

## STALWARTS & VETERANS

The Oxford dictionary defines stalwart as “*A loyal, reliable, and hard-working supporter of or participant in an organization or team*”. A Colts stalwart is therefore not necessarily someone who distinguished himself in cricket but someone who was dedicated to the welfare of the club and displayed this through deeds consistently applied. However, many stalwarts of the Colts are leading cricketers who were also good club men.

The Colts centenary souvenir lists the “great stalwarts” of the club. Dr. Allan Raffel heads the list followed by Tommy Kelaart, C.E. Perera, W. de Rozario, A.T. Pollocks, Carl Van Geyzel, Johnny Murray, B. Kretser, D.W.L. Lieversz, R.G.W. Jayatilleka and E.B. Nathanielsz. Clearly, the criterion is outstanding cricket achievement for the club.

Three of the stalwarts as per the centenary souvenir, Dr. Raffel, Douglas Lieversz and E.B. Nathanielsz, are also life members. In many ways the life members meet the definition of stalwarts better than those defined by their cricketing prowess alone. Trevor Jansz and A.V. Fernando are good examples.

The centenary souvenir confused icons with stalwarts for there is no evidence that Tommy Kelaart, despite his larger-than-life status, was involved in the administration of the club. And Willie Jayatilleke left the club and took others with him, leaving the club in disarray<sup>1</sup>. Hence, the chronicler has opened an extra category, namely, icons to distinguish outstanding cricketers from loyal servants of the club, although the categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The Colts icons were discussed in a previous chapter.

### Honorary life members and stalwarts

The chronicler is familiar with D.W.L. Lieversz, R.G.W. Jayatilleka and E.B. Nathanielsz, the last three mentioned stalwarts. There is a Tita Nathanielsz bar which is indicative how he merged with the modern Colts generation. Douglas Lieversz was a Colt through and through and gave his all to the club. The chronicler is of the opinion that Willie Jayatilleka is more of an icon than a stalwart and is honoured in the Colts icons chapter.

### Doughie and Tita

At the time of the club’s centenary, Douglas Lieversz and Tita Nathanielsz were the two most important living persons associated with the club. In fact, it was Douglas Lieversz who gave the chronicler a copy of Foenander’s book. Tita Nathanielsz passed away in 2009 and the following obituary appeared in the Daily News edition of 16<sup>th</sup> January under the title of 'Human Catapult' passes away –

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<sup>1</sup> Despite leaving the Club, Willie Jayatilleka and Douglas Lieversz maintained a strong friendship. When Willie and family visited Sri Lanka they were hosted at the home of Douglas Lieversz.

“Tita Nathanielsz played cricket for Wesley, Colts, and the Country in a spacious era when gentlemen wore flannels.

He would open bowling with a two step walk at the crease and hurl his awesome thunderbolts to be the precursor of Lasith Malinga of the sling shot. Collette depicted him in a cartoon as the Human Catapult.

Tita played for Ceylon in the 50s against a visiting MCC team and against the Commonwealth XI and his formidable team-mates were those to the manor born - Bertie Wijesinghe, the Primus Inter pares, Lucien de Zoysa, F.C. de Saram, Sargo Jayawickrema, Channa Gunasekera, C.I. Gunasekera, Sathi Coomaraswamy, Ernie Kelaart, Mahadevan Sathasivam, Bobby Schoorman, Bob Bartells, Lala Wadsworth, Brian Claessen, Fairlie Dalpathado, Ben Navaratne and Dr. H.I.K. Fernando - a veritable galaxy of which the Milky Way would have been envious.

When he crossed the boundary as a player, he remained loyal to Colts, his first and only Cricket Club which he captained and was the Patron at the time of his death. After a sustained bond of seventy years the Club honoured him by dedicating a special lounge, naming it THE TITA NATHANIELSZ LOUNGE.

Always suave like Eddie Grey and others of the Upper Crust, Tita was a Founder Member of the Ceylon Amateur Dancing Association. Then he took to the leisured stroll on the golf links wherein the unforgettable revelry is in the 19th hole. He was elevated to the Presidency of the Royal Colombo Golf Club and continued to keep us in touch with literary embellished writings on the game.

Tita Nathanielsz traveled the High Road with much aplomb and had as his wife Jeanne of the delightful face and frame who would have launched a thousand sighs.”

The following article was penned by Bernie Wijesekera in 2006 when Nathanielsz was 86 years old. Nathanielsz was truly a renaissance man.

“Tita has trod the high road

I caught Edward Basil [Tita] Nathanielsz at the Capri. It was an appropriate place for an encounter with a sporting, social and marketing legend. Tita was a founder member of the Capri in 1958, President twice and now an honorary life member. The Capri is still one of his favourite watering holes in Colombo. Tita was in fine fettle as he walked me down memory lane - a long rite of passage for a man who turned 86 in April this year.

Sharp of wit and endowed with a phenomenal capacity for recall, Tita's early and enduring passion was cricket. Along the way Tita tried his hand at bowling in the nets. He took three paces and hurled the ball down. The ball raced, reared and terrorized the hapless batsman. It was phenomenal.

Tita's secret weapon was dangerous and effective. He entered first class cricket in 1938, turning out for Notts Cricket and Athletic Club at Victoria Park under the captaincy of that elegant, brilliant Thomian left-hander, Robert Samarasekera. Tita's apprenticeship at Notts also benefited from the captaincy of E.A.G de Silva, the father of Romesh, the eminent Queen's Counsel, and A.A. Virasinghe, the distinguished hockey player.

In 1940, with World War II raging across Europe, Tita moved camp, joining the Colombo Colts Cricket Club. It is an association that endures to this day where he was captain, an honorary life member and patron, having served as President in 1973, the club's centenary year at which William Gopallawa, the Governor General was Chief Guest.

