

# **Honouring the Founding Fathers of PeraEFac**

**By Dr. Jeeavananda Keerthisena**  
**2025**

## Honouring the Founding Fathers of PeraEFac (1950 – 2025)

The Engineering Faculty at Peradeniya (PeraEFac) was the first Engineering Faculty in Sri Lanka established, as a part of the University of Ceylon, on 1 July 1950 in Colombo. The EFac was moved to Peradeniya in October 1964, and PeraEFac has made elaborate arrangements to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee in the coming months.

Here, I wish to honour our founding fathers who rendered yeoman service to the growth of the PeraEFac through a series of Facebook write-ups in the coming weeks.



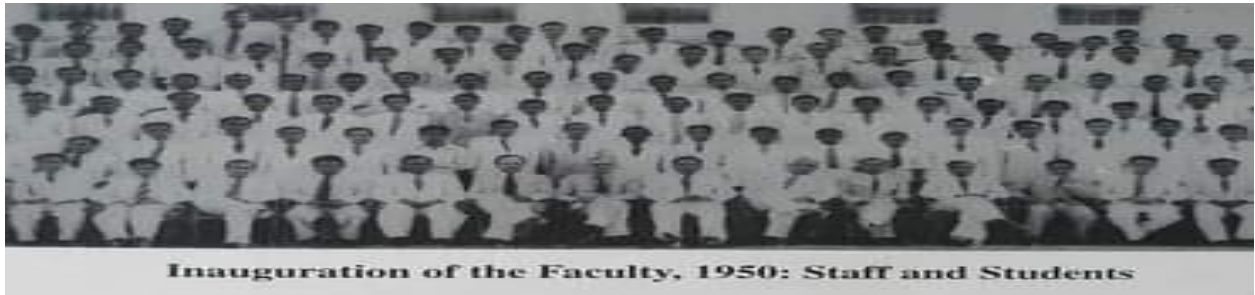
### History and Early Development

Until 1949, Ceylon Technical College (CTC), Maradana, offered Engineering courses, presenting students for London University External Examinations in Engineering. When the degree-level courses at CTC suddenly collapsed in 1950, Prof. E.O.E. Pereira was called upon to set up the EFac hurriedly on 1 July 1950 within the CTC premises.

Prof. E.O.E. Pereira accomplished the task with newly recruited academic staff, 25 freshmen and three batches of 189 seniors who had followed the CTC programmes. R.H. Paul, T. Sivaprakasapillai, H.B. de Silva, E.F. Barrtholoeusz, J.C.V. Chinnappa, P. Selvanayagam, K. Arumugam, W.M.G. Fernando, W.P. Jayasekera, S. Mahalingam, and G.D. Somasunderam were recruited as pioneer Academic staff of the EFac.



Prof. E.O.E. Pereira served as Dean, Engineering, Professor and Head, Civil Engineering; Prof. R.H. Paul as Professor and Head, Electrical Engineering; and Prof. J.C.V. Chinnappa as Professor and Head, Mechanical Engineering. The EFac used the classrooms and laboratory facilities of CTC to offer a four-year BSc Eng degree in specializations of Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering.



## Relocation and Culture

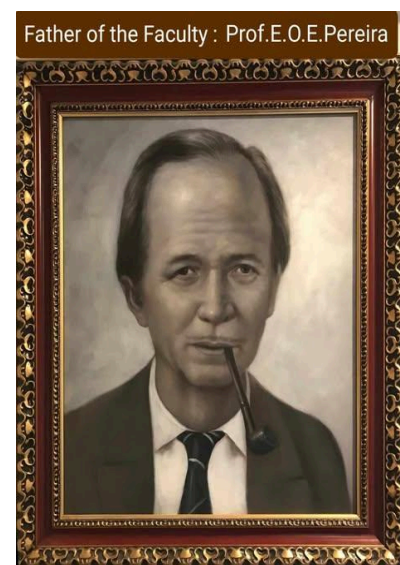
In 1952, EFac moved to Thurstan Road, and EFac students had an exhausting time attending morning lectures at Thurstan Road and afternoon Labs at CTC Maradana. Despite the hectic schedules, EFac boys excelled in sports, athletics, and boxing. The Dean, Prof. EO,E also created a popular annual social event as the Faculty Day.

