



## ***Celebrating 21 Years of Caring for the Less Fortunate 1982- 2004***

THE EIGHTY CLUB MELBOURNE INC.

1982-2003

*By Pamela Forster*

"Helping families in dire need" is the most frequently voiced concern in the minutes of meetings and the Newsletters of the early years of the Eighty Club Melbourne Inc. (ECM). The idea for a club developed from the correspondence between old friends, Brenda Koch and Averil Bartholomeusz. Averil had maintained a family tradition of helping needy members, both old and young, of the Burgher community. In the early eighties calls for her assistance were escalating and while Brenda had continued her assistance, many Burgher 'expats,' Ronald and Eileen van Houten included, were also found to be sympathetic to Averil's cause. They realized that a group effort from Australia would be the most effective way to assist Burgher families in dire need in Sri Lanka (SL).

Historically there have been a significant proportion of Burghers amongst the less fortunate in SL, but many factors led to a worsening of this situation. The SL Government's 'Sinhala Only' policy for instance made it difficult for many Burghers, more proficient in the English medium, to find jobs. Their financial dilemma was further exacerbated by the fact that SL is a country where there is no efficient social security system and support is dependent on a web of reciprocal relationships within the family and communal framework. Few decisions are made in SL without consulting a friend or relative, particularly for help with survival when a breadwinner loses employment or a pensioner runs out of funds. This network of help within the community had shrunk with the accelerated emigration of Burghers from SL, and there were considerably fewer 'contacts' to approach for assistance. It was in this context that Averil and Brenda were attempting to forge links that extended across an ocean!

At an informal meeting of friends at Ronald and Eileen's home, it was decided that the best way to assist Burghers in dire need in SL, would be to form an organization of people interested in helping them. After some discussion the title 'The Eighty Club' was selected for the proposed organization. To Brenda the name reflected the fact that the club was formed in the eighties and was to be restricted to eighty members, a small convivial group with philanthropic intent. A formal 'Inaugural Meeting,' was arranged and excerpts from the minutes of this meeting follow.

*The Inaugural Meeting of the Eighty Club*

*The Inaugural Meeting of the 'Eighty Club' was held on the 25th September 1982.*

*David Smith outlined the objectives of the proposed Club, which were "to help the needy of our community in Ceylon, who were in dire circumstances, and to promote fellowship amongst members, who wish to share in this endeavour. "*

*Finances were to be raised by subscription, donations and fund raising activities.*

*Assistance would be in monthly payments in the long term as well as short-term payments in bona fide emergencies.*

*The election of Office Bearers took place with Denzil Peterson in the chair.*

*President - David Smith, (David consented to take office for two months.)*

*Vice President - Ronald van Houten.*

*Treasurer - Eileen van Houten, (who accepted the position temporarily)*

*Secretary - Brenda Koch.*

*No Committee was elected, it was decided that the matter would be considered when necessary. A subscription of Rs 2.50 per month, per couple or single person was agreed on.*

*General meetings would be held on the last Saturday of each month followed by a social, to which members would 'bring a plate. '*

*A congratulatory letter from Ms Heather Claasz of the UK with offers of financial help was read. Present at the Meeting were:- Jackie & Ellis Albrecht, June Bartholomeusz, Betty & Kiltore Chapman, Brenda & Tyrone De Silva, Myrtle Knowler, Brenda Koch, Pearl & Denzil Peterson, Violet Poulter, David & Yvonne Smith, Eileen & Ronald Van Houten, Rita & Richard Young.*

It was decided that assistance would be in cash, not food hampers. Twenty-five families recommended by Rev C Jansz were sent Rs 300 each at Christmas 1982. Averil and Rev. C. Jansz distributed the funds. Averil and Rev. Jansz were the Club's agents in SL in '82 and '83.