What have you got to say about cricket in the war years survived with matches organized on an ad hoc basis. Tita got to play with and against the likes of George Hubert, F.C de Saram, C.I. Gunasekera, B.R. Heyn, R.L. de Krestser, M. Sathasivam, Pat McCarthy, Vernon Prins, Sargo Jayewickrema, Mahes Rodrigo and Stanley Jayasinghe.

By 1946-47 the game revived in all its glory. The P. Saravanamuthu Trophy was the premier tournament. It was the time Tita Nathanielsz arrived - three paces, slingshot and all. He took the tournament by storm, his secret weapon causing mayhem among the batsmen. Paired at various times with M. Samsudeen, Norman de la Harpe and Lolo da Silva, Tita and his fellow combatants at the Colts.

In 1948 following selection trials for the Ceylon national side, Tita was given the nod to play against Pakistan in 1950, the Commonwealth XI captained by the late Sir Frank Worrell and in 1951 against the MCC.

Tita capped his involvement in cricket as a national test selector and a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Control for Cricket. Tita's zest for life remained irrepressible after he hung up his cricket boots. He played golf with flair. He also served in several honorary capacities at the Royal Colombo Golf Club and became the Royal Colombo's President in 2004-2005, presiding over the Club's 125th anniversary celebrations. Not unexpectedly, he also founded the Hole -in-One Golfing Society as much in celebration of his own prowess as the many golfers who have achieved this distinction.

Tita Nathanielsz is also acknowledged as the great chronicler of the game of golf in Sri Lanka, producing a handsome book on the history of the Royal Colombo to mark the club's 125th anniversary, a tour de force in sports publishing.

His regular and extremely popular golf columns in national newspapers under the nom de plume 'After All' has over three decades generated and sustained interest in the game among followers of the sport.

Mention jazz and one name instantly lights up. Tita Nathanielsz was a founder of the Jazz Club and remains President of Jazz Unlimited, whose concerts on the first Sunday of every month at the CRFC are a lively, popular, fun happening in Colombo's entertainment scene.

Proving that there is a wise head on those still strong shoulders, Tita Nathanielsz also counts among his many pursuits involvement as a founder member and President of the Apex Clubs of Australia; a former President of the Sri Lanka America Society and now Joint Chairman of the Society's highly respected Forum; former President and now an honorary life member of the Ceylon-Australia-New Zealand Association; founder member of the Colombo Toastmasters Club; and a former President of the Colombo Lions Host Club, and still a very active member and a founder member of the Sri Lanka-Australia-New Zealand Business Council.

That's not all folks, read this. Tita was around as a founder member of The Ceylon Amateur Dancing Association and a founder member of the Ceylon Motor Cycle Club and as its honorary secretary organised the inaugural Monsoon Reliability Trials. At 86 Tita Nathanielsz is not retired, just very laid back. He is looking forward to celebrating 50 years of marriage to his wife Jeanne in June next year. Till that big bash comes along he remains the great raconteur, the life and soul of social gatherings, a great friend, the custodian of many, many friendships and a dreamer. "If you don't dream, how can your dreams come true", he asks as he raises a glass to propose an eloquent."

All cricketers are identified by the schools they attended. Stanley Oorloff attended Royal and then St. Josephs'. Fred Aldons was a Royalist. But apparently, Tita Nathanielsz did not attend Wesley as commonly believed, but a church school. Yet, he was possibly the most urbane, polished, and articulate Colt that ever lived. He was truly a renaissance man and one who was never short of words.

While Tita and Doughie did not always see eye to eye, when the latter passed away in 1996 at ninety years of age, Tita penned a moving tribute which is shown below.

**“‘Skipper’ is no more.**

The white flannelled perfect gentleman affectionately known as “Skipper” who adorned the Colts cricket club for over 65 years is no more – the very sad news shattered those who were present in the Club House when the announcement filtered through.

Douglas Lieversz a superb opening batsman – Wicket Keeper played for Royal College with distinction. He joined the Colombo Colts Cricket Club after his college career and he went on to lead the Club most successfully in all premier tournaments and it was no surprise when he was selected to represent Ceylon against the MCC.

**PLEASURE**

I had the distinct pleasure of commencing my cricketing career under his leadership and astute guidance and my closely knitted friendship with him lasting 55 years broke away yesterday with his demise.

Lieversz was President of the Colts for several years and I took over from him in the centenary year 1973. Honorary Life Membership was conferred on both of us during that year.

**OUTSTANDING**

His two sons Darrell & Brian both outstanding sportsmen played for the Colts and Valerie his daughter was a superb hockey player.

‘Skipper’ Lieversz was an outstanding personality. Soft spoken and loaded with good humour he carried a brilliant cricket brain. A tremendous friend leaves the scene and may his dear soul rest in peace.

In haste.”

By way of contrast, Eddie Grey gave a lengthy eulogy at a thanksgiving service in Melbourne in memory of Douglas but made a passing reference to his time at the Colts. It was a tribute to a fellow Royalist and hence the focus was on his sporting achievements at Royal.



Douglas Lieversz  
Courtesy of Ceylon Government  
Service Cricket Association Golden  
Jubilee Souvenir, 1957



Tita Nathanielsz  
Courtesy of the Sunday Times

The following photo of Douglas Lieversz can be roughly dated to the late nineteen forties. It is very likely that the location was the Colts grounds.



### **Trevor Jansz**

Tita succeeded Douglas as Colts president and the two of them would have decided whom to accord stalwart status to. They no doubt used the criteria of cricketing excellence in their choices. For instance, Willie Jayatilleke had already left the Colts when he left the country. There is no evidence that he was interested in Colts affairs after moving to Australia. Trevor Jansz by contrast, was constantly inquiring about the Colts until he passed away in 2022, and always regarded the Colts as his second home. The following correspondence says it all.



