<i>Mr. AnandaPerera</i>	05/04	<i>Mr. Gunatilleke H.L.N.</i>	11/05
<i>Mr. C.A. Fonseka</i>	09/03	<i>Mr. AbeyratneRuan</i>	11/04	<i>Ms. KirthisingheShirani</i>	09/05
<i>Mr. David Ranjit</i>	10/03	<i>Mr. WijetungeSanath</i>	13/04	<i>Ms. JayawardenaVijitha</i>	12/05
<i>Mr. SamaranyakeThanuja</i>	12/03	<i>Mr. Gunawardena Percy</i>	14/04	<i>Mr. Harsha Kumar D.</i>	14/05
<i>Mr. KumarasingheJanaka</i>	13/03	<i>MsHeenMenike D.M.</i>	14/04	<i>Mr. Herat L.G.O.</i>	14/05
<i>Mr. Fernando H.S.B.</i>	16/03	<i>Mr. SumanasuriyaSubhash</i>	15/04	<i>Mr. Dev Silva Premalal</i>	16/05
<i>Mr. Pathirana D.D.V.</i>	16/03	<i>Mr. Dickman J.W.</i>	16/04	<i>Mr. DhirasekeraKalyana</i>	20/05
<i>Mr. S.S.Rajapkshe</i>	20/03			<i>Mr. Hulangamuwa A.E.</i>	24/05
<i>Ms. PereraKamalangani</i>	23/03	<i>Mr. Abeysekera D.J.A.</i>	18/04	<i>Mr. WickremasingheDilip</i>	29/05
<i>Ms. WeerasiingheSriyani</i>	23/03	<i>Mr. EpaAnanda H.</i>	20/04	<i>Mr. Liyanage S.M.P.</i>	31/05
<i>Mr. Devruvan G.</i>	24/03	<i>Mr. Moorthy R.G.</i>	20/04		
<i>Ms. FernandoShiromani</i>	27/03	<i>M.A.T. Kehelhena</i>	20/04		
<i>Ms. PrematillakeSwarna</i>	28/03	<i>Mr. KulasekeraRoshan</i>	21/04		
<i>Mr. PeirisDelricus</i>	29/03	<i>MrNoyahrNevin</i>	23/04		
<i>Mr. J.M.K. Boteju</i>	26/03	<i>Mr. P. Shivaji</i>	26/04		

NEW MEMBERS	
260	Mr. U.S. Dissanayake
261	Mr. S.D. Priyantha Dissanayake
262	Ms. Chintha Wickramasinghe
263	Ms. Anoma Padmini Ariyaratne
264	Ms. Rathnamalie Perera
265	Ms. Sugala Renuka Gunawardena, Wickramapathirana
266	Ms. Bimbo Fernando
267	Mr. Sujeeva Dammika Dias
268	Mr. S.M.P. Indu Upathantha,
269	Ms. K.T. Manel Sugandhikaa Kulatunga
270	Mr. Shyamasundar Ramanathan
271	Mr. K.K.Lasantha Sudarhana
272	Mr. U.B. Dissanayake
273	Mr. Nirmalan Nayagam
274	Mr. Jagath Jayasundara
275	Mr. D. Fernando
276	Mr. Sujith Ariyapala

(Continued from last issue)

THE CASE OF THE WOOD WORK WHITE

BY T.V. PERERA

Among the power driven machines in the Wood Work White Section, were the router, belt sander, tenenor, fret saw, band saw, and broad saw which when in operation created the din synonymous with a factory. On the belt sander, none could match Wimalasena who although in his fifties had the agility of a man half his age. The devilish speed he adopted to accomplish his work aptly earned him the name 'Yaka Baas'. If Yaka Baas was an expert on the belt sander, Romiel was a master on the perilous routing machine which required adroitness to turn out machine tables, leaf covers, and platforms with cut-outs for hinges. Both finished their day's 'count' with a couple

of hours to spare and while Wimalasena relaxed with a cigarette and idle talk, Romiel studied the racing sheet until Tool Room workman Gnanadasa* who knew every muscle in every horse's limb, gave him the day's tips.