David Smith, who was moving interstate and Ronald van Houten resigned from the positions of President and Vice Presidency respectively, in Nov. '82. Willem Leembruggen was elected President and Ernie de Bruin

Vice President. Ronald continued to work enthusiastically for the club in the role of Membership Secretary. The 'Newsletter' (NL.) evolved from minutes of General Meetings that were posted to those members who had been absent from meetings. The earliest NL in the Secretary's files is dated 15.12.82. These NLs form an accurate record of the club's activities for posterity and I have drawn on them extensively for this account.

At the General Meeting on 29.1.1983 Vernon Kelly was elected Treasurer and Maurice Forster Asst. Treasurer. The first 'Committee of Management' was elected at this meeting. It comprised, Pat Hesse, Jackie Albrecht, Eileen van Houten, Sheila Kelaart and Betty Chapman. The new committee set up a Contingency Fund of Rs 1,000 in S.L. for assistance in emergencies.

The first monthly allowance to a beneficiary commenced in Feb.'83, when Rs 200 per month was paid to Ms. I. K., a cancer patient who succumbed to the illness in July '83, an extra Rs 200 was forwarded towards her funeral expenses. The second monthly pension was allocated in April to Mr. C.S., a partially crippled 77 yr. old with no income.

The Ceylon Burgher Assoc. (CBA) Vice-President Col. Noel Jansz was on holiday in Melbourne in Jan. '83 and he addressed the ECM meeting on, 'The CBA and its assistance to poor Burghers.' CBA resources were limited and each beneficiary received just Rs 35 per month. A proposal at the meeting that ECM funds could be channelled through the CBA was accepted.

At the Aug. 27, 1983 meeting President Willem Leembruggen said that after many months of negotiation with the Ceylon Burgher Association and Dutch Burgher Union (DBU) a plan was finalized for the ECM to make donations through these organizations. 57 CBA and 12 DBU beneficiaries received Rs 35.00 and Rs 50.00 p.m. respectively. The ECM would add to these allowances so that with ECM assistance all beneficiaries would receive Rs 70 each p.m. In return the bona fides of those seeking ECM aid in SL would be assessed by these organizations and payments made to the applicants selected. Of the 25 beneficiaries helped by the ECM at Christmas '82, 12 were selected, who were not already assisted by the CBA or DBU, they too would each receive Rs 70 p.m. from the ECM.

Since the Treasurer Maurice Forster was to visit S.L. it was suggested that he contact the CBA and DBU with a view to explaining the detail of the ECM plan. On his return he reported that the meeting with the CBA and DBU had been successful and spoke of what a wonderful carer Averil Bartholomeusz was, she had a special monthly lunch for poor Burghers and gave them money as well as bread and cutlets to take home for dinner. Willem proposed that Averil be given a monthly allowance so she could increase the assistance she gave to the old as well as to young families. Averil helped the ECM until 1999 when she asked to be relieved of the responsibility. All those who visited her were impressed with her total dedication to, and preoccupation with those in distress.

The first ECM Constitution was accepted on the 26th Nov. 1983 its Aims:- *"To afford relief to families in dire need in SL. To make donations to charities in Australia and to provide for the educational needs of persons who need such support in pursuit of educational qualifications."*

At the AGM there was unanimous agreement that each president should serve a short term, preferably of two years, in order to avoid the animosity associated with the change of long serving presidents in some organizations. Though it was not written into the constitution, this custom has been honoured over the years. President Willem concluded that, *"It is not out of place to feel a certain sense of satisfaction that the club and its aims are now recognized by members of the community, Membership is widespread, but there is still much to be done. The plight of poorer members of the community is appalling. The Rs100. a month is still a pittance, it only pays for a loaf of bread a day! Every effort will be made to increase this substantially during the next year."*

There was great enthusiasm and commitment in the early years, nine Committee Meetings (in contrast to four now) and eight General Meetings were held during the year 82/83. All members were involved in selecting beneficiaries, often making spontaneous donations in cash and kind to fundraising projects, just so an extra person in SL could be helped.