To the relief of all, the EFac began its new home in its beautifully planned spacious home at salubrious Peradeniya in October 1964. EFac students were jubilant with spacious lecture theatres, laboratories, library, and accommodation facilities.

### I. Prof. E.O.E. Pereira

In the annals of the EFac, Prof. E.O.E. Pereira, the founding Dean, shines brightly as a brilliant sympathetic leader and the father of engineering education in this country.

Prof. Eustace Oliver Edwin Pereira, affectionately known as EOE, was born in 1907 and had his education at Royal College, and University of Ceylon Colombo. He obtained a first class in the B.Sc University of London in 1928 and a first class in the Mechanical Science Tripos at University of Cambridge in 1931. After serving as an Engineer in the Public Works Department, he was appointed to the University chair to plan the first Faculty of Engineering at Peradeniya.



The spacious layout of the building complex and the excellent facilities at PeraEFac have been due to the foresight and determination of Prof. E.O.E. Pereira. In 1957, when EOE was called upon to trim down his requirements for EFac buildings and equipment, he tendered his resignation rather than compromise his vision.

Had he succumbed to pressure, our EFac would not be enjoying the prestige and recognition of owning the best auditorium and majestic buildings. Prof. EOE was a brilliant academic and a teacher par excellence. Even amidst his duties, he taught structures in 1966, delivering brilliant and lucid lectures.

I was fortunate to join the Civil Engineering department under Prof. EOE in May 1968. He urged us to be sensitive to the feelings of students from rural areas. In the late 1960s, he led a model paddy field project and, in 1969, successfully steered the university as VC through a student crisis. He retired in 1970 but remained dedicated to EFac. He received an honorary D.Sc in 1978 and passed away in 1988.

## Honouring the Founding Fathers, Pera Engineering Faculty Episode II:

### **Prof. R.H. Paul**

The first Engineering Faculty (EFac) of the University of Ceylon was established on 1 July 1950 in Colombo, and achieved steady progress with EOE Pereira as Dean and Head Civil, RH Paul as Head Electrical, and JCV Chinnappa as Head, Mechanical.

Competent pioneering staff T. Sivaprakasapillai, H.B. de Silva, E.F. Bartholomeusz, P. Selvanayagam, K. Arumugam, W.M.G. Fernando, W.P. Jayasekera, S. Mahalingam, and G.D. Somasunderam and the cream of physical science students attracted to EFac enabled the Faculty to obtain recognition of the 3 professional institutions in London.

Compared to academic staff in other Faculties, EFac was short of PhDs in initial years. EFac recruited academics with very good first degrees and were sent out postgraduate research in England to rectify this problem and when the Faculty moved to Peradeniya in 1964, it had a good complement of brilliant academics.

As a Pera EFac undergraduate during 1964-67, I remember the bright young staff, Drs. U.S. Kuruppu, A. Thurairajah, M. Amaratunga, K. Sanmuganathan, J.A. Gunawardena, S. Naguleswaran, C.L.V. Jayatilleke, H.R. Sirisena, T.D.M.A. Samuel, and Messrs N.S. Karunaratne, V. Shanmuganayagam, along with the pioneers. PeraEFac is making elaborate arrangements to celebrate the 2025 Diamond Jubilee, and I was planning to glimpse the services of founding fathers of the EFac weekly.

Today, I wish to write on another distinguished founding teacher, Prof. R.H. Paul, who is considered the “Father of Electrical Engineering Education in Sri Lanka”.

Robert Hoisington Paul (1904-1978), who came from a family of educators, studied at St Thomas’ College, Colombo and Ceylon University College to earn a first class in B.Sc London and the government Engineering scholarship to Cambridge University. He was a person of high academic calibre and the first Ceylonese to obtain a first class in the Mechanical Science Tripos at Cambridge University in 1928.



He joined the Ceylon Technical College (CTC) as a lecturer in 1933 and did a great deal of pioneering work setting up the electrical engineering laboratories at CTC. Dedicated efforts of R.H. Paul enabled the recognition of CTC to prepare students for the B.Sc. Engineering external degree of the University of London in 1942. He was appointed professor in 1943 and held the post of director of CTC from 1945-49. Despite demanding work and meagre facilities at CTC, he published his research in the Institution of Electrical Engineers, London, winning the overseas premium in 1944.