The closely knit trio of Aponso*, Abeygunewardena and Nimal were a concordant compound; their end-production stage manual operations providing them leisure for joviality. In his early twenties, arising from a matter of his few days old marriage Aponso took vengeance by knifing the culprit whose brother stoked the fires of retribution and buried a dagger in Aponso's chest the next day. The section was never dull with Kasthuri Abeygunawardena around. Spotting the funny side of everything, he would rapture into an ecstatic laughter bending into two and making others too laugh till their sides ached. Following his son's enrolment in the Navy, Abeygunewardena quit his boarding place to travel from his Ratgama home. He would board the Samudra Devi to get home for dinner and catch the 3.30 am train to be at the factory by seven.

At the time imported items were scarce, Jinadasa* frequently brought in smuggled items. In marketing them he would chant like a mantara that they were wonderful, wonderful items so many times that he was christened 'Wonderful Jinadasa'. As time went on, everybody forgot the Jinadasa name and addressed him as Wonderful to which he responded quite normally. But for all his flamboyant rhetoric, despite being warned to guard his tongue, Wonderful, a censorious government critic openly praised the JVP insurrection with the ultimate result that he was one evening bundled into a white van and was never heard of again.

Of the Jaffna Tamil workmen, Sithamparanathan produced a cassette-piece which became popular. Notable middle distance runner, winner in the 800m Mercantile A.A. Championships representing the Singer Sports Club Thirananvukarasu, joined the LTTE movement. Sivantha Moorthy made good his lost front tooth by replacing it in gold smuggled from India. Krishnamoorthy developed a disorder of his central nervous system and ended a victim of Parkinson's disease. Jayarajasingham who was supportive of the LTTE but restrained from joining the movement itself, and boilerman Bhuvanachandran, finally settled to lead quiet lives in Chunnakam. Meanwhile Sivapragasam who decided to live by choice, found his way to Germany where he joined a production company and served until 65 years before returning to Sri Lanka. Today he lives quite a comfortable life in Jaffna on his 700 Euros pension, equivalent to Rs. 126,343 a month, computed at the dollar rate prevalent at the time of writing this essay. Before concluding this nostalgic traverse of a mosaic of notable ventures, I record my observance that the ethos of Department Manager Rajadurai and Foreman Ramanayake were of fatherly, head masterly sternness without which the Wood Work White would not have reached its respectability.

* Denotes not living

(To be continued)

Dream to Reality

As a youngster I dreamt of driving a Red car to work. Don't ask me why, but it just popped into my brain in early 70's. And now, in 1992 it was coming true. There she was a gleaming new Red colour Honda Civic, delivered to me by Stafford Motors, at our Union Place head office. I left school in 1971, and joined the Arpico Factory as a Production Trainee, along with five of my classmates. It was our first job, and very exciting with the shift work, which left two weeks of free daytime for us to go swimming, to see movies, visit friends and party. The salary of Rs125/- plus overtime, was a princely sum for a young school leaver, and we had ourselves a jolly good time. However the glamour faded soon, and by 1974 I was looking out for a job which would enable me a more outdoor lifestyle.

Applying for the post of Sales Representative at Lever Brothers Ceylon Limited (now known as Unilever Sri Lanka) I was lucky to be selected and thus embarked on a career in Sales & Marketing. The salary Rs550/- plus a company maintained Morris Minor car. I soon found that I had not joined a mere sales organisation, but it was truly a Business University. As a Sales Representative, I served in the Balangoda, Ratnapura and Malale Territories for six and half years. Thereafter I worked in Brand Management for five years and then went back on the field as an Area Manager in 1985. During the 13 years I worked at Unilever, my salary had crept up to Rs8,500/- It was in 1987 that I was offered a position by Singer Sri Lanka, and I joined the legendary Gamani Abeysurrya

(a strict disciplinarian but with a very caring heart) as Sales Manager Retail. They paid me a starting salary of Rs12,500:--.

