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# WESTERN AUSTRALIA - SRI LANKA (CEYLON) ASSOCIATION INC.

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## Newsletter - June 2023

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Milindha de Mel

Secretary

Bianca Eriyagama

Treasurer

Shamilal Wirasinha



## President's Message

My dear members and friends,

Hope you are all keeping safe and warm through the rainy start to Perth's winter. How are we already in June? This year seems to be absolutely racing by.

While I don't want to give you sad news constantly, I want to say thank you to all of you who reached out with love and kindness as my family dealt with the loss of my grandmother, Kamala Fernando. She was a wonderful woman and was an integral part of our childhood and upbringing back in Sri Lanka. She will be greatly missed.

It's coincidental that I talk about our Mother's Day event held on the 7th of May, at the John McGrath Hall in South Perth. Nearly a 100 members and guests were treated to an afternoon of fun and fellowship. While our Treasurer will speak to the numbers later in this newsletter, for me it was a chance to celebrate the women in our lives and to show them our love and appreciation.

I would like to especially thank the working group for putting on an amazing event as well as our generous Committee. The positive feedback received makes all our efforts worthwhile.

There are some important dates coming up on our calendar and I would like you all to save the dates and join us!

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August we plan to have our WASLA Winter Dance. Preparations are already underway, and you can be assured of another fantastic event. Please join us for what will no doubt be a memorable evening.

We will also plan to have our AGM on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August. Formal communication on this will follow but I would like to see as many of you there as possible.

You would have also (hopefully) noticed our increased social presence via Facebook. We will now extend this to Instagram as well. Let us know what you think at [info@wasla.org.au](mailto:info@wasla.org.au)

As always, thank you for your support of WASLA. The Committee really value the backing we receive from our members, and we hope to see you at the above functions if not sooner!

God bless,

Milindha  
President



## A Note from the Editor

Hello again, Everyone!

I hope you enjoyed the many special occasions of the last months- Sinhala and Tamil New Year, Vesak and Mother's Day.

I am away in Sri Lanka right now and say a big 'Thank You' to Bianca for completing the formatting in my absence in spite of her hectic schedule. As always, muchas gracias to Kevin Melder for his numerous contributions and to all other contributors and supporters.

This edition is dedicated to all mothers, stepmothers, foster mothers and mother-figures, and features a special tribute and photographic coverage of WASLA Mother's Day which was an unqualified success. We profile two outstanding women- Mary Anne David and Yaso Ponnudurai, and share lone Cooray's memories of her visit to Sri Lanka, and another journey down memory lane with Professor Vanden Nathan.

There's also an article on the naming of the Multicultural Services Centre offices in honour of Dr Leela de Mel, and one on the benefits of drinking coffee.

We farewell a WASLA icon- Max Gerreyn, who has left an indelible memory in the lives of all who knew him. We also farewell renown singer Desmond Kelly

I welcome advertisements for future publications to fund the Newsletter and WASLA administration costs.

Full page \$ 80.00 per publication

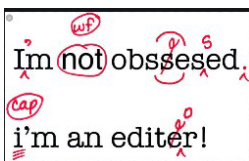
Half page \$ 50.00

Quarter page \$ 30.00

Here's a request going out to anyone with an interesting article, joke story or titbit for the next Newsletter. We love hearing from you! Please send your contributions to: Editor, WASLA Newsletter, c/o Australian Asian Association, 275 Stirling Street, Perth WA 6000 or direct to me at [radhanikademel@gmail.com](mailto:radhanikademel@gmail.com).

As always, I hope you enjoy this edition and look forward to hearing from you soon.  
Stay Safe! Kind regards

Radha





## Treasurer's Report

Dear members and friends,

From a Treasury perspective, the only function I have to report on is our Mother's Day event in May. As Milindha promised some numbers here they are:

98 tickets sold of which 65% were members (which is amazing)!  
 \$3,300 in profit, into the WASLA bank account!  
 \$2,140 in donations from the Committee, without which our profits would be just over \$1k.  
 \$470 in raffle proceeds, which will be donated to a women's shelter in Northbridge.

As you can surmise from the above, this was an unbelievable event for our Association. But I also want to highlight the generosity of this Committee. We are constantly looking to give our members and guest the best in terms of value and experience, and the numbers above can attest to this.

The bank balances also reflect the working being done:

ACCOUNT	Balance as of 31 <sup>st</sup> May, 2023
Current Account	\$21,411.50
Business Cash Reserve	\$10,000.00
Term Deposit	\$132,500.00

Some further points I'd like to address with you.

**Subscriptions.** Could you please make sure your subscriptions are up to date. We are looking to do preferential pricing for our members for the dance but to enable this, your subscriptions need to be current. This will also confirm your voting eligibility at the upcoming AGM.

The subscription rates for 2023/24

Single Membership	\$15
Family Membership	\$25
Single Pensioner Membership	\$10
Pensioner Family Membership	\$15
Student Membership	\$10

Our preferred form of collection is via an Electronic Bank Transfer

Please make reference as:

Existing membership renewals - "Name, Surname, Mem Renewal - year"  
 New members - "Name, Surname, New Member - year"

Account Name: The Western Australia Sri Lanka (Ceylon) Association  
 BSB: 036 - 062  
 Account No: 518950

We are looking for sponsors for the Winter Dance and would dearly like for our members to support us in this cause. If you would like to, please get in touch with a committee member.