## Colombo Colts Cricket Club

FOUNDED 1873

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e-mail : coltscricketclub@stmail.lk

21<sup>st</sup> October 2004

Mr. Trevor Jansz,  
111, Canning Street,  
Avondale Heights 3034,  
Victoria,  
Australia.

Dear Mr. Jansz,

Your letter addressed to the President of this Club which was indeed a very pleasant surprise was placed by him before the Committee of Management at its Meeting held a few days ago and I have been directed by the Committee to express to you our deep appreciation of your continued interest in the affairs of the Club despite your emigration to Australia a few decades ago.

Colts has had its fluctuating fortunes and we have managed to keep our nose just above the water line so far! We have however been sufficiently resourceful in Cricket to maintain our position as one of the four Clubs classified in the Super Grade by Sri Lanka Cricket, formerly known as the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka.

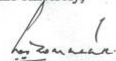
Tita Nathanielsz is the only surviving stalwart of your time in this part of the World. He is presently the Patron of the Club and holds the prestigious office of President of the Royal Colombo Golf Club. Dougie Lieversz as you may be aware passed away a few years ago.

I am forwarding to you herewith copies of the last two Annual Reports which may be of interest to you.

Thanking you once again for your interest in the Club and looking forward to having you with us once again in the not too distant future.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

  
Walwin Goonetilleke  
Hony. General Secretary

Courtesy of Trevor Jansz

Trevor Jansz was a true Colts believer who was first associated with the club at the age of 15 and had a 28-year association with the club before he emigrated to Australia in 1966. (He states that it was A.V. Fernando, his Sunday school teacher, who was responsible for him joining the Colts.) Yet, he kept the club close to his heart until he passed away on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022.<sup>2</sup> In 2005 he wrote to the club requesting copies of the annual reports. And in 2013 his son visited the club and took photographs. The following article by Harold Andrado dated 10<sup>th</sup> April 1991 captures his skills as a cricketer and his devotion to the Colts –

10/4/91

## Trevor Jansz was one of the finest spinners

By Harold de Andrado

Trevor Jansz was one of the finest team men in the 1941 Royal team. That was fifty years ago a very long time in Sri Lanka's cricket history. Nature endowed him with an average frame, a shrewd cricketing brain strong spinning fingers, and an extraordinarily equable temperament. Royal College under Owen Wameek were unbeaten in 1941 but their season was like the curates egg good and bad in patches. It was Trevor Jansz and late Dr. Minoo Jilla who finally saved them from disgrace and defeat in the Big match and helped them to maintain that unbeaten record.

Of average height and most amiable Trevor Jansz was for years the pride and glory of Colts Cricket up to his retirement and emigration to Australia. Trevor was not only the back bone of the Colts both on and off the fields he was very often the backbone and ribs as well. He was Hony. Secretary of the Sri Lanka Cricket Board just prior to his emigration, and he was certainly the most efficient. Simple, unassuming person who held that coveted post. He never sought the limelight, never looked for profit or gain out of his duties, never hankered after managerial appointments or overseas tours, but simply carried out his assignments without fear or favour.

Men like Trevor cannot be easily replaced on Sri Lankan sporting circles. As a batsman he made several centuries not only for his club but in both State Services and Mercantile Higher Division Cricket. It was as a spin bowler that he was better known with a delivery that was not so much menacing as it was persistent and purposeful.

There are several opinions as to his abilities as a club captain. He could be dour and determined and a dominant figure who once he makes up his mind would not change it readily. A draughtsman and architect by profession he had positions of similar vein in Australia. He was highly respected in Victorian Cricket Circles where even today at 67 he still excels at his weekly game of Golf.

Spin bowling was his forte and he always believed that spin is as essential to an attack as violence, (he has strong supporters in Sir Don Bradman and Bill O Reilly) and though champion batsman will perhaps never be subjugated entirely by guile, those lesser ones will continue to give the wrong answer to the wiles of the spinner.

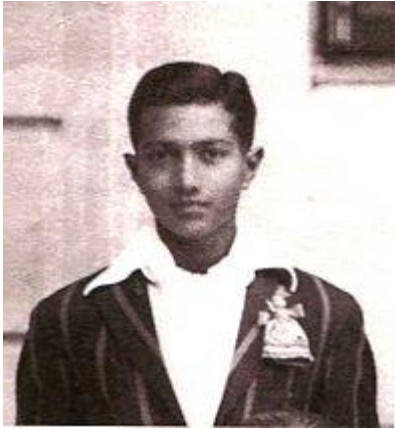
Trevor Jansz had amazing natural gifts and skill. There may have been men who were superior to him in some departments of the game. But he was the ideal man for any occasion.

The public with short memories may have forgotten him. His work on the field is told however inadequately in the record books but his work in the committees and as an administrator has never been properly assessed before. That it was extra-ordinarily valuable no one can ever dispute.

The above article was written when Jansz visited Sri Lanka in 1991

<sup>2</sup> The chronicler can attest to this because although he has been living abroad for 51 years (in 2024) he is still committed to the club.

A ROYAL CRICKETER



MARRIAGE



FAMILY IN THE EARLY SIXTIES



Courtesy of the Jansz family

If S.P. Foenander was alive today to update the history of the Colts, he would surely rank Trevor Jansz as a club stalwart. Colts blood ran through his veins.

In 2014 Trevor Jansz had requested him to nominate his outstanding performances for the club. He mentioned his 140 against the combined colleges and a century before lunch (117) against the C.C.C. His best bowling performance was 6 for 18 against the N.C.C.