Among his first undergraduate students were W.P. Jayasekera and W.M.G. Fernando who won government scholarships for training in UK to become distinguished teachers to serve EFac for 4 decades from inception in 1950 until retirement.

When the EFac was established on 1 July 1950, Prof. R.H. Paul was selected as Professor and Head of Electrical Engineering, and he served EFac until his retirement in 1967. Planning of the Electrical Engineering curriculum and Labs at PeraEFac in 1960s was almost entirely his effort and I remember Prof Paul doing our second year lectures and handling his favourite experiments in the power laboratory in 1965.

During his Deanship (1965-1966) he inculcated a strong sense of discipline among staff and students and I remember Prof. Paul walking around the EFac admiring the master-slave clock system installed in EFac in 1965 working to perfection. Prof Paul was a Fellow of the Institution of Electrical Engineers London and its overseas representative in Sri Lanka from 1964-1978. Prof. Paul served in the Advisory Board of Technical Education (1966) and was a member of the Commission on Broadcasting and Information (1969).

He served as the president of Sri Lanka Association for Advancement of Science and also was the president of the Institution of Engineers Sri Lanka (IESL) in 1968. The IESL honours the Father of Electrical Engineering Education in Sri Lanka with an annual Eng. Prof. R.H. Paul Memorial Lecture on his birth anniversary and this year's lecture at IESL on 7 Feb 2025, 5.15pm is by Prof. Lilantha Samaranayake, Dean, PeraEFac.

Prof. R.H. Paul passed away on July 3, 1978 and was honoured posthumously with an honorary D.Sc of the University of Peradeniya in 1981.





## **Honouring the Founding Fathers Pera Engineering Faculty Episode III**

### **Prof. J.C.V. Chinnappa**

The first Engineering Faculty (EFac) of the University of Ceylon was established on 1 July 1950 in Colombo, and achieved steady progress with EOE Pereira as Dean and Head Civil, RH Paul as Head Electrical, and JCV Chinnappa as Head, Mechanical engineering.

Pioneering staff T.Sivaprakasapillai, H.B.de Silva, E.F.Bartholomeusz, P.Selvanayagam, K.Arumugam, W.M.G.Fernando, W.P.Jayasekera, S.Mahalingam, and G.D.Somasunderam and the cream of physical science students attracted to EFac enabled the Faculty to obtain recognition of the 3 professional institutions in London.

From 1953 to 1964 the Engineering Faculty had to function with temporary “Takarang” buildings erected at Thurstan Road University premises in Colombo.

In 1964, the Faculty was moved to its beautifully Engineered permanent home at Peradeniya on the left bank of Mahaveli river.

Several young PhDs joined the EFac strengthening the degree program, and teaching to produce world class Engineers.

As a Pera EFac undergraduate during 1964-67, I remember our bright young teachers; Drs. U.S. Kuruppu, A. Thurairajah, Milton Amaratunga, K. Sanmuganathan, J.A. Gunawardena, S. Naguleswaran, C.L.V. Jayatilleke, H.R. Sirisena, T.D.M.A. Samuel, and Messrs N.S. Karunaratne, V. Shanmuganayagam along with the pioneer staff.

Our shift to the EFac in October 1964 was truly inspiring. The spacious Labs and drawing offices, tiered lecture halls with long corridors were very impressive. The student intake was 150. We were delighted to be the first occupants of the brand-new, well laid out, EFac buildings at Peradeniya and enjoyed interacting with the enthusiastic staff who worked with dedication to set up the laboratories and improve academic facilities. PeraEFac is making elaborate arrangements to celebrate the 2025 Diamond Jubilee and I wish to glimpse the services of founding fathers of the EFac in the coming weeks.

Today my writeup is on another distinguished founding teacher Prof J.C.V. Chinnappa who pioneered Mechanical Engineering education in Sri Lanka and served as Head Mechanical Engineering and Dean Engineering (1969-1971).

I remember Prof Chinnappa as a slightly shorter stockily built Thermodynamics teacher with a pleasant smiling face walking quietly along the long EFac corridors.