Please feel free to email WASLA on [info@wasla.org.au](mailto:info@wasla.org.au) or reach out to any of the committee members for more information.

Thank you.

Shamilal Wirasinha  
 Treasurer



## WASLA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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**Save The Date!**



**WASLA**



*Winter  
Dance*

**5th August 2023**



## Welcome to Perth!

Mary Anne David- Virtuoso singer, musician, performer, director, producer



Mary Anne: Teacher, mentor and friend

Mary Anne David. is a name known to most Sri Lankans all over the world. A legendary vocal teacher and choral conductor, she founded her hugely successful school of vocal music and performing groups *The Merry Ann Singers* and *The Mary Anne David Chorale* over 55 years ago.

Since then Mary Anne has performed with The Auckland Symphony Orchestra, The Symphony Orchestra of Sri Lanka, The Cantata Singers, The Jaran Choir & Orchestra, The Philharmonic Orchestra and The Cantando Cello Ensemble and has been Music Director for over a hundred Musical Shows and Chorus Director or Chorus Conductor for numerous operas including the Sri Lankan production of Verdi's *Requiem*.

She was also the First Woman Conductor of the Colombo Philharmonic Choir. This is apart from the many marvellous shows that she produced

and directed along with her late husband Andrew David and son Andre David in Sri Lanka and in Bangalore and Chennai, in India.

Mary Anne is the proud recipient of numerous awards, including *Zonta Woman of Achievement* in 1994 and a State Music Award on completing 25 years of music and song in Sri Lanka.

Amongst the sparkling list of successful celebrity stars and groups that have been trained by her and been a part of the *Merry An Singers* are Bathiya and Santhush, The Gypsies, Misty and Rajitha Rupesinghe, Flame, and sopranos Kishani Jayasinghe, Gayathri Perera and Preshanthi Navaratnam. Together with Andre she also trained and developed Roshani Abbey who plays a female lead in *Hamilton* in the West End, and Isuri Wijesundera who played a lead in the Netflix mini-series *Little America*.

In January 2024 this amazing woman will celebrate 55 years of vocal coaching and conducting in Sri Lanka, with a musical show featuring over 130 of her students from all over the world, who have come together to honour and facilitate their beloved vocal coach, mentor and friend.

Mary Anne has now moved to Perth and lives with her son Andre and her precious family comprising Dinali, Jordan and Ethan. Their adorable pet Astro Earnest Hiccup David is the fifth member of this close-knit family.

Sri Lanka's loss is our gain, and we are delighted to welcome Mary Anne to Perth. May she go from strength to strength, providing her own special brand of music, love and laughter.





## Profile: Yaso Ponnudurai : A Woman of Many Talents



Devoted daughter, wife and mother, skilled volunteer, seasoned politician, ardent academic, virtuoso veena player and passionate advocate for CaLD communities - she juggles all these roles with apparent ease. Her ebullient personality, boundless energy and infectious laugh endear her to everyone she meets, while her knowledge and skills in politics and business make her an invaluable asset to the like-minded, and a formidable opponent to those who try to ignore or intimidate her. Born in Jaffna to Tamil parents, Yaso Ponnudurai spent her childhood and youth in many cities. A greater part of her childhood was spent in Kandy, among a multicultural community of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers.

She left to India at a very young age to pursue her twin loves of academics and music- but returned to Sri Lanka shortly after to nurse her mother who was left with horrific injuries from aerial bombing during the skirmishes of the war years.

Her father was Director of Education, and encouraged young Yaso to pursue a career as a teacher - citing it as being more suited for women, offering as it did paid holidays, regular hours and the chance to spend more time with husband and children.

But young Yaso had bigger ideas and grander aspirations - She wanted to study engineering! However, it was not until much later in life that she was able to pursue her dreams of higher education. More pragmatic matters had to be dealt with first- She needed a paying job! Starting at the Taj Hotel in public relations and marketing, she moved on to Air Lanka. When, at 25, she began work in Chennai, she was easily one of the youngest Sri Lankan women to be posted abroad. Her strong interest in culture resulted in the establishment of a Cultural Survival Trust- no mean feat for a young woman working in a foreign country!

Marriage was furthest from her mind. She was free, independent, enjoying life to the fullest, and determined to let nothing stand in the way of success, when Cupid decreed otherwise.





Her eyes twinkle and a mischievous grin lights up her face as she talks about her husband, whom she met and got engaged to within 4 days! It truly was the stuff of fairy tales! It was her husband's parents who first met and fell in love with the attractive and irrepressible young woman at a wedding in New Zealand. Coincidentally, her father-in-law hailed from the same village in Jaffna, while her Australian mother-in-law was of Anglo-Celtic heritage. With some artful manipulation by both sets of parents, the young couple met in Singapore on a Friday night, fell in love, and got engaged on Monday! The rest, as they say, is history. Yaso has been happily married to Carl for 27 years and is the proud mother of 24-year-old Viknesh, who is an actuary.



She arrived in Australia in 1996, with no formal educational qualifications. But marriage and pregnancy only whetted her appetite to pursue her studies, and with the encouragement and support of her husband and in-laws, Yaso completed an Advanced Diploma in Accounting and Book-keeping - 'One unit at a time'. They say you can't keep a good woman down- and Yaso was soon working full time again- This time, as Revenue Officer for the City of Perth. Although at first she lacked the requisite qualifications for the role, her 'can do' attitude soon gave her a permanent position, and she worked in the Council for over 7 years. While working fulltime with a young child, Yaso completed a Bachelor's Degree in Commerce, and a MBA.

