

Jayantha Thenabadu

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A true titan who revolutionized the engineering sector

BY GERRY SURAWEEERA

I had the good fortune of associating with Jayantha during three stages of our lives, and it was extremely sad to hear about his demise during a trip to Jaffna when they were back on a holiday from Melbourne.

I first met Jayantha as an engineer at Richard Pieris's factory when I was a Production Assistant. His unassuming ways and treating everybody with a smile impressed me, and he was an engineer who did not believe there was an eternal conflict with production and engineering. Then he went overseas and rejoined after about 15 years as the Chief Engineer, and later appointed as a fellow board member of a Richard Pieris subsidiary company.

I met him again when he was with Ceylon Biscuits Ltd. - they were selected for a grant for a part of their expansion programme from the Netherlands, funded the Eco-efficient Productivity Project of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce where I was the Project Consultant. His simple, friendly manner never changed throughout his life. He was equally at home, at Board meetings or with the



mechanics in the workshop. I will always remember his standard opening line; "How are things?" -- and his genuine pleasure in meeting old friends.

Jayantha, a staunch Old Thomian, was a Chartered Engineer as well as a Fellow of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (UK), who performed any task assigned to him with great diligence

and enthusiasm. His career speaks volumes of his performance here and abroad, where he handled significant and unique projects with distinction. The posts he held were Works Manager, Ceylon Fertilizer Corporation, Sectional Engineer Technical Services, Maamba Collieries Ltd., Zambia, Kenya Breweries Ltd., Chief Engineer Richard Peiris & Co., Ltd, Director / General Manager, Richard Peiris Rubber Products Ltd. and Group Director Technical, Ceylon Biscuits Limited.

Jayantha's capabilities shone during his tenure as the Group Director Technical at the Sri Lankan leader in biscuits - Ceylon Biscuits Ltd., in-charge of all technical operations such as production, maintenance of plant and machinery. He was involved in upgrading the existing facilities at the Pannipitiya factory by installing new biscuit lines, a fully-automated flour handling system capable of handling bulk deliveries of flour for the first time in Sri Lanka and upgrading factory standards to conform with global standards of safety, hygiene as well as environment. He was also responsible for the construction of two new factories

— one for manufacturing cakes and the other for manufacturing biscuits for exports. The company's market share for biscuits increased considerably during this period to remain as the market leader. Jayantha's contribution to the local biscuit industry has been unique.

His contribution to CBL's local market leadership and the expansion of the global market activities has been immense. Jayantha was an able leader and his commitment to achieve organizational objectives was remarkable. These characteristics have been aptly highlighted in a message from his team during his retirement.

"The footprint you left as a leader, as a mentor and as a friend to all with a charming smile on your lips always - is remembered though we miss you at the office hereafter... The new chapter you initiated at CBL will be continued - That is a promise as your team mates..."

We believe his beloved wife Manel, daughter Ruvani and son Arun will find solace in remembering that Jayantha's has been an endearing friend to many and also rendered yeoman service Mother Lanka during his lifetime.