In Jan.'84 Jackie Albrecht proposed the formation of a Working/Fund Raising Committee, to organize fund raising events. In '86 this Committee was expanded to include volunteers and renamed the Entertainment Committee. Later it was decided that 'The Fund Raising Committee' was a more apt description of the committee's role.

An excerpt from the Newsletter of April '84 reads, *"Rather than confining ourselves to sending allowances to the older members of the Community who are badly off, we have made arrangements with the CBA, to assist younger persons to enable them to secure good employment"*. A decision was made to fund the CBA with Rs 300 monthly, so that at any one time three students could follow courses in Shorthand and Typewriting: The first ECM Vocational Training program commenced in 1984, within two years of the ECM's formation. The Secretary cum Treasurer of the CBA, Lorensz de Kretser, was visiting in Australia with his wife Hazel (Girle) and addressed an ECM general meeting in April 84. He described the great hardship of the poor caused by the high cost of living. He gave examples of how expensive basic stationery requirements were for school

children. Most distressing was the lack of communication between generations, due to the younger generation being educated in the Sinhala medium, English being taught only four or five periods a week. Lorensz' words had a strong impact on members, and the formation of an Education Fund, was reported in the May' 84 'Newsletter'.

In the next NL was an appeal for a girl who had completed her 'O levels' and gained entrance to Methodist College but whose widowed mother with two other dependants, was unable to finance her at the school. The CBA Secretary worked out that Rs 500. a month would be needed for fees, books, uniforms and transport. The appeal resulted in contributions of \$850. The student was fully funded and the excess credited to the 'Education

Fund' to help other students.

In the year 85/86, five youngsters and a second year undergraduate of the Kelaniya University were assisted. The texts for her English Literature course were unavailable in SL at the time. These books were posted to her and she said she spread them all around her, just ecstatic.

Committee concerns that there could be accidents at fund raising events, which would result in claims for compensation, led to a decision that President Maurice Forster should negotiate, the incorporation of the ECM with the Office of Fair Trading. Changes to the constitution including a name change to, 'The Eighty Club Melbourne Inc.' were required. Eventually in June '87 the process was successfully completed.

'The Burgher Welfare League of WA' (BWL) was formed in May '89 when ECM members in Perth resigned from the ECM to form their own organization. From '91 to '93 the BWL generously, contributed Rs 50

through the DBU, to each of the 122 ECM beneficiaries in SL.

Recognition by the Tax Department as a Charitable Organization was an important objective for 1988/89. The position in relation to tax liability of our income from fund raising activities and from interest on our invested reserves had to be clarified. Amendments to the constitution, including the deletion of the clause pertaining to education, were needed. Education was not considered to need charity in Australia at the time. Finally in Dec '90, President Vernon Kelly was informed that the ECM was recognized as a 'charitable organization'.

'The Eighty Melbourne Club Inc.' was well established by the end of 'The Eighties'. Most 'new initiatives' introduced since, have a precursor in those years be they: sponsorships, vocational training, or help with rent payments.

We had the sad experience in '91 of the death of the incumbent Secretary Lorensz de Kretser. Lorensz had been elected Secretary of the ECM almost as soon as he arrived in Australia in '86. He had the closest ties with the ECM, as he had been Secretary cum Treasurer of the CBA in '83, when the ECM negotiated payments through that organization. He was a kind, God fearing man, and a tireless worker for needy Burghers for many, many years.

In December '92 President Ian Kelly visited SL. He was present at the DBU X'mas party for beneficiaries. Ian was impressed with the efficient organization of welfare programs by President Harrold Speldewinde and his team, and appreciative of Averil's work.

Brenda Koch, co-founder of the 'Eighty Club' passed away on the 14th of June 1996. Her caring nature and tireless efforts got the 'Eighty Club' off to an excellent start, and it has progressed way beyond all expectations. It is no exaggeration to say that she spent every waking moment thinking of ways to enhance assistance to the needy in SL.