His most memorable incident was when fast bowler L.V. Jayaweera opened the attack with 4 consecutive no balls. He resolved the problem by changing boots and stuffing them with paper.

Clearly, memories of the Colts Cricket Club were permanently embedded in his consciousness and could be readily tapped. He also provided the chronicler with access to his Colts related cricketering memorabilia.



Trevor Jansz and Douglas Lieversz had a lot in common. They both attended Royal. They both qualified as engineers. They both met their wives to be at the Colts tennis courts. And they were on the jury for the Bandaranaike assassination trial with Douglas Lieversz as foreman. Lieversz was President when Jansz farewelled the club.

### **A.V. Fernando**

A.V. Fernando is discussed in detail in appendix II. At this Juncture I think it appropriate to make mention of A.V. Fernando who was a Colt through and through and a true stalwart. If injury hadn't cut short his career while still at school, he would have played for the Colts in the forties and no doubt would have been recognized as a stalwart.

His funeral in took place at the Kanatte cemetery in 1970. Fifty-two years on one begins to fully appreciate the contribution he made to the Colts. Darrell Lieversz, in addition to what he learnt from Trevor Jansz, was taught how to grip the ball by A.V. and consequently trod a path to bowling craftsmanship.

Trevor Jansz said that he joined the Colts in 1938 at the age of fifteen on the urging of A.V. who was his Sunday school teacher. And there were many others, particularly Wesleyites, who joined the Colts because of A.V. Fernando. Below are tributes which appeared in the local papers following his passing in 1970.

## VETERAN SPORTS WRITER DIES

VETERAN SPORTS WRITER, ALBAN V. FERNANDO DIED ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT AFTER A BRIEF ILLNESS. FERNANDO WAS THE CRICKET CORRESPONDENT OF THE TIMES OF CEYLON.

His knowledge of cricket was so vast that in the latter stages of his career, he devoted most of his time to coaching schoolboys.

Fernando, who began his education at St. Thomas' College, Mt. Lavinia, later came to Wesley and played in the college first eleven in 1931 and 1932. It was in 1932 that Fernando had to give up active cricket because of a head injury sustained when he opened the innings for Wesley, facing LaBrooy of Royal.



Ever since then, Fernando was an ardent lover of the noble game contributing his knowledge to the Colombo Colts Cricket Club, where he was in charge of the then newly laid turf cricket, in addition to being an official.

Fernando spoke very little on the field while coaching, but he was gifted in spotting talent. His first coaching assignment was with Wesley and one of his best products was Brian Claessen. He picked Claessen from the under 16 team and coached him to be the cricketer he was. Claessen was one of the few cricketers to play for Ceylon while being a schoolboy.

Among his other coaching assignments, Fernando lent his knowledge to Ananda and St. Joseph's where he was responsible for the high standard of the colleges in those years. As a cricket writer he wrote fearlessly. He was a man of few words but his words had a wealth of meaning.

He leaves five sisters — Isabel, Rose, Iris, Irma and Myrtle and one brother B. J. B. 'Bonnie' Fernando of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. His funeral took place at Kanatta yesterday evening, in the presence of a distinguished gathering.

C. H. S.

## TRIBUTE TO 'A.V.'

A. V. Fernando, one of Ceylon's leading cricket coaches and a brilliant cricket writer, is no more. He died on Wednesday, April 15, after a brief illness.

I came to know AV 16 years ago when I joined "The Times of Ceylon" straight from school and my one regret is that I did not know him earlier.

AV was the epitome of modesty. He went about his work in a most unassuming manner. He avoided the crowds as he preferred watching a match undisturbed.

And at the end of the day's play he would tell you the faults of the batsmen and bowlers and how a bowler or batsman should be countered. This was the gift which enabled him to be such a great coach.

AV never worried himself about the outstanding player; his main concern was to make his pupil an outstanding player.

A champion of the underdog and the downtrodden, he would happily spend his time and money on a player's time to regain his form. He considered it a challenge and would not rest contented till he had corrected the defect.

### Ambition

He taught for love of the game and not for any financial benefit. His devotion to the sport was tremendous.

He told me quite often that his main ambition in life was to publish a book, in Sinhala,

on cricket. He had the articles but unfortunately could not get a translator and a sponsor. He needed a sponsor in order that the village lad could get the book at a very low price, if not free.

AV's knowledge of the game was immense. He had a solution for every problem. He always maintained and correctly too—that cricket should be played hard with the determination to win, and definitely not to please one's opponents.

AV was an outstanding cricketer as a schoolboy but an accident during an interschool match cut short his promising career. Fate decreed that he should devote his time to coaching and not to playing.

And his time was well spent. He produced many top Ceylon cricketers and the best known among them in recent years were Brian Claessen, Abu Fuar and Sarath Wimalaratne.

There were many other Ceylon cricketers who came to him for advice, which he gave generously.

### A void

AV has left a void in Ceylon cricket both as a coach and a writer.

Examples of his honest love for the sport and player are too numerous to mention. He thought spoke wrote and lived or cricket.

What I learnt about cricket was not through books but through discussion with AV, for which I am ever grateful. And I am certain that there are many others like me who have improved their knowledge and technique of the game merely by talking to this maestro of cricket.

Players and writers will miss him at matches but I am sure they will not forget him. May his soul rest in peace.



## 'A. V.' leaves void hard to fill

THE greatest and possibly truest epitaph that could be written of A. V. (Alban) Fernando would be: 'Here he lies in Death as in Life—honest.' For throughout his life Alban's greatest quality was that of self-effacement. Ceylon has by his death not only lost one of the greatest cricket writers of this or any other era but also one of the game's most erudite scholars.

But for his love of always being in the background and the unwillingness to push himself to the forefront, Alban could have graced any office in cricket administration from selector to coach with dignity and brilliance.