Never afraid to push against stereotypes, Yaso then joined the mining sector, a male-dominated and very challenging environment where only her 'persistence and the strong will to succeed' got the job done.

Completing a Company Director's Course helped her to hold numerous Board positions- many in a voluntary capacity.



However, her first love has always been working with and for CaLD communities, and Yaso soon found herself a Councillor for the City of Canning:

"I have a particular interest for empowering women and in providing a voice for the CaLD community. I was able to achieve some advances ..... through the Purple Bench project and connecting multiple community organisations through the Hillview Intercultural Community Centre which provides a range of community resources and access to services designed to cater to our diverse community."

Yaso is also a 'Veena Virtuoso' - having studied this art form for many years in India. She now teaches, promotes and performs classical Indian music.

This multi-talented, multi-faceted woman is currently the President of the Ethnic Communities Council. She credits her success as a migrant to having a supportive family, great mentors, a thirst for knowledge and skills and grand aspirations for the upliftment of the downtrodden and the empowerment of marginalised communities.

WASLA looks forward to working together with Yaso and the ECC, and we wish her the very best in all her future endeavours.

*Radha de Mel*





We need women who are so strong they can be gentle, so educated they can be humble, so fierce they can be compassionate, so passionate they can be rational, and so disciplined they can be free.

Kavita Ramdas



## *A tribute to all mothers, grandmothers, step-mothers foster mothers and mother figures*

### Some of History's Greatest Moms

(Extracted and edited from *25 of History's Greatest Moms* by Suzanne Raga<sup>1</sup>)

*With their words, actions, and unconditional love, mothers have a profound influence on their children. Our mothers give us life, nurture us, and support us as we grow from babies to adults. They teach us, take care of us, and give us advice (wanted or unwanted!), and often provide this sort of motherly presence for many others in their lives as well. To celebrate Mother's Day, here are some of history's greatest moms.*

#### 1. Kathy Headlee



Kathy Headlee, a mother of seven (the youngest of whom she adopted from Romania), started Mothers Without Borders to help orphaned children around the world. Beginning in 1992, she led a group of volunteers to distribute relief supplies to orphanages and train caregivers in Romania. Since then, Mothers Without Borders has sent volunteers to help children in Bolivia, Bosnia, Guatemala, India, Mexico, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Nepal.

#### 2. Marie Curie

Although scientist Marie Curie (1867-1934) is best known for being the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, she also raised her two young daughters alone after her husband died in an accident in 1906. One of their daughters, Irène Joliot-Curie, went on to co-win the Nobel Prize in Chemistry with her husband for their own work with radioactivity. Joliot-Curie said her mother instilled hard work and flexibility in her children.



Marie Curie and daughter Irène

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<sup>1</sup> [25 of History's Greatest Moms](#)



### 3. Nancy Edison

The youngest of Nancy Edison’s seven kids was Thomas Alva Edison. Although some stories about his mother’s virtues were most likely exaggerated, we do know that rather than give up on his education, Nancy Edison decided to home-school her son after his teacher deemed him “addled” (meaning mentally ill or incompetent). Edison, who may just have been dyslexic in a time before that learning disorder was studied or understood, said of her: “My mother was the making of me. She was so true, so sure of me; and I felt I had something to live for, someone I must not disappoint.”

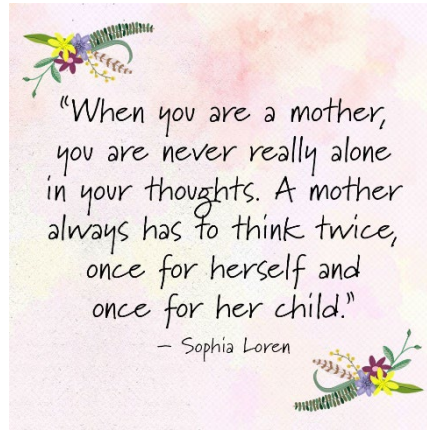


### 4. Julie Andrews



© Julie Andrews / Michael Kovac/GettyImages

Although you may know Dame Julie Andrews for her film roles as Mary Poppins and Maria Von Trapp, she’s also an author. Andrews writes *The Very Fairy Princess* children’s book series with her daughter, Emma Walton Hamilton. Hamilton told *Today* that her mom was firm, protective, and—despite her busy schedule—“very hands-on, always there making eggs at 5 o’ clock in the morning before we went to school.” Practically perfect in every way.



## 5. Angelina Jolie

Because of her humanitarian work supporting refugees and education, Oscar-winning actress Angelina Jolie has become as well known for her charity work as she has for her film roles. Jolie first got involved with humanitarian work for refugees and people displaced when she was filming *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* in Cambodia in 2000.

She adopted a son from the country, and eventually adopted children from Ethiopia and Vietnam as well (in addition to her three biological children with ex-husband Brad Pitt). And though she travelled to more than 30 countries in her role as a UN Goodwill Ambassador, Pitt told *The Wall Street Journal* that when she had a day off, “the first thing she [did was] get up and take the kids out. This is the most important ‘to do’ of the day. No matter how tired she might be, she [planned] outings for each and all.”