Steep rises in the cost of living in SL were making the education of children difficult. A child had complained that she could not think because she was 'always so hungry'! Help was clearly needed. Secretary Maurice Forster obtained committee approval to publish an offer in the NL to 'link sponsors with children in SL.' The Child Sponsorship Scheme commenced in 1996. It now attracts sponsors from non-members of the ECM, including the children of members. The 'younger generation' of Burghers are at last showing interest in an Eighty Club initiative. A welcome change, since there had been concern at their lack of interest in the community in SL.

A finance committee was formed on Maurice Forster's proposal at the July '97 Committee meeting to advise on; accounting policy, annual financial plans, and the feasibility of discretionary and non- discretionary changes to expenditure and income.

In July '97 President, Ivor de Kretser informed the DBU of a Management Committee decision to form an Aid Fund of \$1 000.00 for medical emergencies and vocational training courses.

Changes to the Federal Government's income tax legislation in '98 required the ECM to re-apply, as a non-profit organization, for exemption from income tax. Rodney Ferdinands made the necessary changes to the constitution which included: the reintroduction of help with Education in SL, the new the office of Membership Secretary, the removal of General Meetings, (due to poor attendance), and the commencement of the financial year on the 1 st of July. President Edgar Jansz took on the task of applying for tax-exempt status for the ECM as a non-profit organization. In Feb.'99, the Australian Tax Office granted the ECM an exemption from filing a tax return unless requested to do so.

At the Management Committee meeting on the 12th Sept. '99 Tony Scarnivel made Treasurer Cecil Fernando's

apology of absence due to illness. Shortly after the President was called to the phone. He returned to announce that Cecil had 'passed away'. A period of stunned silence ensued. Those present asserted that they felt his presence he was taking his leave. His commitment to the aims and purpose of the ECM was one of the strongest. Cecil fulfilled the role of treasurer with meticulous accuracy. There was the occasion when the committee decided to publish receipts of subscriptions in the 'Newsletter' instead of posting individual receipts. Later it was found that Cecil had continued to issue receipts paying for the postage out of his own pocket. He insisted on following correct procedures however inconvenient or tiresome. His high moral principles and gentle manner were greatly appreciated.

The Dec. '99 Newsletter carried the sad news of Willhem Leembruggen's death. He was president for the customary two year period 1982/83 and 1983/84, Asst. Treasurer in 1985/86 and continued on the committee until he left for NSW in 1996. He made a huge contribution to the organization of the Club in its formative years. Those who were on the committee remember his punctilious pursuit of accuracy in the maintenance of accounting records, and minutes. His commitment to the welfare of Burghers in SL was second to none. Having retired from the police force as Deputy Inspector General- one of four, he brought his organizational skills to the formation and running of the club.

The Newsletter (NL) of the third quarter of 2000 brought on the 'refugee debate', initiated by Secretary Richard Young who was saddened by remarks such as "Sink the boats, let the sharks eat them." He published an article that was sympathetic to refugees.

Outgoing Pres Edgar Jansz and Pres Henry Brohier continued in similar vein in the next NL. In the following NL readers' differing views were printed!

David Varney censured, "It appears to me, that the Eighty Club is condoning political opinions on the current 'Queue Jumping Asylum Seekers.' This appalls me as I cannot understand why these Bleeding Heart Do Gooders cannot understand that the Government of this great country, that they now hopefully call HOME, have security concerns."

Charmaine Solomon cheered; "Herewith, please find enclosed a contribution of \$200 towards the work you do in Sri Lanka. Congratulations on a very moving article on Ahmed Alzalimi." Dudley Ludekens queried: "It was our understanding that the Eighty Club was a non-political organization, only interested in fostering the welfare and improving the conditions of those less fortunate Burghers left behind in Sri Lanka. Regrettably the editorial

written by the Hon. Secretary, Richard Young, appeared to contradict that viewpoint."

