



Gurmit, alias “Matt” Singh

He plays hockey, tennis and has been a professional compere.

By Cyril Fernando

At 8 o'clock on any Tuesday evening, Gurmit Singh, or Matt, as he is popularly known, steps on stage in the terrace of the Club. His well modulated, baritone voice comes over the speaker system with his trademark “Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, it’s time for our Tuesday evening draw……” With the attention of members riveted on him, he then proceeds to invite a member of the audience to pick one of several hundred slips of paper from a glass bowl which contains the names of all fully paid-up members eligible for participation. There is a hush when a lucky member’s numbered slip is drawn and announced. After all, it could be a food voucher, a bottle of whiskey or, later at 9 o'clock, a cash prize of several hundred dollars depending on the snowballed amount.

With his neatly trimmed beard and attractive personality, one can easily imagine Matt in a long, flowing robe and a cloth headdress with a shepherd’s crook in his hand, who could easily pass off as any of the Biblical prophets of old. In fact, according to Gurmit, 39, he was once stopped by an elderly lady who thought he was a priest from the local parish, and actually called him “Father”, with the reverence that one bestows on a Minister of the Church.

In 1981 he began visiting the Club as a coach for young hockey aspirants from the Singapore Armed Forces Boys’ School. A member of the Club since 1986, his regular visits to Balestier Plain were mainly to play leisurely games of tennis with a small band of sprightly retirees who were at least 35 years older than he. Matt describes them as “patient teachers who taught him the finer points of the game and nice people to be with”. He recalls his veteran tennis partners, Rene Sobrielo, Dr. Victor Thevathasan, George Kartheesu, Amirthalingam, and N. Ponnudurai among others. But he soon plunged into other aspects of Club life. When it came to light that this affable man used to be a professional compere with noted Singapore showman Victor Khoo (of puppet, ‘Charlie’ fame) from 1979 to 1984, he was invited to be a member of the committee that organized the CSC Annual Dinner & Dance in 1988 with Patrick Joseph, George Fox, Charles Kulasingham, Jack Sree and the late Richway Ponnampalam. He breaks into a wide smile when he proudly says, “It was a very successful D&D and was hosted by me.” Clearly, ‘show biz’ is in his blood.

Professionally Matt is a Business Development Manager and had also been a Marketing Manager with a well-known life insurance company.

Matt, the self-proclaimed, “friend of everyone” (no one will dispute that), is seen at the Club on an average of twice a week after work and sits at a table with his pals “under the stars” in the field.

But recently, it was noticed that he was conspicuously absent from the Club for a couple of weeks. Matt, it turned out, had to make his presence felt elsewhere when he co-starred in the most important event in his life. To put it in his own words, “I got married to a lovely lady on 19 March.” Her name? Manjit Kaur. A look at the picture of the starry-eyed couple on this page will confirm that Matt has impeccable taste. Congratulations!

The happier news is that the Club has got him back and he is still in full voice. He stresses that he is always ready and willing to help and contribute new ideas to the CSC. The Club should take him up on this offer. With the numerous social events being organised throughout the year, he will be an asset.

His talent has extended to helping organise functions for the hockey and cricket sections, as well. On Club Executive, K. Ramanathan’s request, Matt has hosted CSC Children’s parties. Kids have found him entertaining and easy to get on with. This quality should eventually come in useful when Matt and his wife, Manjit start having their own kids. Very soon, we hope. Singapore needs the manpower.