Angelina Jolie / Michael Locstano/GettyImages





## 6. Mary Maxwell Gates



Portrait by Margaret Holland Sargent

The mother of Bill Gates, Mary Maxwell Gates (1929–1994) served on the board of directors for corporations and non-profit organizations in Seattle. She helped convince leaders at I.B.M. to hire Microsoft to create an operating system, and following that contract, Microsoft went on to achieve massive success. But more importantly, Gates encouraged her son to focus on philanthropy, and the effects of his success are now contributing to worldwide causes because of it. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has given billions of dollars to fight malaria, HIV, polio, and poor sanitation, and to improve opportunities for education.



## 7. Alberta Williams King

The mother of Martin Luther King, Jr., Alberta Williams King (1904–1974) played the organ, founded the choir at Atlanta’s Ebenezer Baptist Church, and was involved with women’s groups, the NAACP, and the YWCA. She set about to raise her three children with a healthy sense of self-respect and taught them that the segregation they saw every day was simply “a social condition rather than a natural order,” as MLK Jr. wrote in his autobiography. “She made it clear that she opposed this system and that I must never allow it to make me feel inferior. ... At this time Mother had no idea that the little boy in her arms would years later be involved in a struggle against the system she was speaking of.” In 1974, six years after her son was assassinated in Memphis, Alberta King was shot and killed at her organ in church.





*I can't repay the lessons  
That you taught when I was small,  
Or give you, gift for gift,  
The daily treasures I recall;  
I can't return encouragement  
Or loving words of praise  
In quite the way you did for me  
Through all my childhood days.  
But there's one gift that I can give:  
It's all the love you've earned--  
For love is what you always taught,  
And love is what I learned.*

**“There’s no way  
to be a perfect mother,  
and a million ways  
to be a good one.”**

**– JILL CHURCHILL**



Save the date

# Annual General Meeting

Sunday  
27 August 2023

Victoria Park Bowling Club  
18 Kent St, East Victoria Park 6101







## WASLA Mother's Day Celebration

WASLA paid tribute to our wonderful Mums with a lavish afternoon high tea in South Perth. Mums and guests were treated once again in the trademark style of sophistication and elegance that is uniquely WASLA.

Guests were welcomed with a glass of Bubbly and seated at beautifully laid out tables showcasing an amazing array of short eats, cakes, and sweets.

There were plenty of prizes and surprises and the "Oceanites" kept the guests entertained and on the dance floor with their wonderful music.

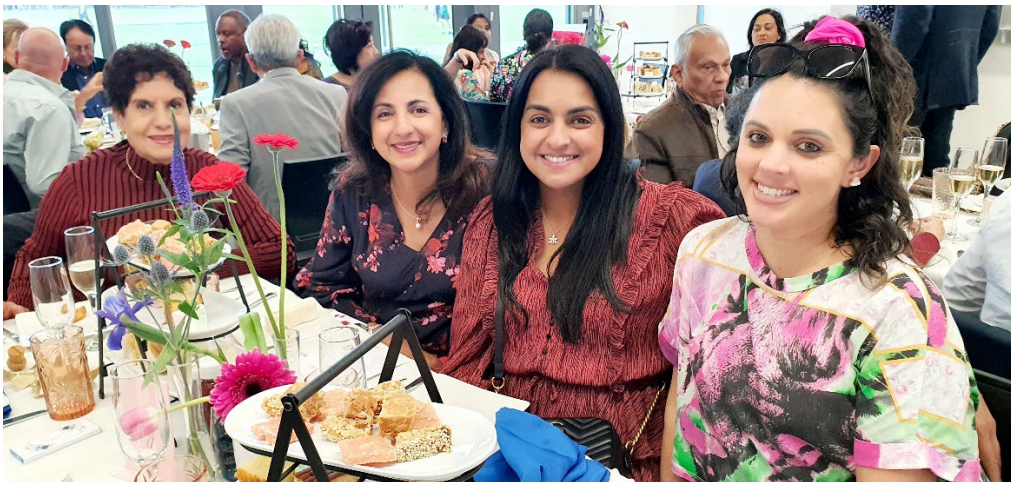
Judging from the many complimentary messages from Mums and guests, there was no doubt, that each and every one enjoyed a memorable and fun afternoon.

We are indebted to the kind generosity of the organising committee and "Friends of WASLA" who give of their time, hard work and financial sponsorship, to put together a fabulous function such as this.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to the working group from the WASLA committee for this event:

- Rosanna de Mel
- Sigrid Thomas
- Prakash Muthu Krishna
- Anu Wirasinha
- Sunita Niranjana

We would also like to thank the many generous friends of WASLA who donated their time, resources, and yummy food.



L to R: Roxie, Susie, Serena and Tenoya



L to R: Anju, Dolly and Colleen



L to R: Olya, Vera, Rouchelle and Jackie



L to R: Shirley, Dilo and Raji



L to R: Manil, Radha and Chris



The Oceanites



L to R: Mercia, Sam and Nalini



L to R: Romaine, Carmel and Jacqui



L to R: Edward, Jasmine, Patty and Sam



L to R: Marins, Sophie, Penny and Parm



L to R: Francis, Rosanna, Milindha and Daryl



L to R: Suri, Angela and Niluki



L to R: Prakash and Vicky



L to R: Sigrid, Rosanna and Mercia



L to R: Bianca, Dhulani and Rowena



### Dr. Geezer's Clinic

An old physician became very bored in retirement and decided to re-open a medical clinic. He put a sign up outside that said:

**"Dr. Geezer's Clinic. Get your treatment for \$500 - If not cured, get back \$1,000."**

**Doctor Digger Young**, who was positive that this old geezer didn't know a thing about medicine thought this would be a great opportunity to make \$1,000. So, he went to Dr. Geezer's clinic.