Dr J. B. Chapman approved; "It is very refreshing to find someone who has the courage of his convictions - to stand up and be counted. I refer to the "outpouring" in your NL of the 4th quarter."

Other writers continued a lively debate, which indicated that a larger number of members read the Newsletter than imagined by committee members.

In 2002 Darryl Isaaks liaised with Neville Overlunde, DBU Welfare Chairperson, on a review of beneficiaries' financial status. Some allowances were terminated and improved guidelines for assessing beneficiaries were established.

An outline of ECM *IDBU* welfare programs was proposed by Ivor Ferdinands, initially as a 'Memorandum of Understanding' the document was renamed the 'Procedural Guide to the Conduct of ECM DBU Welfare Programs.' President Pamela Forster forwarded a draft copy to the DBU in Feb.03, for their consideration and input. It was accepted as by the DBU as an user friendly guide to *ECM/DBU* welfare programs. It would be particularly helpful and informative for new committee members and anyone needing information of ECM welfare programs.

In June '03 a scheme for 'Post Secondary Education and Training' (PSET) funded with an allocation of \$2,000 from the ECM and a donation of \$1,000 from Ivor and Pat de Kretser commenced, three youngsters had their courses paid for under the PSET scheme in '03.

At the end of June 2003, ECM membership stood at 536. A total of \$33,523, was sent to 150 welfare beneficiaries for the year, which included; allowances of Rs750, a mid-year bonus and Christmas bonus, and where applicable, family allowances of Rs 200 and spouse allowances of Rs500, as well as help with medical expenses for some.

Subscriptions and donations for the year amounted to \$25,005. The Fund Raising Committee brought in \$19,000, Student Sponsorship receipts totalled \$ 26,950, for 116 children.

Since 1983 the committees of the DBU and the ECM have maintained excellent working relations. There is a dynamism, which has allowed for a variety of initiatives to suit different needs. Enthusiastic DBU office bearers have facilitated all ECM schemes to help the needy.

#### FUND RAISING

Fund raising activities are essential to the ECM's ability to fulfil its commitments in SL, as subscriptions of \$30 would not go very far. In June '91, for example, the Club was assisting 127 Burgher families with Rs 350 each. ECM membership was 229 but 600 members would have been needed to meet this commitment without any fund raising events.

In '82/'83 there were four types of Fund raising.

The first adventure into fundraising was the street stalls at the Bentleigh shopping centre. Brenda was unable to

attend the first one as she was hospitalised. While she continued to suffer from poor health, it no way inhibited her enthusiasm she would arrive at fund raising events, limping and short of breath, but involved in all arrangements. At Street stalls chutneys, pickles, cakes even X'mas stockings were successfully sold, but the stalls were replaced by fun type activities focused on Sri Lankan food.

The 'Dinner Dance' was another early initiative. The dinner was 'Stringhoppers and the usual accompaniments', with tickets at \$7.50. Brenda, an appreciative viewer of 'Young Talent Time' on TV, had organized a cabaret artiste she had seen on the show to perform at the dance. The lady donated her act to the cause. A very pleasing profit of \$659.00 was realized from the event. The mid-year dance is an enduring feature of ECM fund raising. The **sale of raffle tickets for the Lions Club** was a self-help venture organized by 'The Lions' to assist small organizations in their fund raising. It continued for a few years.

Fourthly there was The '**Members' Initiative**'. Members' initiatives have grown beyond all expectation, to encourage the efforts of the Fundraising Committee of the ECM.

In '83 Cecil and Maureen Fernando organized a '**Hopper Night**' at their home, for 40 people at a charge of \$6.00 p.p. Maureen made the hoppers, accompaniments were provided by members. Funds raised were donated to the ECM.

Pamela and Rodney Jansz and their friends organized 'A **Hot August Night**', a dinner dance in '96. which resulted in a donation of \$1 ,000 to the ECM by this cheerful group.

In '97 the ECM was very fortunate to have dedicated members **Susie and Jan Harris donate the meal at a delicious luncheon** in memory of Jan's father, St. Elmo Varden Harris. They have continued this donation over the years.