We were able to find out from our seniors that he was a keen rugger player and a good boxer and also an expert in solar refrigeration.



He was seen busy with his Solar rig outside the Thermodynamics lab in his free time. James Chandrasekaran Virasinghe Chinnappa was born on 5 October, 1923 in Madras. He did his mechanical engineering degree at College of Engineering, Guindy, India, and continued his post graduate studies at Imperial College London.

J.C.V. Chinnappa joined the EFac as a lecturer in Mechanical Engineering in 1950. J.C.V. Chinnappa and S. Mahalingam were responsible for developing the curriculum and teaching in mechanical engineering subjects during the early years of the faculty. Starting in late 1950s, throughout his academic career, Chinnappa conducted significant research in the field of solar energy. Chinnappa carried out his post graduate research at University of London under the supervision of Prof. Harold Heywood, a renowned mechanical & chemical engineer.

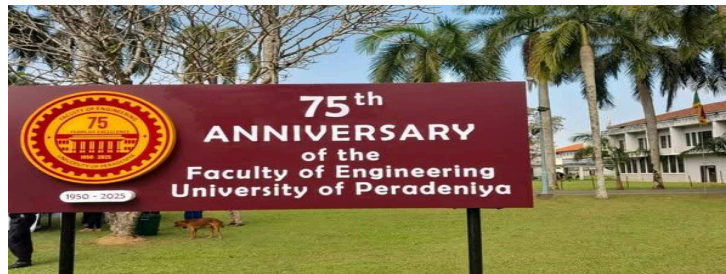
He was appointed Professor, Head of the department Mechanical Engineering in 1964. Prof. Chinnappa's doctoral thesis at University of London was on "Study of the Intermittent Absorption Refrigeration Cycle and its Operation by Solar Radiation"

His research papers are still being cited, 60 years after they were published. His pioneering work on solar refrigeration and pressurized water heating was ahead of his time to gain recognition as an expert in solar energy research. Much of his solar energy research gear was built in the faculty workshops under his direction and his style of work was an inspiration to academics who undertook practical research at Peradeniya and those who took to solar energy research. Students and visitors often saw Prof. Chinnappa standing on a ladder, with a spanner in hand, attending to his solar rig. Prof. Chinnappa taught thermodynamics and heat transfer and took much interest to develop the Heat Engines Laboratory at Peradeniya, with an industrial type boiler.



After I joined the academic staff, I saw his sharp legal mind in drafting regulations. Prof. J.C.V. Chinnappa succeeded Prof. E.O.E Pereira as Dean of the Faculty 1969-71. He was instrumental in setting up the Faculty of Engineering Staff - Student Consultative Committee, that met regularly to address students' concerns in 1971. He took the initiative to diversify the mechanical engineering curriculum to accommodate chemical, production, and agricultural engineering disciplines. Professor Chinnappa left to Georgetown in British Guyana in 1971 and then Lae in Papua New Guinea in 1975 and moved to James Cook University in Townsville, Australia in 1978 and remained there until retirement in 1988. His interest in Solar refrigeration persisted during his service abroad until retirement.

Prof J.C.V. Chinnappa passed away in Melbourne, Australia on December 28, 2006.



## **Honouring the Founding Fathers of Pera EFac IV:**

### **Prof. E.F. Bartholomeusz**

The Engineering Faculty of the University of Ceylon was established in Colombo on 1 July 1950 and was moved to its permanent home at Peradeniya in October 1964. From 1955, the faculty began recruiting the cream of its graduates to pursue training in top UK universities. Most returned with PhDs, eager to join the pioneer teachers in launching one of the best engineering degree programs at the EFac.

I was fortunate to be among the first second-year students to commence studies in the well-planned Peradeniya faculty, supported by a full complement of highly qualified staff. Prof. E.O.E. Pereira was Dean and Head of Civil Engineering, Prof. R.H. Paul led Electrical Engineering, Prof. J.C.V. Chinnappa headed Mechanical Engineering, and Prof. E.F. Bartholomeusz led Engineering Mathematics.