Alban's contribution to the game was one of quiet efficiency and inconspicuous dedication. As a player and a coach he was without peer but his quiet demeanour and his reluctance to hold forth about the game he knew so much often relegated him to the background, while lesser knowing colleagues waxed eloquent.

Alban's writing too whilst being unquestionably authoritative, wasn't glamorous, verbose or given to vagaries of opinion. His writings were never influenced by personal leanings or loyalties though there was hardly anyone in the game he did not know or who did not

know him.

I knew Alban by his enviable reputation for many years ago but was privileged to work with him as a colleague only during the latter part of the last decade. As a 'rookie' reporter he was the absolute epitome of inspiration and encouragement. He spoke very little but when he did he distributed real gems of sports wisdom.

I always felt that Alban belonged more to a trappist monastery than to a Sports desk, and his silence was in direct contrast to the understandable loquaciousness that obtains in that sector of the Press.

Even though a bachelor to his dying day he wasn't even a gay one and revelled in being a recluse. The outside world, even his colleagues knew little about him. So unobtrusive were his coming in and going out.

Ceylon cricket, which is in the boiling pot of emergence still, will miss the sound advice he could have given players and administrators alike. Truly Alban has fully lived up to that wonderful axiom: 'I shall pass this way but once, so, if I can, let me be of use to my fellow-men.'

In some celestial parison Alban perhaps now resides, as in life for hereafter the Quiet Gentleman (and was his soul).

PREM

### **Life members, 1973**

Those who were honorary life members in 1973 must all be considered stalwarts, except for Donovan Andree who probably gave the club a generous donation. They were as follows – Dr. E.L. (sic) Raffel, A.T. Pollocks, Donovan Andree, D.W.L. Lieversz, A.V. Fernando, H.R. Elders, C.W. Schoorman, A.E. Christoffelsz, Dr. Dadabhoy, A.C. Maclean, T.E. Jansz and E.B. Nathanielsz.

A.E. Christoffelsz was president of the club for 16 years. Ronnie Elders was Hony secretary of the club for 4 years and was Honorary Treasurer for 24 years. It was only death in 1968 which severed his connections with the club.

Dr. Raffel was president from 1928 to 1940 and captained the club from 1901 to 1919. A.T. Pollocks captained the team on five occasions. Which begs the question as to why none of the founding fathers are in the life member list. This probably has something to do with when the concept of life membership came into being.

Foenander (1941: 21) describes C.W. Schoorman, as the present honorary secretary and a useful playing member who demonstrated all round skills. It was he who introduced his nephew Douglas Lieversz to the Colts, and it is very likely that he was dedicated to the club. Dr. Dadabhoy was a club President, and his family provided the funds for the construction of pavilions at Racquet Court and havelock Park.

A.C. Maclean's contribution to the club is unknown. He remains a mystery, but one which could have been solved by asking Douglas Lieversz when he was available.

### **New life members**

Between 1973 and 1998, the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club, the following had been added to the list of honorary life members - M. Chanmugam, L.H. de Sielwie, M.W. Rajasingham, G.B. de Jonk, W.T.P. Goonetilleke, Z.M. Suhaib, E. Cramer, R. Samarasekera and H.D. Hettiwatte.

The chronicler is able to comment on four of the post 1973 inductees. L.H. de Sielwie was a ubiquitous presence at the club well before its centenary. Mike Chanmugam and Ranjit Samarasekera performed yeoman services as club coaches. They were students of the game and imparted that wisdom for the benefit of the club's cricketers.

Walwin Goonatilleke was a lawyer who was introduced to the club in the late sixties by the chronicler's father. He remained a Colt until he passed away in the early noughties. He was president of the club from 1977 to 1982, and again from 1984 to 1988, and he steered the club through difficult times. Although he finished stints as President in the eighties, he was the honorary secretary in 2004 when he replied to an inquiry from Trevor Jansz. He no doubt was devoted to the Colts cause and was surely one of those who kept the club on an even keel until the golden days arrived. He and Ranjit Samarasekera may be considered the unsung heroes of the Colts revival.



Walwin Goonatilleke



Mike Chanmugam

### **Mike Chanmugam**

Chanmugam joined the Colts as a student member and captained the first division side in 1958. From 1967 until 1984 Chanmugam was the coach cum chairman of the cricket selection committee.

The Colts Cricket Club 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication had this to say about Mike Chanmugam –

“He was in his day the most knowledgeable of cricket techniques in this country and a master tactician par excellence. He had the knack of spotting talent and thereafter moulding the cricketers to give of their best. He was a strict disciplinarian but was never slow to impart of his knowledge to even the most junior cricketer, whether he was a member of the Colts or of any other club. He had the ability to detect the smallest shortcoming in a batsman or bowler and to correct such shortcomings. His advice was sought by many cricketers even by national cricketers who had no affiliations with the club, and it would not be incorrect to state that the success achieved by most of them was due in no small measure to the advice and guidance they received without any expectation of reward or recognition from Mike Chanmugam.”

## **Supreme stalwarts**

By any measure Ranjit Samarasekera, not unlike A.V. Fernando, must be considered a stalwart par excellence. Both were responsible for bringing good players and good administrators to the club and wouldn't have pitched their tents in any other club. They were extremely loyal to the club.

## **Ranjit Samarasekera**

In the club's centenary year Ranjit Samarasekera wasn't a stalwart. But he proved to be one of the club's greatest stalwarts over the next 44 years of his life. He was loyal to both school (St. Anthony's) and the Colts Cricket Club. He was the glue that kept the club from falling apart. He made the club second XI a force to be reckoned with and then ensured that the club would survive as a viable force by introducing good cricketers and good people to the club. His greatest legacy is that the Colts of today is a viable concern that can hold its head up high and have an organizational capacity befitting one of the oldest cricket clubs in the country. Modernism has blended with a unique historical legacy to feed off each other.