**Zodiac Caterers donated** a sumptuous spread for the dinner dance in Jan 2000, which was enjoyed by all. They have generously continued to donate the meal at annual dances.

President Pamela Forster's suggested that the last two donations have been acknowledged, with special projects. On behalf of the Harris family the committee agreed to take on Mrs. D as an extra beneficiary. On behalf of Victor and Loraine de Silva of Zodiac Catering, a donation was made of 70 mosquito nets for children at the Nayakakande Convent in SL

In 1985 a fund raising activity that encouraged members to **collect coins** to be donated to the Club was introduced as an alternative to raising subscription rates. The coins have kept rolling in over the years.

The '**First Lunch**' was held on the 14.06.87. The fellowship it engendered was so appreciated that lunches have continued to be a popular feature of ECM fund raising.

The Tenth Anniversary of the ECM was celebrated, with a Dinner Dance on the 21 st of Nov.'93. Thus was our **Christmas Party**, an occasion of fun and celebration, launched.

The DBU had inquired if ECM could take on 50 more pensioners, but the committee could only afford to take on 51. In '91 the committee issued '**Heart Cards**' to members to assist in fund raising. They were successful for some years, but gradually lost support.

Coach trips to **Crown's World of Entertainment** including an 'All you can eat buffet lunch' have been

organized since 1999. These popular trips, are run by Arlene and Tony Scarnivel, Richard and Rita Young and Noel and Yvonne Werkmeister.

The **First Food Fair** on the 6th Sept. '86, organized by Brenda and Jackie, made profit of \$2,798.21. The aim was to have all of the delicacies of a Burgher feast.

Maureen Kelly, Leonie Martenstyn and helpers used 'Grandmas' pans to cook **poffertjees!** Brenda and Eileen van Houten organized **fuguetes, bolo-folhado**. June Bartholomeusz ran a cake and sweet stall with love cake, and toffees, aluwas etc. Maureen Fernando ran the hopper, pittu and rotti stall and Shelah Kelaart and Betty Chapman the savouries including **pan rolls, patties, 'mus pangs', vaddais** etc. Pamela Anderson provided fried rice and accompaniments. Maurice Forster made **vaddais** and **Woodapple** ice cream. **Lampries** preparation was organized by Ann Keegel and Pamela Forster. In subsequent years Ann made and donated 100 lampries on her own!

**String hoppers** and accompaniments were served by Hazel de Kretser and Caryl Ferdinands. Doreen de Bruin ran a Caramels and **Vattalapan** stall. A Drinks stall including, **Sherbert** was organized by Rita Young and Eileen van Houten. Many others assisted.

Over the years stalls were added and new stall managers came in. Pat and Ivor de Kretser Elaine Orchard took on the savouries stall, Pamela Forster managed the Hopper stall and also made foguetes and broeders. Astrid Bowen made stuffed **Godambas** and **thosai** and Ian Kelly **lingus** and salt beef. Pamela Brohier managed the cake and sweet stall. Food Fairs became occasions of camaraderie and fun, and were the most productive with profits rising to approx \$5,000.

**The end** to Food Fairs was brought about by very unfortunate circumstances. President Ivor de Kretser wrote in the Aug '99 Newsletter "the incidence of food poisoning after the Food Fair unfortunately caused severe illness to some members and patrons. The resulting trauma to all concerned cannot be repeated and food fairs have been deleted from the fund raising calendar."

To say that committee members and members were greatly distressed is an understatement! Rev. Lawrence Turnbull of St David's Moorabbin with Rev. Crosbie de Kretser held a healing service, which greatly helped

members as they attempted to refocus on their commitment to those in need. The committee was also heartened to observe the groundswell of member support for the next fund raising event, the May luncheon when 265 attended.

