

# EIGHTY CLUB MELBOURNE INC.

*"Caring for the Less Fortunate"*

From OPULENCE

to AWAKENING

then DEDICATION

By Nowell Hanibalsz

In the beautiful Island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) during the 50s and 60s there were a few exclusive Clubs; such as the 'Colombo Swimming Club', 'The Ceylon Turf Club', 'The Silver Fawn Club' 'The Galle Gymkhana', 'the Women's International' and last but not least, the rich and famous 80 CLUB housed in a prestigious location – Maitland Crescent, Colombo 7.

To have had even an opportunity of stepping into its foyer one should have known the likes of the Donovan Andrees, Clement Walles, Sansonis, Gratians, F.C. de Sarams, O.E. Goonetelikes, Harry Jayawardenes, Senanayales, Kotalawelas, Bandaranayakes, Ponambalams, Gardiners, Major Bawas, or Gulam Hussains. In close proximity was yet another 5 star meeting place – the Galle Face Hotel. It was one cool evening when the Banquet Manager of Galle Face Hotel, the late Ronald van Houten was on the west wing promenade of the hotel taking a break. He just dozed off to sleep and dreamt that one day, somewhere, he would rally round a few friends and form an 80 CLUB. Not for the rich and famous, but for the ordinary people who would have a common concept of *caring for the less fortunate* people, in particular the forgotten Burghers in Ceylon. Behind closed doors, seated behind his polished teak writing table, in a cosy apartment in the suburb of Moorabbin he rallied a few confederates, just over 12. Together they pledged to make an all out effort to start the 80 CLUB, which in the YEAR 2003 proudly celebrates 21 years.

At the meeting at Ronald's home were friends some of whom had resigned from the newly formed VOC. This meeting preceded the inaugural meeting of the Eighty Club. The choice of name was the result of the different considerations, to Ronald it signified a 'Nobler Cause.'

Ronald was the first Vice President, he continued as a very successful recruitment officer persuading friends to join the Eighty Club and inspiring them with his enthusiasm. At meetings he would read letters from S.L. of Burghers in dire need, and eloquently plead for assistance for them. Eileen the first treasurer was a charming and elegant lady who would arrive at meetings with a delicious cake to be raffled, the proceeds to be donated for charity. Ronald and Eileen were active in all fund raising events, be they street stalls, food fairs, lunches or dances.

Today with a membership of over 500, it is time that all should be upstanding and form a guard of honour to the founder, Past Presidents and all Office Bearers. They have, over the years given and still give their very best without counting the cost, not with assets of stocks and shares, buildings, but with a deep sincere dedication and goodwill and hearts of gold *caring for the less fortunate*.

When we talk of music we speak of variations of a theme. Can the history of the Eighty Club be a variation of a theme? Yes, various themes appear, disappear, reappear or even fade away forever. Today we seem to hear strong themes of 21 years ago; Family values, Main stream battlers, troubled talk of the 80s back home and now a sudden light in the tunnel with signs of peace and prosperity on the horizon. On a joyful note, let us, as members of the Eighty Club, in one chorus say together – LONG LIVE THE EIGHTY CLUB.

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