The following article appeared in the Daily News of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017 on his passing. There are other tributes to him, notably in the club report which articulate his incalculable contribution to the club. He captained both Donovan Andree and Sara trophy teams, served as president, and was the club patron at the time of his passing. He believed in the club and that faith was ultimately aptly rewarded. At the time of his unfortunate accident, he was a very proud Colt, and justly so.



### **“Anthonian and Colts stalwart Ranjith Samarasekera no more**



Former St Anthony's College sportsman and stalwart of Colombo Colts Cricket Club Ranjith Samarasekera passed away in Colombo yesterday following a brief illness at the age of 76.

Samarasekera lost his memory and was confined to bed after suffering from a fall in his bathroom two years ago. He was unable to communicate with people and his health gradually deteriorated. Samarasekera was an outstanding sportsman at St Anthony's College excelling at athletics and cricket being one time Public Schools javelin champion. He was the first recipient of the Double Eagle award (athletics and cricket), the highest prize presented by the school for sports.

At cricket Samarasekera was an all-rounder. He bowled right-arm leg-spin and was an excellent close in fielder in addition to his batting. He was a contemporary of ACM Lafir, the former All-Ceylon cricketer and opening bat and represented his school from 1955-58.

“Ranjith came to St Anthony's from Maris Stella Negombo and gave his heart and soul to the old boys' welfare activities at school and went out of his way to organize events,” said Lafir in tribute to a former team mate. “He even at times neglected his business to attend to school activities. He was a loyal Anthonian.”

Samarasekera was a stalwart at Colombo Colts CC whom he represented after school and was a live wire at all the club's activities. He was coach, president and patron of the club. He was also a national cricket selector and during his period three former Anthonian cricketers played for Sri Lanka in Test cricket – Muthiah Muralitharan, Piya Wijetunge and Ruwan Kalpage.

Samarasekera is best remembered for the role he played in the Saints Quadrangular – the flagship event of the Old Boys of the four premier Catholic schools in Sri Lanka - St. Anthony's College Katugastota, St. Benedict's College Kotahena, St. Joseph's College Colombo and St. Peter's College Bambalapitiya.

Samarasekera, a pioneer member of the inaugural organizing committee in 1963 was a pillar of strength to the Saints Quadrangular convincing the OBUs of the four schools subsequent to the inaugural event to make it an annual event. He was present at every organizing committee since then.

At the 47th Saints Quadrangular in 2014 Samarasekera was honoured when a trophy named 'Ranjith Samarasekera Challenge Trophy' was donated by Old Peterites Sports Club to be awarded to the winners of the Rugby Sevens in recognition of his commitment and excellent service rendered by him towards the success of the tournament.

Samarasekera is survived by his three children – two sons and daughter.

His remains lie at AF Raymond's funeral parlour Borella and his funeral takes place tomorrow at Borella Cemetery. – ST

(archives.sundayobserver.lk)

Ranjit Samarasekera was a member of the 1957 Anthonian cricket team. In the previous year W. Premaratne, who was to captain the Colts twice, was named schoolboy cricketer of the year. One wonders whether it was Premaratne who brought Samarasekera to the Colts? Samarasekera's first year at the Colts where he represented the first XI was under Premaratne's captaincy.

Premaratne captained the Colts twice. During his second stint as captain he organised a *shramadana* to create a drain that would prevent waterlogging on one side of the ground. He even borrowed money from a club member which he was slow in returning. Yet, unlike Samarasekera, his association with the Colts was limited, and after he captained the club for the second time he was lost to the club.

Ranjit was not without his faults. He was sent from Maris Stella to St. Anthony's to curb a rebellious streak. Nor was his private life pristine. But rebelliousness is not something to be frowned upon. Unlike Abu Fuard who also had a rebellious streak, Samarasekera was loyal to the Colts and was never mean towards the club and its cricketers.

#### ST. ANTHONY'S COLLEGE (KATUGASTOTA), 1ST XI CRICKET TEAM, 1957



Standing (L to R) – H.M.L.B Herath, Heenbanda, A.H. Sherifdeen, K. Thirunawakarasu, Charlie Joseph, Franco Rudolph, Michael Raj, Lakshman Algama, Sarath Pamunuwa and Brian Rambukpotha

Seated (L to R) – Ranjith Samarasekera, S.W. Seneviratne, Ranjit Doranegama (Captain), Mr. Robert Wright (Coach), Rev. Bro. Macky (Prefect of Games), Anton Rambukpotha, Stephen Joseph

Courtesy of quadrangle.www.lk

Ranjit brought cricketers from other clubs to the Colts. And this included a player who had a SSC DNA, but came from the same hometown as him. He coached the team that won its first premier championship. According to Ranatunga (2013) Ranjit was a multi-tasker. He found club sponsors, organized teas, and purchased equipment for the needy. Of all the stalwarts of the Colts, very few made such a difference as Ranjit. His legacy is evident today in terms of infrastructure, performance and the club's appeal to many talented players and cricket aficionados. When Ranjit passed away in 2017 the club was unrecognisable from the year he joined the club.

### **Well known veterans/stalwarts**

Many Colts stalwarts were never made honorary life members. But their love for the club was without qualification. In the chronicler's time Eddie Melder was a Colts die hard and a stalwart by any definition.

In his History of the Colts (1941) Foenander speaks of the oldest surviving members of the club who were no longer actively connected with the club but were still ardent lovers of the club although all past the three score years and ten mark. In 1941 they were Harry J. Ebert, Gerald Heyn, A.C. van Cuylenberg and James de Kretser. (If the book came out in the late seventies Douglas Lieversz would have fitted the bill perfectly.)