**Dr Young:** Dr. Geezer, I have lost all taste in my mouth. Can you please help me?

**Dr Geezer:** Nurse, please bring medicine from Box 22 and put 3 drops in Dr. Young's mouth.

**Dr Young:** Aaagh! -- This is Petrol!

**Dr Geezer:** **Congratulations!** You've got your taste back. That will be \$500.

An annoyed Dr Young goes back after a couple of days intending to recover his money.

**Dr Young:** I have lost my memory, I cannot remember anything.

**Dr Geezer:** Nurse, please bring medicine from Box 22 and put 3 drops in the patient's mouth.

**Dr Young:** Oh, no you don't -- that is Petrol!

**Dr Geezer:** **Congratulations!** You've got your memory back. That will be \$500.

Dr Young leaves in a temper and returns after several days.

**Dr Young:** My eyesight has become weak --- I can hardly see anything!

**Dr Geezer:** Well, I don't have any medicine for that so, here's your \$1000.00 back.

**Dr Young:** But this is only \$10.00!

**Dr Geezer:** **Congratulations!** You got your vision back! That will be \$500.

### Moral of the Story

Just because you're "Young" doesn't mean that you can outsmart "old Geezers".

**\*Remember:** Don't make us old people mad. We don't like first place, so it doesn't take much to piss us off.

***ENJOY YOUR DAY!!!***

**(Anonymous)**

*Contributed by Kevin Melder*



being old in the



## Sri Lanka: Our Beloved Motherland: Ione Cooray Reminisces

Call it Ceylon or Sri Lanka- It's the country we are all proud to call our Motherland.

We all migrate when greater opportunities are offered for the betterment of our future. Of course, migration has undoubtedly caused a huge 'Brain Drain' which is unavoidable. Sri Lankans are proud of their achievements in countries they call their new home, but most of still have nostalgic and fond memories of this beautiful island home.

Sri Lankans domiciled abroad will continue to recall sentimental memories of their early life and upbringing with beloved parents and family members and we will endeavour to preserve our ties with family and friends who still live in this island paradise- a beautiful country to be cherished, with nature's unspoilt beauty in evidence everywhere you look. Visiting families in Sri Lanka will be a continuing tradition for those of us living overseas.

My husband Nihal and I had an extraordinary visit to Sri Lanka in January 2023, and I would like to share a few highlights with you.

### **60<sup>th</sup> Year Reunion- A Memorable Celebration**

In 1963, Nihal entered the Engineering Faculty of Peradeniya University as a young undergraduate. In January 2023 Nihal and I had the great pleasure of attending the 60<sup>th</sup> Year reunion celebration with his batchmates. What an amazing occasion it was!

50 batchmates and partners living overseas together with batchmates in Sri Lanka had organised a truly memorable reunion to celebrate this momentous occasion in Sri Lanka.



The Monster Cake



Batch Mates - And Still Good Friends

Young men in 1963, now 60 years have gone by and they're still in touch! Notwithstanding their age and stage of life, they enjoyed their time together- singing, dancing, feasting and reminiscing- It was a time of great camaraderie of an enthusiastic, vibrant and fun-loving group.





The visit to the University Peradeniya Campus was the pinnacle of the batch reunion. It brought back nostalgic memories of young men leaving family nests to pursue a lifetime opportunity of the best of free education.



Sounds of the Mahaveli Ganga surrounded by mountains, luscious greenery of healthy trees, spectacular beauty in the unspoilt hills and waterfalls bought memories of the happy years spent at the Campus.



The group stayed at the Earls Regency Hotel which is built into the mountain ranges of Kandy. The sight of the mist covering the mountains and hills with the twinkling of hotel lights was absolutely spectacular.



### Sinharaja Rainforest

My husband and I had the opportunity of revisiting *The Rainforest Ec lodge* situated in the Sinharaja Division. Sinharaja is a forest reserve and a biodiversity hotspot of international significance and has been designated a Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988. It is the country's last viable area of primary tropical rainforest.

The Forest provided great relaxation in surroundings that are beautiful, peaceful and healthy. (This is a must-do trip in Sri Lanka as the rain forest echo system is the richest reservoir of flora and fauna.)



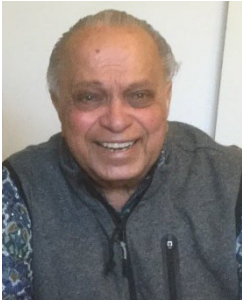
We Sri Lankans are a proud and resilient people

May our Motherland prosper.

Ione Cooray  
April 2023



## Vale Max GERREYN



*Our dear friend, Max Gerreyn has sadly passed away, and left us all in deep sorrow...*

Max was larger than life, yet down to earth. He was advisor, confidante, and counsellor to all who knew him. Brother of the famous cartoonist Mark Gerreyn, Max was a gifted artist himself. His caricatures, cartoons, drawings and paintings are legion.

He was our own loveable Sri Lankan 'larrikin' and amiable friend. His quick and ready wit and mischievous sense of humour made him beloved of everyone he met, and his passing has thrust us all into a deep sense of sadness and loss.