My Wholesale counterpart was Premalal de Silva, a cricketing friend from my schooldays. Fondly known as "Yakadaya", for his batting prowess. The first thing I experienced at Singer was, a "culture shock". The American style and British style of doing business, was totally different, but I was soon able to integrate into the new culture. Gamani Abeysuriya was a "master at setting up distribution networks" and the Singer network is what it is today, due to the pioneering work done by him.

The Chairman Hemaka Amarasuriya, with a background in both Finance and Marketing, was a man with a Vision -" to make Singer the Largest and Best Appliance & Electronics Retailer in South Asia ". For Singer - known only for its sewing machine, this was a far fetched dream, but in the eyes of chairman, something achievable."

We brought in Jaliya Jayasuriya and Rienzie Martinesz from Unilever and Shehara Parakrama from Reckitt & Coleman, to strengthen our Merchandising and Marketing efforts. Jaliya was directly responsible for setting up the Mega Channel outlets in Kandy and Rajagiriya, and also our foray into Sports marketing and Sponsorship of Sri Lanka Cricket. Winning the Cricket World Cup in 1996, gave a major boost to the Singer brand name worldwide. Jaliya unfortunately was a victim of the Tsunami tragedy of 2004. Investing heavily in Training at all levels of Management, through Local as well as International Trainers, Hemaka Amarasuriya sold his "Vision of Singer #1", to his staff , and mapped out the Strategy for future success, within a framework of Multi Brands and Multi Channels. Very soon "Chairmans Vision became Our Mission."

I had a dream run at Singer for 22 long years, moving from Sales Manager to Marketing Services Manager , Marketing Manager , Deputy Marketing Director and finally Marketing Director In 2001. Along the way I had the privilege to work and learn my trade alongside a host of top professionals like Hemaka Amarasuriya, Gamani Abeysuriya, Neville Peries, Anton Abeysekera, P. Shivaji and ever green Gamini Wasalathanthri.

We were building Concepts & Processes which would be sustainable. In hindsight I see that it was done with the Customer at our focal point. I was lucky to be a participant in the Key Management Team that was instrumental in setting up the Wholesale Channel to supplement the existing Retail network, build the concept of Brand Management and Multi Brands, expansion of Retail network, launching the Mega and Sisil channels to consolidate our Multi channel strategy, venturing into Sports sponsorship and Sports marketing and transforming Singer into a Consumer Centric company.

Chairmans direct involvement in setting up the Service network, with people like Anil Samarasekera and later Shyam Ramanathan consolidated our position as No1 Electronics & Appliance Retailer in Sri Lanka. In fact it was a key differentiator for Singer, at the time set up, taking Service to the Consumers doorstep.

moving into the Marketing Directors office in 2001, I initiated a strategic move to create a position of a Sales Director. Murali Prakash was the first incumbent, with his years of experience in Field sales and Credit management, making him an obvious choice.

It was also fortunate to have people of the caliber of Asoka Peiris, Mahesh Wijewardena, Priyath Salgado, Chitral Perera, Nasser Majeed , Kumar Samarasinghe, Senani Perera, Jude Joseph, Mihindu Rajaratna, Mohamed Fairoz , Dhammika Wijesundara , Sanjaya Karunaratne and Ravi Balraj as work colleagues. We arguably had the cream of marketing talent working for Singer during this era, and thus made my task easier.

Under my watch Singer was voted as the "Brand of the Year", an accolade we still win up to now, and was a vindication of the Consumer centric company that Singer had become.

Projects like the "Singer Rugby League" helped us get into the mindset of the Youth , who were going to be our future Customers. I took my retirement in 2009, happy with the thought that I had built a "second line of management" more capable and qualified than me, to take Singer into the future.