Some pioneering staff had left, and others such as T. Sivaprakasapillai, H.B. de Silva, K. Arumugam, W.M.G. Fernando, W.P. Jayasekara, and S. Mahalingam were joined by younger staff including U.S. Kuruppu, S.M.A. Perera, A. Thurairajah, M. Amaratunga, J.A. Gunawardena, K. Sanmuganathan, S. Naguleswaran, C.L.V. Jayatilleke, and N.S. Karunaratne.

We were delighted to be the first users of the beautifully tiered lecture halls, auditoriums, drawing offices, and new labs nestled in breathtaking surroundings. Compared to our first year at Thurstan Road, Peradeniya was a paradise. Our lecturers were attentive and made our stay homely.

Professors E.O.E. Pereira, T. Sivaprakasapillai, and E.F. Bartholomeusz stood out as the most admired teachers who genuinely cared for our well-being. During the 1965 student unrests, they courageously protected us amidst baton charges and administrative changes under the new Universities Act.

Everard Frederick Bartholomeusz was born on 30 December 1920. After completing his secondary education at St. Joseph's College, Colombo, he earned a BSc in Mathematics with First Class Honours in 1942, followed by an MSc from the University of London. In 1950, he joined the newly established Faculty of Engineering and in 1952, proceeded to the University of Cambridge for research at the Cavendish Laboratory under G.I. Taylor, earnHonouring the Founding Fathers Pera EFac IV: Prof. EF. Bartholomeusz

The Engineering Faculty of the University of Ceylon was established in Colombo on 1 July 1950 and was moved to its permanent home at Peradeniya in October 1964. From 1955 the faculty was recruiting the cream of its graduates to get them trained in good Universities in UK.

Most of them returned with PhDs eager to join the pioneer teachers to launch the best degree program at the EFac.

I was fortunate to be among the first second year students to commence Engineering studies in the well-planned faculty with a full complement of highly qualified staff.

Prof EOE Pereira was Dean and Head Civil, Prof RH Paul, Head Electrical, and Prof JCV Chinnappa Head Mechanical and Prof EF. Bartholomeusz Head Engg Mathematics.

Some pioneering staff had left the service and T.Sivaprakasapillai, [HB.de Silva](#), K.Arumugam, WMG.Fernando, WP.Jayasekera, S.Mahalingam, were joined by young staff US.Kuruppu,

SMA. Perera, A.Thurairajah, M.Amaratunga, JA. Gunawardena, K.Sanmuganathan, S.Naguleswaran, CLV, Jayatilleke, and NS Karunaratne.

We were delighted to be the first users of fresh smelling beautifully tiered lecture halls, auditorium, drawing offices, and new labs in breathtaking surroundings.

Peradeniya was a paradise compared to our first year at Thurstan Road and our lecturers were more available to attend to our needs and make our stay homely.

EOE. Pereira (EOE), T.Sivaprakasapillai (Sivaps) and EF. Bartholomeusz (Bartho) stood out as the most admired teachers who cared for our well-being at Peradeniya.

There were many student unrest at Peradeniya in 1965 leading to police baton charge and replacement of the Vice-chancellor under a new Universities act.

Bartho and Sivaps fearlessly appeared to protect us during these rumpuses at Peradeniya.

PeraEFac is making elaborate arrangements to celebrate the 2025 Diamond Jubilee and today I wish to glimpse the great service of Prof. EF. Bartholomeusz to Efac.

Everard Frederick Bartholomeusz was born on 30 Dec 1920. After his secondary education at St. Joseph's College, Colombo, he obtained the BSc (Maths special) with First Class Honours in 1942 and the MSc degree from University of London.