Although he was clever and quick-witted, he never hurt anyone, but treated all with respect, empathy and kindness. Advice and guidance were always forthcoming to anyone who sought it. His philanthropy and assistance to his fellow Sri Lankans were freely offered, without any expectation of a return.

Maxi had the ability to infuse any gathering with his joyous enthusiasm and jovial larrikinism. His ability to spur those around him to burst into laughter was a special trait unsurpassed by any other Sri Lankan.

We will always remember his valuable contributions to WASLA, the BWL and other Sri Lankan associations. He had happy and cordial relations with so many people and we wish him a joyous and happy life in the hereafter, dressed, as always, in colourful attire!



We offer our deepest condolences to Shereen and the family, relations and friends grieving deeply the loss of this very special human being. We ask God to give them strength and courage to bear their sorrow and face the future with hope and courage.

*Ranjit CP Ratnayake*

### **Notes from All over...**

*My heartfelt condolences on the untimely demise of Max. I renewed our interaction when Muttiah Muralidaran and I met him during the 'Foundation of Goodness' breakfast banquet in December 2019.*

*Since then he was an ardent supporter of our humanitarian endeavors, and used to keep in touch periodically, encouraging us time and again to do more good for humanity...I loved his humorous style of engagement..... I am truly saddened by his passing.....*

*We share the grief of the family...May all of the good deeds he has initiated bless his life and times.*

*Respectfully,*

*Kushil Gunasekera.  
(Sri Lanka)*



*I first met Maxi at the SL Burgher Welfare League Christmas dance in 2012.....Since then we have been very close friends, so much so he telephoned me to NZ and chatted with me sometimes 4-5 times a week. When chatting with him, I just did not feel the minutes, hours tick by. I was always enthralled by his stories, jokes and the 'naughty' talk. Most often the topic was cricket. Or about the 'old days' and those who hailed from Kotahena.*

*I will be very sad on my next visit as Max will not be there, but the wonderful memories will linger on.*

*Maxi may your beautiful soul Rest in Peace.*

*Our heartfelt condolences to Shereen, children and grandchildren*

*With love*

*Ranjit Aaron*

*(New Zealand)*





## SRI LANKA'S EARLIEST LINKS WITH AUSTRALIA

*Professor Pretorius Vanden Nathan and Jaspas Bloomfield, 1996*

Some years ago, the incumbent Minister for Immigration and Cultural Affairs the Hon Al Grassby MP (Retd) OA DSO, addressed an audience of ethnic bodies and mainstream Australian support agencies on Australia's then prevailing policy of migrant assimilation, fore-runner to today's multiculturalism. The venue was the Fremantle Town Hall and during the course of his address Grasby stated that Australia's very first migrant "of choice" came from Ceylon.

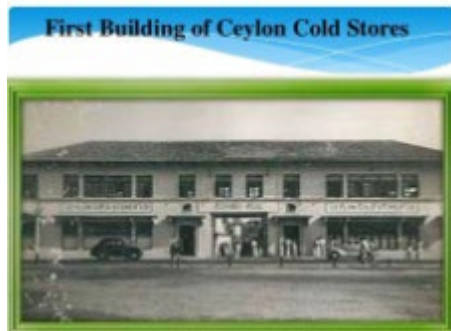
This hitherto little-known fact is comprehensively documented in records held in the National Gallery in Canberra. The earliest record pertaining to this appears in the log of His Majesty's brigantine, the Laissez Faire which transported one of the earliest batches of convicts to the colony. The Laissez Faire under the command of its captain Master Iriah Bates, left Gravesend in Kent in March 1798 with a cargo of "sundry provisions for the garrisons of the Cape Colony and Fortress in Columbo" including inter alia, "tobacco, administration aids and writing materials, victuals of subsistence for British militia", in addition to eighteen men sentenced to penal servitude in Australia.



After rounding the Cape and a brief stopover in the colony there, the ship arrived in Colombo roadstead and fresh provisions were unloaded for the long voyage ahead.

The providoring firm in Colombo was the newly established business of Ceylon Cold Stores, owned by Captain Thomas Major and a Norwegian who had served with the Dutch East Indies Company, Lars Kruijen Vaaz.

Captain Major was a renowned poet of the day and served with the 19th Regiment of Foot (The Green Howards) in the Jaffna Garrison until he suffered a severe bout of dysentery, resulting in him resigning his commission to enter commerce. Vaaz had, in earlier Dutch times, been employed to supply the Dutch and Malay cavalry with saddlery, vestments and fodder which he and his workers stored on premises next to the Dutch cemetery bordering the Galle Face grounds. This location is thought to have been between where the Masonic Lodge stands today and the old Colombo Club, later the site of the Army rugby grounds and the Fisheries Corporation and today the car





park of the Taj Samudra Hotel, opposite the present Ceylon Cold Stores premises. A merger of these two business ventures resulted in their relocation just across the Beira Lake and over the new bridge built to service the new army hospital and officers' compounds on the banks of the Lake.



F.X. Pereira: Founder

Vaaz was married to Agnietta, the only daughter of Titus Ezekiel Canbie, the Jewish founder of Titus Stores which was situated adjoining the Pettah cemetery and across Main Street from F X Pereira & Sons, a military clothing outfitter from the Dutch era when the Pettah was a burgeoning upper strata suburb of officers and merchant nobility. F X Pereira & Sons was owned by a respected family of Catholic Malabars or "Chetties" and occupied the defunct synagogue which had closed as a place of worship as a result of the dispersal of the Pettah or Oude Straat's ("old town's") Semitic residents to Batavia, Bombay and Singapore following the Dutch capitulation in February 1796.