Dream to Reality... 1974-2009...a long journey of 45 years...

Asita Abayasekera.

REMINISCENCE

While I was thinking of the past days at Singer Company one day, an amusing anecdote came to my memory. Actually it was related to me once by our – giggling friend, deceased, - Mala many years ago. It had happened in 1980s. As an annual event the two days ladies' trip had been organized upcountry, accompanied by two male escorts, Messrs Nissar and Shivaji, if I remember the story right. I myself would have been with Singers during that time but I must have missed it because of my infant son. According to Mala, two busloads with families had gone on the trip, including Dulcie, Piyaseeli, Vijitha and so many others, After having dinner at the hotel, many had developed stomach aches with vomiting. Immediately, medical aid had been sought from a nearby clinic and the situation got settled to some extent. The next day's plan was to visit Haggala Gardens. First thing in the morning another dose of medicine was distributed among the crowd by the two matured ladies. However, after lunch at Haggala Gardens the stomachs of many got disturbed again with a need to seek a toilet, and there had been a mad rush for the purpose.

Mala and a few others had been affected very badly in this connection. Amidst her usual giggle she told me that he ran amok in search of a toilet almost all the visible one were occupied. Finally in desperation she had managed to ease herself under a well grown tree without getting caught to anybody's sight! When I asked her how she found water, she laughed and said, "where to find water dear, I had to clean myself with my panty and throw it up to a high branch until I could go to a place to use water". Before getting back to the hotel, with continuous medication all had recovered although weakness prevailed. It had been a great relief as the Chairman and other higher officers were due to visit the hotel at night to join in the fun. By that time everybody had been okay to perform their impromptu concert items. So everybody had thoroughly enjoyed that night. Mala further said that all were wondering how Mr. Nissar was spared in this episode. Then it had been revealed that thanks to a dose of Digene at the outset of the trip in order to avoid any possible food allergies, only he had escaped this embarrassing experience. I wish to conclude this account with due respect to Mala and other deceased friends who faced this memorable trip.

As this is not a first-hand experience, I wish to request the living members who participated to excuse me for any lapses on my part in the account.

Pushpa Fonseka

SILENT TEARS

A bundle of joy you were to me
How can I ever forget you sweet.
Your cooing and crying my rosy cheeks
Why did you bring this sorrow to me?
Am I not worth your ma to be?
Oh! That is why you opted to leave,
With eyes closed tight
With an angel's sight
Shattering my hope to see you bloom.
May you be in a better world,
With none of suffering you had here.

AMMA

Note: Sent by Pushpa Fonseka
Poem written by her in 1984

Special Request to Members - Articles for the Newsletter

When submitting Articles for publication in the Newsletter, please ensure that you follow the following instructions:-

1. The Articles should be ORIGINALS from the Member relevant to an incident or incidents which happened during his or her period of employment at Singer.
2. Please keep the Article as short as possible, preferably covering a half or three quarter A4 page.
3. Keep to the deadline indicated on the last page of each Newsletter as Articles received late may not find space in the Newsletter to be published.

We are reluctantly compelled to take this course of action with a view to keep the cost of type-setting, printing and postage as low as possible

Your cooperation in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

The Editor

PS; Even though the draft of this Newsletter was forwarded to the Printer for typesetting and printing as far back as 18th February, due to the Covid 19 virus and the curfew imposed, he could not finalise printing of this Newsletter. Hence the delay in distributing copies to members. We are indeed very sorry for keeping you in the dark as far as the activities of the Association is concerned.

Regards

Wasalathanthri

Email: gwasalathanthri@gmail.com

G.C. Wasalathanthri
6A, 6th Lane,
Pagoda Road,
Nugegoda.

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



Mr. G.C. Wasalathanthri,
No.6A, 6th Lane, Pagoda Road
NUGEGODA.