From that point onwards the committee's role in fund raising has changed completely and cooking is done by registered caterers. Five lunches three trips to the casino, a dinner dance and Christmas party are held each year since 2001. Committee members take turns to co-ordinate events. The dances need special expertise, the ECM has been fortunate to have members who coordinate them Ian Kelly, Errol and Elaine Orchard in the past, and now Tony and Arlene Scarnivel, George and Yvonne de Vos and Rita and Conraad Hatch. George is a gifted artist and has transformed the ordinary hall into a thing of beauty on the night. It is an enormous commitment for committee members, but one that is undertaken in the knowledge that support from fellow members is readily given.

#### **ECM BENEFICIARIES**

Concern for Burgher 'families in dire need' led to the formation of the ECM in September '82. The Club's focus has remained on the '**Burgher community**' rather than just the 'elderly in need'.

A family, Mr. & Mrs. 1. with 4 children were given Rs 100 pending investigation. (NL. June SL.) By Aug. '83 **two Families** with young children were allocated funds; one with 7 children received Rs350. p.m. (this remittance was taken on by J & K Henderson who sponsored the family); the other received Rs 150.00.p.m. A cheque to cover these payments for 3 months was sent to Miss D. Lembruggen who supervised this project in Colombo.

In Jan' 88 a **family allowance** of Rs200 to 17 beneficiaries with children under 18 was approved, to help with the cost of feeding, clothing and schooling kids. It was rumoured that children were unable to go to school because they had no shoes.

**Help too Late!** Secretary Brenda Koch wrote in Dec. '84 of a family, Mrs. N and her retarded daughter, whom the ECM helped through the DBU. *'Mrs. N is terminally ill and hospitalized. Her daughter also ill, begs during the day and sleeps under her mother's hospital bed at night'*. (The allowance at this time was Rs100 pm.) Brenda reported in the April '85 NL that mother and daughter could not be hospitalized indefinitely, admission to the 'Home for the Incurables' was being arranged with the help of a donation. However soon afterwards came the devastating news that Mrs. N had in fact died on the 30th of March, her daughter Ms. N passed away 3 weeks later. In SL 'The Weekend Insight' March 31 reported:-

#### **A MISERABLE DEATH**

*Forty-five year old Ms. N ... died last week. After weeks of misery, Ms. N. had been a patient of the Surgical Ward of the General Hospital treated for a gaping wound in her leg, when the hospital discharged her over a month ago. Ms. N ... (her mother too had died in the hospital), a Burgher lady without any relatives or friends in Sri Lanka, decided she would remain in a corridor of the Colombo General Hospital with the wound in her leg covered up with a piece of waste paper. She hoped to receive some attention from the many physicians and nurses who passed the spot daily. But she was sadly mistaken, the only result after her picture was published a month ago in the 'Weekend' was an angry rebuke from the Ward Sister asking her why she had talked to the Press! Ms ... was buried at State expense "*

If there had been any doubts of the horrific consequences of lack of contacts and help within the community this article dispelled them. It also showed that the ECM allowance did not go very far.

ECM members have always been responsive to appeals for help. For instance in '87 an appeal made in the 'Newsletter' for Rs5, 000 on behalf of a family, unable to pay an advance on their room rent, resulted in donations the equivalent of 1 to 2 years rent.

Justice Percy Colin-Thome was on a visit to Melbourne in 1988. He was invited to address the committee,

and made this passionate appeal regarding ECM assistance to the community in SL.

*'Please do not abandon them (beneficiaries), there are bare-footed, sore-infested children turning up at the DBU Christmas party. ' He spoke of families in hovels, on the beaches, on the canal banks; of the terrible desperation that has driven a few to the oldest profession. "And some of these bear the names of families that once stood tall in our community, the community is now at the bottom of the economic and social order. The most recent census revealed a combined Burgher and Eurasian population in excess of 38, 000. The views of other leading members of the community in SL suggest that the numbers and needs of our community will grow in the foreseeable future. Lets face the fact that most remaining Burghers can no longer "burgher off" to Australia, they are trapped by lack of education, skills and resources to stay in Sri Lanka. "*

One of the most heartbreaking situations is that of old parents burdened with incurably ill dependents. An example is the widow with a quadriplegic son who needs constant attention, his medical bills are around Rs 10,000 p.m. without income he depends on the generosity of others. The ECM has given him an allowance of Rs400.00 a month.