Their eldest son Norgen Raoul worked in the family providoring business. He was at the time betrothed to a Presbyterian missionary, Crystall. She is reputed to have taken a major part in the establishment of the orphanage of St Pauls at Milagiriya and was the second daughter of Thomas Stuart Glass, a Scots Fiscal Clerk with the Vaccine Department and resident of Bailey Street.

Presumably following a domestic scandal which is briefly hinted at in a copy of the Colombo Miscellany newspaper also held in Canberra's gallery courtesy of a Mr Ephraims, the younger Vaaz was assisted in securing a berth as mate to Master E Bates on the brig Laissez Faire by Captain Major.

It was Norgen who sailed from Colombo on 16 March 1779 for Botany Bay where it is uncertain whether he made the decision to stay when the ship left or was off loaded, becoming the first migrant to make his home in Australia by his own choice. Records of his status in the colony are meagre but the Gazette of New South Wales (1804), the forerunner to the Sydney Sun, reported a reward for the apprehension of two bushrangers, one of whom, Patrick Nathaniel Kelly was a shipmate of Vaaz' and the other bore the analogous name of Norton Vasse. The family is still existent in Sri Lanka today with the Lankanised surname of Vaas.



Although modern historians have postulated the theory that indigenous Aboriginals were the first migrants, it is a subjective perception that they too originally came from the regions of South India and Ceylon via the archipelago of Indonesia and Malaya to Australia during the times of Gondwanaland. It may thus be that the earliest migrants to Australia whichever migratory theories are accepted by today's historians as the origins of ethnicity despite Professor Blainey's refutations, are rooted in Sri Lanka. Wa Lee Ming, a contemporary of the explorer monk Fa Hsein who visited Ceylon, is also rumoured to have landed on Terra Australis.

An interesting aside to this episode is that the firm of Ceylon Cold Stores was the source of a type of ice confection named after the son who left and bears his name as its trade brand today. The event of the son's departure is also reflected in the argent or coat of arms of this business, best exemplified in the design on the aged coir doormat that still exists at the entrance to this retail outlet bearing the date 1835 and the relief outline of a palm tree (presumably a coconut tree), an elephant with trunk intertwined around the tree and a sailing ship beyond.

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Note: The above is an extract from a paper delivered at the inaugural symposium on migrant values and motives Effects of Selective Migration on the Third Millennium: Ethnicity and its Prerogatives, an In-depth Study held at Adelaide's Centre for Ethnic Co-Existence in June 1996, titled Mores and Morals of Migration by Choice: An extemporarial and empirical study of migratory effects on developed societies from third world sources by Professor Pretorius Vanden Nathan, Emeritus Professor of Ethnicity at the University of Witwaterstrand and Jaspar Bloomfield, Chairperson of the Institute of the Americas Native and Indigenous Inhabitants Council and author of the controversial Land Rights and other Rites of Passage of the Shoshone Indians of Nevada. Bloomfield spent a considerable time in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) when his uncle Phillip K Crowe was the US Ambassador to that country.

Contributed and painstakingly transcribed from the original by Tony Anderson. Thanks Tony! ED

Editorial Note: Albert Jaime Grassby, AM (12 July 1926 - 23 April 2005) was an Australian politician who served as Minister for Immigration in the Labor Whitlam government. He initiated and completed reforms in immigration and human rights and is often known as the father of Australian "multiculturalism". Unfortunately, in his later life he was accused of acting as an agent of influence for the Calabrian criminal network that murdered anti-drugs campaigner Donald Mackay. (Wikipedia)



## Health Benefits of Moderate Coffee Consumption

### From a talk by Doctor Harold Gunatillake

Moderate coffee intake—about 2–5 cups a day—is linked to a lower likelihood of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, liver and endometrial cancers, Parkinson's disease, and depression.

However, if you take too much caffeine it can cause health problems, such as restlessness and shakiness, insomnia, headaches, dizziness, fast heart rate, dehydration, and anxiety. "Too much of anything is good for nothing" as the proverb goes!

#### There are 8 Ways to Make Your Coffee Super Healthy

- No caffeine After 2 pm.
- Do not overload your coffee with sugar.
- Choose a quality brand, preferably organic.
- Avoid drinking too much.
- Add some cinnamon to your coffee.
- Avoid low-fat and artificial creamers.
- Add some cocoa.



Caffeine in coffee is a psychoactive substance that changes the chemicals in your brain. After imbibing caffeine daily for a period your body becomes reliant on this chemical change to function and, as such, **coffee-drinking can become an addiction.**

Some studies show that caffeine intake is linked to weight loss, reduced body mass index (BMI), and fat mass. Caffeine intake may thus lower the risk of conditions linked to overweight or obesity, such as type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease.

Coffee drinkers around the world are rejoicing. A new study shows that a **moderate intake** of coffee may lower the risk of premature death from certain illnesses. Mayo Clinic nutrition expert Dr Donald Hensrud says that the health benefits of drinking coffee are pretty good overall.

#### Here are some points to consider:

##### **Coffee is beneficial for those having type 2 diabetes by reducing inflammation.**

Consuming coffee is linked to a lower risk of type 2 diabetes. The relationship is well-established, says a new study, but the mechanism remains unclear.

