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AN APPRECIATION

The death occurred suddenly of Mr Ackland Rasiah Ratnarajah in the early hours of Sunday, 19 February 1995. It came to me as a rude shock when his son Vasikaran telephoned me that Sunday morning to inform me about this very sad event, which is a great loss to his family and to me and my family as well.

I had known Mr Ratnarajah closely from 1951, when he took up appointment as an engineer in the P.W.D. He was fondly remembered by his colleagues as "Rats". Rats was quiet and gentle in his ways. We both worked in the same office - a temporary site office, exposed to all the vagaries of the weather on the construction of the New Kelani Bridge in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1955/56. This was the largest bridge under construction in the world at that time. The design, specifications and construction were done by a foreign firm managed by well qualified and experienced engineers.

We were posted to supervise the work although we had never seen even the smallest of bridges constructed in Sri Lanka. We, including a few other engineers were placed in a rather difficult and ridiculous position as some of our seniors at head office felt that the foreign contractors/engineers were always right in whatever they did. We then decided that we will do a combined study and master all the design aspects, the specifications and contract clauses. Rats did a wonderful job in making himself thorough on the design side and held the whip hand. By this joint effort we were able to exercise an excellent control thereafter and get a proper job done. Rats had a flair for structural designs.

After some time he married Chandra Sanders and moved out to a more congenial station for a young couple in the hill country in Sri Lanka. During his courtship, he suddenly told me one day that he wants to visit his fiancée in Jaffna and whether I could join him, as he was not happy about driving alone from Colombo to Jaffna. I readily agreed. When we got to Jaffna he left me with his brother Aras in his house and I never saw him again till about an hour before returning to Colombo!

I have never known him to get angry or lose his temper. Nothing disturbed him. He took things as they came. He and his family were our immediate neighbours in Colombo for about ten years and later joined us in Nigeria to work with me in the same firm. The family continued to be our neighbours again. Rats was well liked and respected by the Nigerian and other Co-workers there. The family had made friends with many families there and were very much liked by them. Rats was a very knowledgeable, competent and capable engineer. He was very responsible and conscientious.

After a short break in Sri Lanka he accepted another assignment in Nigeria in a firm of consulting engineers. Although his appointment was in a different State, we met as often as possible and continued our good relationship. We always consulted each other on all matters of importance to the family. Later when we migrated to Australia we were extremely happy when they too migrated to Australia and decided to live in Melbourne. We met very often. Our children meet them and their children and visit each other. Our children had a very high respect for "Uncle" Ratnarajah and they too were shocked and sad when they heard of the sudden passing away of Rats.

I have never known or heard of Rats as being sick except for two minor operations a few years back, in Melbourne. Even a few days before he passed away we dropped in at his house without any

warning or notice, to have a chat with him and his wife Chandra. Rats always kept in touch with the professional and other activities back home in Sri Lanka and gave me news whenever we met. Rats was a very fine gentleman and everyone who has known him over the years will, I am sure, endorse this and miss him.

Rats leaves behind an ailing wife Chandra, a daughter Sharmini who is married to Mahen Nalliah, an active and lively grand daughter Rachel and a son Vasikaran. Vasikaran had recently completed a Masters Degree in Engineering. Rats was looking forward to the son continuing the same profession as his and attaining even greater success than him. But unfortunately he could not live to see this. I hope

Vasikaran will soon achieve his fathers ambitions.

Our family will always miss Ratnarajah It is hard to find such a sincere and loving friend who is gentle, kind hearted and always concerned about others.

Our deepest sympathies go to his wife Chandra, children Sharmini and Vasikaran, Son-in-law Mahen and grand daughter Rachel.

Rats was an old boy of St. John's College, Jaffna. Besides his family he leaves behind a number of relatives and friends in Australia and in other parts of the world.

MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PERFECT PEACE.

K.A. Rasaratnam (Rasa)