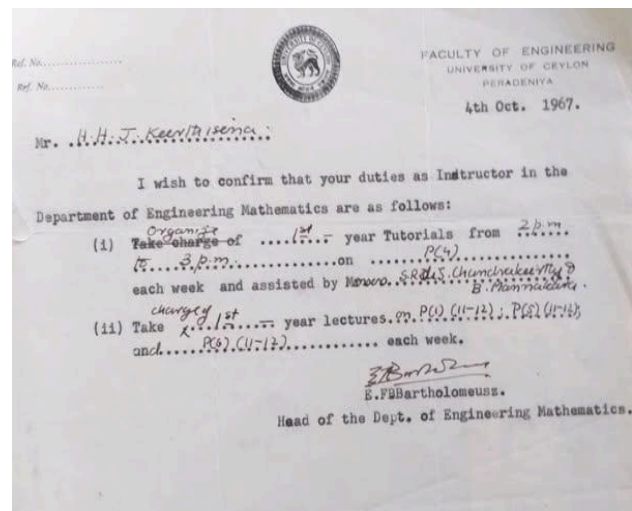
In 1950, he joined the newly established Faculty of Engineering, University of Ceylon, and proceeded to the UK to do research at the University of Cambridge in 1952. He worked in the famous Cavendish Laboratory, under eminent researchers like G. I. Taylor and obtained his PhD from University of Cambridge in 1955. Dr. Bartholomeusz had an excellent rapport with



students as a much-loved teacher and he contributed immensely to the welfare of the Faculty and its students.

One of his most noteworthy contributions was the setting up of the Engineering Faculty Canteen. He played a pivotal role in formulating its management structure and extending its services to provide quality food, stationery, drawing instruments and calculators at low prices. Thanks to his efforts, the EFac Canteen was the best run canteen at Peradeniya University. He was appointed professor and Head Eng Maths in the 4th dept of EFac created in 1965.

Prof. EF. Bartholomeusz was an elegant master in the lecture room and had the ability to retain the attention of all students on any complex or abstract topic in Mathematics. It was a pleasure to listen to his well compiled, fluently delivered lectures and take down orderly notes neatly written on the blackboard, with clearly numbered subheadings. He touched the life of all EFac students with his friendship, wisdom, and guidance. His understanding and appreciation of the needs of the students endeared him to all. Most of us at EFac considered Prof. Bartholomeusz as the best teacher we ever had. His contribution to EFac was much more than being an excellent teacher and mentor.



He gave a patient hearing to students and staff whenever they sought his advice. During his long, distinguished career Bartho wholeheartedly offered his best efforts to educate and guide many bright EFac students to excel as professionals today. Prof. Bartho was my mentor who coaxed me as an academic offering me a teaching position in Engineering Mathematics and guiding me soon after graduation in 1967. He was the perfect guru in the true sense of the word accessible at all times. It was a pleasure to work with him as he gave responsibility with clear instructions. The work schedule (on lunar calendar based on poya days) assigned to me by Prof. Bartho as Head is something I treasure as not many can improve on the precise allocation of duties.

- i. Organise first year tutorials from 2pm to 3pm on P(4) each week and assisted by Messrs [S.R.de. S. Chandrakeerthy](#) and [B. Mannakkara](#).

ii. Take charge of 1st year lectures on P(1) 11-12 ; P(5) 11-12 and P(6) 11-12 each week. Prof. Bartho always appreciated the work of subordinates whatever the rank may be and served as an exemplary Head of Eng Maths at PeraEFac until his departure in 1974.

He served University of Zambia as Head Maths until 1990 before moving to the US. Prof. E. F. Bartholomeusz, passed away on October 22 in Phoenix, Arizona, in the US. In appreciation of his long, dedicated and outstanding service to Pera Efac the Peradeniya Engineering Faculty Alumni Association felicitated him in 2007. his PhD in 1955.

Dr. Bartholomeusz was a beloved teacher who had a strong rapport with students and contributed immensely to the welfare of the Faculty. One of his most enduring legacies was the establishment of the Engineering Faculty Canteen, where he designed a management structure that provided quality food, stationery, drawing instruments, and calculators at low prices. Thanks to his efforts, the EFac Canteen became the best-run canteen at Peradeniya University.

Appointed Professor and Head of Engineering Mathematics in 1965—the Faculty's fourth department—Prof. Bartholomeusz was a master lecturer, capable of holding students' attention on even the most abstract topics. His lectures were well-organized, delivered fluently, and accompanied by clearly structured blackboard notes with numbered subheadings.

He touched the lives of all EFac students through his wisdom, mentorship, and friendship. Most students regarded him as the best teacher they ever had.

His contribution extended far beyond teaching. Always accessible, he patiently listened to students and staff alike. As my mentor, he encouraged me to join academia, offering me a teaching position in Engineering Mathematics after my graduation in 1967.