A study found that drinking coffee boosts anti-inflammatory adipokine hormone levels and decreases levels of C-reactive protein (CRP) and leptin, which promote inflammation.



### **Coffee makes your immune system stronger.**

Coffee is known for its energy-boosting caffeine effect. It is an abundant source of nutrients and helpful chemicals to aid your immune system. Coffee protects against autoimmune diseases. Comparatively, within the acquired immune system, the caffeine content within coffee potentially suppresses the proliferation of Th1 and Th2 cells which are damaging to the system. **Coffee can reduce the damage caused by the release of cytokines thus boosting the immune system.**

### **Coffee and liver health**

Coffee also lowers the risk of other liver conditions, including fibrosis (scar tissue that builds up within the liver) and cirrhosis. Drinking coffee can slow the progression of liver disease in some patients. Among the main polyphenols in coffee, chlorogenic acid and ferulic acid have shown promising antioxidative properties.

### **2-3 cups of coffee daily linked to longevity, lower risk of cardiovascular disease.**

Good news for coffee drinkers emerged earlier this year, with studies reporting that drinking coffee is linked to a lower risk of mortality and that moderate daily coffee drinking may reduce kidney injury risk by 23%.

However, historically, more than 75% of medical professionals have advised patients with cardiovascular disease to avoid coffee. Recent observational studies *Trusted Source* challenged this misconception by discussing caffeine consumption's safety and beneficial effects concerning arrhythmia and cardiovascular disease.

More information was needed on the impact of different types of coffee on heart health. This prompted researchers at the Baker Heart and Diabetes Research Institute in Melbourne, Australia, to conduct a large observational study that would provide some insights into the role of caffeine on cardiovascular outcomes by comparing the impact of decaffeinated and caffeinated coffee.

The newly published findings of a large observational study at the Baker Heart and Diabetes Research Institute in Melbourne indicate that the consumption of 2-3 cups of instant, ground, and decaffeinated coffee a day is linked to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and death, and caffeinated coffee significantly reduces the risk of arrhythmia.

*This is an edited and abbreviated account of the YouTube talk given by Dr Gunatilleka. This talk is available on YouTube: [Health benefits of moderate coffee drinking - YouTube](#)  
You can access this talk and many other talks and articles of interest through the website : [www.Doctorharold.com](http://www.Doctorharold.com) .*

*You can also read the full transcript of this talk on the WASLA website. ED*







## Naming of Dr Leela de Mel Centre

The board of the Multicultural Services Centre of Western Australia (MSC) has decided to name its recently acquired Cannington Office Dr Leela de Mel Centre. The unveiling of the plaque was by Dr Anne Aly, MP, a close friend, confidante, and mentee. A diverse and distinguished crowd gathered on the lawn of the Cannington Office to felicitate a woman who has made an invaluable and indelible contribution to human rights and multiculturalism.

In his address CEO Ramdas Sankaran, OAM referred to Leela as 'The Queen of Multiculturalism' and reiterated the love, admiration, and high regard in which she was held by all who knew her: "What brings us together today is not nationality, religion or ethnicity, but our love and admiration for a woman whose personality, belief in human rights and perseverance in achieving it for vulnerable sections of the community touched our hearts and our lives in so many ways", he said.

Ramdas referred to the many accolades that had been heaped on Leela by other leading advocates of multiculturalism such as Dr Geoff Gallop, Professor Laksiri Jayasuriya, Suresh Rajan, Dr Anne Aly and Cathy Groves- all of whom acknowledged Leela's leadership, vision and drive in the promotion of human rights, multiculturalism and equal rights. It was during Leela's tenure as Executive Director of the Office of Multicultural Interests that the Multicultural Charter, Anti-Racism Strategy, Substantive Equality Policy and Language Services Policy saw the light of day.

A few years ago, the Ethnic Communities Council of WA honoured Leela by presenting her with the Multiculturalism Award - the first public servant to be the recipient of this prestigious award.

Speakers at the event on 4<sup>th</sup> May included Deanne Lightfoot, CEO Aboriginal Interpreting Service, Dr Anne Aly MP, and Leela's son, Janek O'Toole. Yaz Mubarakai, MLA read a meaningful message from Premier McGowan, and Yvonne Henderson delivered a heartfelt tribute from Dr Geoff Gallop.

It was a fitting tribute to a woman who worked tirelessly for the upliftment of the disadvantaged, marginalised and oft-forgotten communities, and we were proud to be associated with Leela, and with this event.

Radha de Mel

*"I was fortunate to have Leela de Mel as Executive Director of the Office of Multicultural Interests. She fully understood what it was the government intended, was resolute in her support for the policies when the inevitable challenges emerged and through all of this acted in a dignified and respectful way."*

*Dr Geoff Gallop, 2022*





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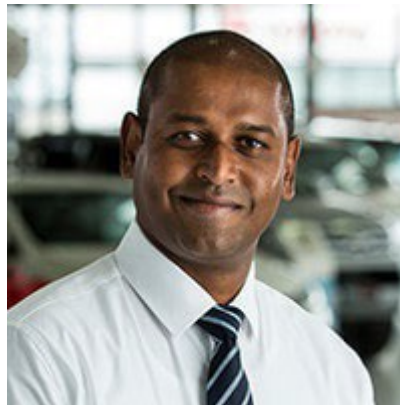
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