The Definition of 'a Burgher' was revisited in Dec.2000. As applicants for assistance are selected on the basis of the racial classification on their birth certificate the definition is critical for those seeking aid.

An official definition 'Burgher' had been made by Justice Onley in the Supreme Court in. 1933. *"The name 'Burgher' belongs to the descendents of the Dutch, Portuguese, and other Europeans born in Ceylon: the right*

*to this distinction must be decided by the country from which the father of paternal ancestors came. To what ever number of generations through which the family has passed in this Island if the male ancestors were Dutch, Portuguese, or any other Europeans, whoever may have been the female parents, if the parents were married the off-spring would be Burghers. If the parents were not married, the country of the mother would decide the question. If the right to be denominated Burgher be once lost by the legitimate father being a Sinhalese or other Indian, it cannot be recovered. "(He was quoting from a 1830 Royal Commission of Inquiry)*

However an application was received from a Burgher lady who had married a Muslim and had three children. The husband absconded. Since the race of the father is bestowed on the child, it precluded these children from being sponsored! 'Do we forsake a sister?' asked Sec. Richard Young. The rule was changed to read- "An applicant who has either a **Burgher mother or a Burgher father** is eligible for consideration for ECM benefits. Thus overriding gender bias.

We are often asked, "Why do you help only Burghers?" Here are some of the reasons:

1. The census in SL lists the Burghers as the 2nd poorest community, with the 2nd highest unemployment, and as such they are in obvious need of assistance.
2. Listening to a missionary speak of all the facets of India an 'Aussie' inquired, "If they have their own rich people why do we have to help them?" There is an accepted perception that members of a community have an obligation, to assist the needy of their own community.
3. The Burgher community has arguably the highest proportion of emigration of any community in SL. Those left in SL have very few contacts to approach for assistance in a country where assistance within the community is the norm. Distance does not lessen our ties.
4. Just as other racial and ethnic have their own organizations, founder members of the ECM sought to form an organization of people concerned to help Burghers.

The Management Committee of the ECM is very appreciative of the assistance given by the DBU Committee. We would not have been able to reach out to Burghers in need, in the way that we have, except for the help and guidance of a series of DBU Presidents, Treasurers and Welfare Chairpersons. Percy Colin Thome, Amyas de Kretser, Harold Speldewinde, Deloraine Brohier, Anthea Muller and Neville Overlunde have at different times made outstanding efforts and personal commitment on the behalf of the less fortunate of our community.

The ECM has been blessed with wonderfully supportive members who have shown their appreciation of the efforts of its committee with generous donations. At the AGM in Sept' 99 for instance the Treasurer Tony Scarnivel drew attention to Donations having increased 100% over the previous year. Some members have realized it would be more caring to seek donations to the ECM, than accept floral tributes on behalf of deceased family. Other members requested donations to the ECM in place of gifts at anniversary or birthday celebrations. All of these donations, most between \$1,000 and \$3,000 have helped to increase assistance to beneficiaries.

Very impressive too are the donations made by caterers '**Zodiac**' and the **Harris family** who have each donated meals at separate ECM fund raising functions for several years. Committee members look on these donations as expressions of confidence, and indicators that the ECM is on the right track. With trust comes the responsibility to live up to donors' high expectations to extend the scope and effectiveness of ECM programs.

The ECM has been blessed with dedicated committee members who have been unsparing of time and effort. A message from a member in the USA encapsulates the sentiment, *"though I have never met you I feel a kinship engendered from a common cause - alleviating hardship and suffering. I applaud the work of the Club and the untiring efforts of Committee members. "*

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