Clearly by that time the meaning of the term veteran had changed from 1900 when a team of older players was referred to as veterans. But as the club got older the term veteran came to encompass older players who had retired. Then the term veteran came to encompass those who never played cricket for the club or served in an honorary capacity but whose devotion to the club was exemplary. Today the terms veteran and stalwart would be synonymous.

### **Harry Ebert**

Foenander (1941: 94) describes Harry Ebert as follows –

“No one among the older generation was a more enthusiastic supporter of the club and a harder worker for its welfare than Mr. Harry Ebert, the retired Chief clerk of the Traffic Dept. of the C.G.R. Till failing health in the last decade confined him to his home, there was no more critical and enthusiastic spectator at a Colts match than this much respected veteran sportsman. More than one well-known Colt owed his good start in life to the kindly assistance of Mr. Ebert, who helped them to find work in the C.G.R.”



Henry Justin “Harry” Ebert (7.12.1853–28.1.1943) was 19 when the Colts came into being and he died two years after Foenander’s publication. Henry had 15 children in all, 9 from his first marriage and 6 from his second. His two wives were stepsisters, daughters of John Robert Augustus Brohier’s marriage to Caroline Wilhelmina Freywer and Elizabeth Matilda Gratiaen. Eric, the eldest child from Harry’s second marriage, married the chronicler’s maternal aunt Amybelle.

He was 77 years in 1930 which is about the time he became confined to his home. When his granddaughter, now resident in Adelaide, was taken to see him, about the early forties, he was bedridden. He passed away soon after turning 90 in the club’s 70<sup>th</sup> year.

Henry (or Harry) played rugby at training college and was a stalwart of the Colts Cricket Club, near which he lived (at Dawson Road, Havelock Town). His association with the Colts was much deeper than “playing a few games for the Colts”, as remarked by his grandson Trevor, the chronicler’s maternal cousin.

Harry Ebert was a gregarious personality and a larger-than-life character. He is remembered for the dressing down he gave the father of Trevor Jansz (another Colts stalwart) who had committed mischief of sorts. In the presence of railway staff he blackguarded<sup>3</sup> Mr. Jansz referring to him in colourful language using phrases from the Burgher lexicon, in a scene straight out of a Muller book. However, they later made up.

The chronicler wonders whether Harry Ebert was related to the bearded J.C. Ebert who appears in a few of the early group photographs. Sadly, the chronicler lacks a photograph of Harry Ebert. However, there is a picture of Eric, his eldest child from his second marriage, who married the chronicler’s maternal aunt. Eric was aware of his father’s passion for the Colts, knowledge of which he passed on to his son, Trevor. Eric Ebert (b. 1898) would have grown up during the heyday of the Colts and would no doubt have been steeped in the club’s tradition through his father. A conversation had with Eric Ebert about the Colts would have been richly rewarding. Unfortunately, Eric Ebert passed away at 73 years of age, two years prior to the chronicler’s arrival in Australia.

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<sup>3</sup> Used by Ceylonese in lieu of “scold” but pronounced as “blaggard”.

#### ERIC AND AMYBELLE EBERT



Courtesy of Doreen Lieversz

Harry Ebert would have been very pleased with Foenander's book on the Colts which came out in 1941. He would be just as pleased with the chronicler's historical update of 2024. He would have been thrilled to learn about the personalities who took over the baton and who have kept the club afloat for the 81 years since he left. Similarly, it is good for the latter-day stalwarts to have a knowledge of those who came before them and to whom the club was also a second home. A dream meeting would be one between Harry Ebert and K. Mathivanan.

#### Gerald Heyn

Gerald Heyn was not as successful a cricketer as his elder brother Charlie but held the position of treasurer for many a year. His son Russell, a grandson of Justin de Zilwa, one of the Colts' founding fathers, was one of Ceylon's leading cricketers, but played for the B.R.C.<sup>4</sup>

Foenander also refers to old European residents of Ceylon who were great admirers of the Colts. They were the then deceased George Vanderspar, W.R. Fellowes Lukis of the C.G.R. and Louis Siedle, who umpired for the Colts in more than one big match, including the one against captain Ward Jackson's XI.

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<sup>4</sup> Russell Heyn's eldest son Richard was bowled out twice by Douglas Lieversz' son Darrell, in the famous Royal – Peterite game of 1962. Brian Silva, a Peterite himself, used to needle Richard whenever he came out to face Darrell in club games between the Colts and the BRC, referring to Richard as Darrell's "bunny".

Finally, Foenander refers to a couple of up-country residents who went out of their way to assist the Colts team whenever they visited the hill country. (Refer chapter 26). They were T.C. Van Rooyen (lawyer), Edwin Pate and his eldest son E.T.A. Pate, and WJ. Webster (Vet.) Around the turn of the nineteenth century the Colts Cricket Club instilled a lot of burgher pride.

### **S.P. Joseph**

S.P. Joseph is not included in the 1973 stalwart list. His career would have kept him away from cricket. He did not perform startling deeds as a cricketer. But while not an icon, he would comfortably fit within the definition of stalwart. He was a fast-scoring batsman who played for the Colts fresh from Royal.

Foenander (1941: 100) remarks that Dr. Sydney Perceival Joseph (1873-1934) served as an honorary secretary of the club after retiring as provincial surgeon. This was at a time when the club's cricketing prominence was sliding (Simpson 2020). His keen interest in Club activities and the enthusiasm with which he inspired the members, were greatly missed after his death.

If he retired between 50 and 55 years of age, he would have commenced serving the club as secretary between 1923 and 1928. He isn't listed in the official honour board as a secretary. But he could have served as a cricket secretary? But we do know that he was on the organising committee of the club's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 1898.

