

PAST PRESIDENT'S RECOLLECTIONS

By Edgar Jansz

Sometime ago our President, Pamela Forster, gave me a short note that stated that we should all unite to produce a souvenir to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of our Club's existence. Pam also suggested that we could choose any topic - be it memories, experiences, biography, tales of inspiration, tales of hardship, poems, pictures - whatever!

Well, I find it very difficult to say NO to a President and a lady, (that is my downfall) so I racked my brains for a suitable topic and came up with the lame heading of a Past President's Recollections. Hope it may inspire budding Presidents!!!

At an Eighty Club Luncheon in 1996, I happened to pass the table occupied by the then Secretary - Maurice Forster and I overheard him discussing with Leonie Martenstyn and Errol Orchard, that nominations for all positions for the next year were filled except the position of Vice President. Immediately, Leonie turned to me and suggested - very strongly - that I should nominate for the position. She was ably supported by Errol and, yours truly, not having a clue as to the make-up of the Eighty Club organisation, and not able to say NO to the persuasive arguments of a capable female, (and due to a little bit of vanity in my make-up), I consented to place my name on a nomination paper, which Maurice had promptly placed before me. Thus, yours truly, entered the hallowed sanctuary of the Eighty Club organisation - not by merit, but purely by chance and vanity.

Fortunately for me, the President was none other than Ivor de Kretser, a most capable person, who knew the workings of the Eighty Club inside out. Thus, I was a Vice President in name only, until the end of his two year term when Ivor expressed his desire to vacate the position of President. I then realised I still had a great deal to learn about the workings of the Eighty Club and the personalities of those who ran the Club and I persuaded Ivor to continue for another year. It was indeed very fortunate for the Eighty Club that I succeeded in persuading Ivor to continue as President, because it was during this period that the Club went through its worst crisis - the food poisoning episode at our food fair. I can vouch for the fact that had I been President at this time I may have gone to pieces, and state that I admire the manner in which Ivor handled the whole crisis - with decorum - and always keeping the goal of the Eighty Club before us all, namely to help our less fortunate folk in Sri Lanka. He succeeded, and the Eighty Club flourished in spite of all the bad publicity it received due to that unfortunate incident. Thank you Ivor.

In September 1999, I was appointed President and through a strange quirk of fate, we went to the annual General Meeting without a single nomination for the position of Vice President. It was indeed with a great deal of joy that I observed a tentative hand being raised when I called for nominations from the floor. The hand belonged to Ivor Ferdinands, and I was very grateful to him for supporting me and saving the day. During my short term, I can honestly say that I succeeded not because of any ability on my part, but due to ALL the Committee Members pulling their weight, especially our very experienced and efficient Secretary, Richard Young and Treasurer, Tony Scarnivel.

The highlight of my short term was when our Club received a handsome cheque from a couple who instead of spending their Golden Wedding Anniversary with "dining and wining" their friends, decided that the money be used to help our Less Fortunate Folk in Sri Lanka. A special mid-year bonus of Rs1000.00 was thus donated to all (150) of our beneficiaries and the cards and letters of thanks that were received were certainly heart rendering and heart warming, not only to the Club but also to the "special" couple. Thank you Ivor and Audrey Ferdinands, for by your gesture you had made my term as President a memorable one and you have set us, lesser mortals, a benchmark that will be hard to follow.

I hope that this short synopsis of my term as President will inspire some of our younger members to aspire to the various positions in the Club thus helping it to live up to its motto: - CARING FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE.

(Excerpt from 21st Anniversary Souvenir, Eighty Club Melbourne, September 2003.)