Eugene Joseph had fifteen children. S.P. Joseph was one of them. Eugene Joseph's elder brother Arthur Francis married one Eugenia and had male offspring, including Lawrence (later Joseph Lawrence) who moved to Scotland in the 1890s. The photos below of him as a young man were sent as greetings by S.P. to his cousins in Scotland, the descendants of whom are now in Canada.

S.P. joined the Ceylon light infantry in 1890 and was a captain-major in the Ceylon volunteer medical corp between 1927 and 1933. He married Noble Ohlmus (1878 – 1949) on 4 September 1905, the daughter of one the founders of the Colts, Eudo Ohlmus, and had four children between 1906 and 1916.

### VARIOUS STAGES OF DR. S.P. JOSEPH

London, 9.8.1902



Courtesy of Joe Simpson

Maskeliya, 15.9.1909



Sydney, Anne and their first born child, Noble

Courtesy of Shelagh  
Goonewardene

Later years



Courtesy of Joe Simpson



Courtesy of Foenander  
1941

S.P. joined the Colts in March 1892 and remained an enthusiastic member until his death. He played in all local test matches against European teams until 1900. He opened the batting with A.T. Pollocks and was noted for his quick singles (Foenander 1941: 10). He was also a good outfielder. His younger brother E.A. Joseph was an all-rounder who figured in several tests with Allan Raffel and W. de Fransz.

In his brief period of retirement Dr. S.P. Joseph also served as treasurer of the DBU indexing old records and registers (Simpson 2020). He worked at the Wolvendaal church where he also got married in.

### Unsung stalwarts

Eddie Melder, Emile Othen and Brian Silva are other stalwarts who deserve mention. They were or have been Colts all their lives and gave their all to the club. As cricket secretary Eddie Melder was an avid recruiter of talent to the club. He embodied what was best in the club as much as what some people considered the worst in the club, namely, his overzealous barracking for the club. But his loyalty was never in dispute.

Along with M.W. Rajasingham, Desmond Van Cuylenberg and M.N. Hameed were chiefly responsible for the restoration of the club ceiling in 1978. Together, they provided material, labour, architectural expertise, and financial support. Their devotion to the club knew no bounds.

## Modern day stalwarts

In recent times, persons like Mathivanam, G.H.A. Goonesena, Trevor Rajaratnam, Carlton Bernadus, Nishantha Ranatunga and Rajasingham have done much for the club and are veterans bordering on stalwart status, in every sense of the word. All but Mathivanan are former Colts cricketers. (Mathivanan played cricket for the Saracens in the early seventies.) Mathivanan was president for a decade and during his tenure it appears that the club changed considerably. There obviously are other stalwarts or stalwarts in the making that the chronicler isn't aware of.

From 1984 to 1990 the playing group was held together by Goonasekera and Bernadus. After Walwin relinquished the presidency the club leadership was falling apart, and Gamini Goonasekera was persuaded to take up the mantle. Many regard him as being responsible for building the club to what it is today. Some have even remarked that he ruined his life by pumping much of his money into the club. He laid the foundation for Mathivanan to build on and make the changes that shifted the club into a higher realm.

Rajaratnam and Rajasingham were in the Ranjit Samarasekera league in that they were involved in the club for over fifty years and were a link between the club of the early sixties and early seventies, and the new millennium. They were there when the club was struggling and stuck with it through the lean times. It was their devotion and loyalty that enabled the club to survive the lean times. They shaped the character of the club through their dedication.

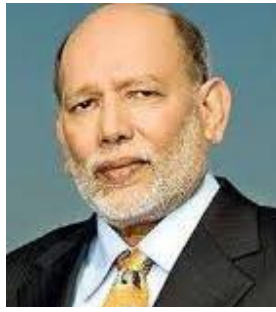
Trevor Rajaratnam was the figure that made the modern club a familiar place to expatriate Colts and those who were involved with the club in the seventies. Before the chronicler left for Sri Lanka in 2014, he was asked by Vimal Jayanetti to get in touch with Trevor Rajaratnam.

For those who considered the club a second home or a spiritual home, Trevor Rajaratnam was the one figure that lent substance to that feeling. He made people like the chronicler feel that they were coming home when they approached the club. Even if he wasn't present physically, the knowledge that he was still involved in the club made expatriates feel that they belonged.

Rajaratnam's sudden and unexpected passing in February of 2024 saddened, not only the current club membership, but the entire expatriate community to whom he embodied continuity with the past. And it cast a pall over the celebration of the club's endurance over 150 years.



Carlton Bernardus  
Courtesy of ESPNcrickinfo



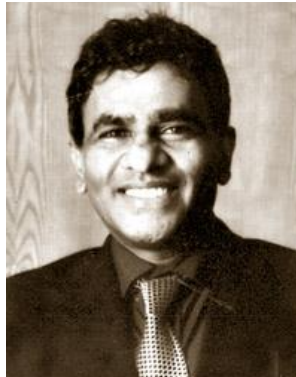
Trevor Rajaratnam  
Courtesy of Daily FT



M.W. Rajasingham  
Courtesy of Colts  
125<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
publication



Gamini Goonesena  
Courtesy of the Colts 125<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary publication



K. Mathivanan  
Courtesy of the Daily News



Nishantha Ranatunga  
Courtesy of the Sunday  
Times

With the passage of time the definition of who constitutes a stalwart has been broadened. A stalwart of today would be someone who played cricket or none, who may have joined the club from school or later in life, but who has never lost his/her links with the club and has served the club in various capacities and continues to demonstrate his/her affection for the club through deeds. A stalwart could even be someone whose time at the club was limited, and who for the most part was geographically isolated from the club, but who nonetheless retained strong emotional bonds with the club and to whom the Colts is the only club he/her has ever identified with.