Prof. Bartholomeusz was the perfect guru, assigning responsibilities with clear instructions. One of the schedules he gave me—organized using a lunar calendar based on poya days—included:

i. Organising first-year tutorials from 2pm to 3pm on P(4), assisted by Mr. S.R. de S. Chandrakeerthy and Mr. B. Mannakkara.

ii. Conducting first-year lectures on P(1), P(5), and P(6) from 11am to 12pm each week.

He valued every subordinate's work, no matter the rank, and served as an exemplary Head of Engineering Mathematics until his departure in 1974. He later served as Head of Mathematics at the University of Zambia until 1990, before moving to the United States.

Prof. E.F. Bartholomeusz passed away on 22 October in Phoenix, Arizona. In recognition of his long, dedicated service, he was felicitated by the Peradeniya Engineering Faculty Alumni Association in 2007.

Prof. Bartholomeusz was more than a brilliant academic—he was a compassionate mentor, a visionary planner, and a cherished figure in the history of Pera EFac. His legacy continues to inspire generations of engineers. We remember him with great respect and heartfelt gratitude.





## Honouring the Founding Fathers Pera EFac V:

### Prof. H.B.de Silva

The Engineering Faculty of the University of Ceylon was established in Colombo on 1 July 1950 and was moved to its permanent home at Peradeniya in October 1964.

EFac recruited the cream of its graduates for training in top Universities in UK. Most of them returned with PhDs eager to launch the best engineering degree program to the cream of Advanced level students entering the PeraEFac. From 1966 the first-year course was modified to include more engineering bias and new regulations came into effect in 1969 with year-end examinations in all 4 years. Many new assistant lecturers were recruited to prepare for Swabasha teaching and for staff training to launch Production, Chemical and Agricultural Engg disciplines.



Some senior teachers had left the service by 1969 and T.Sivaprakasapillai, H.B.de Silva, W.M.G.Fernando, W.P.Jayasekera, S.Mahalingam, were joined by younger staff, A.Thuraiajah, M.Amaratunga, CLV, Jayatilleke, JA. Gunawardena, K.Sanmuganathan, S.Naguleswaran, V.Shanmuganayagam, DJ. Gunaratnam, AS. Balasubramaniam, BL. Tennakoon, TDMA. Samuel, GP. Karunaratne, JBX. Devotta, S.Sivasegaram, HR. Sirisena, AK. David, ART de Silva, MP. Ranaweera, VB Karunaratne, S.Selvalingam, NB Rambukwella, V. Theivendran, NE. Wijesundera, HHJ. Keerthisena, S.Rajendran, JS. Gunasekere, RJKSK.Ranatunga, R.Galappatti, S.Selvavinayagammoorthy, R. Mahalinga Iyer, T.Vinayagalingam, WDK.Gunatileke, WJN.Fernando, GKGKK. Gamini Bandara for new regulation, and swabasha teaching.

1969 Second year teaching was handled by young rookies and I remember the fiasco of large number of failures in the very first New Regulation Part I exam in 1969. Many of the Pera EFac development plans went awry with the disturbance of academic programs following insurrection in April 1971 and introduction of new University's act in 1972, which created the 2nd EFac attached to Katubedda campus. Attempts to transfer some Pera EFAC resources to Katubedda led to many student protests disturbing the peace at Pera EFAC when academic work resumed in 1972. Prof HB de Silva assumed Deanship in 1972 and had to steer the PeraEFac during turbulent times of student agitations over police arrests and drastic changes in the campus with food quality in the halls suffering from introduction of meal tickets.

After 1971, language policy also threatened the future prospects of some senior staff. Despite the turmoil the EFac continued its Applied Mechanics building program designed and supervised by Dr. Milton Amaratunga with the help of young Efac staff. Pera EFac acquired an IBM 1130 computer in 1971 and undertook services to industry. A new Msc program in Foundation Engineering was also launched in 1972. Many PhDs; HR Sirisena, BL Tennakoon, S Naguleswaran, ART de Silva, S. Rajendran, K. Sanmuganathan, S. Selvalingam, GP. Karunaratne, AS. Balasubramaniam, DJ. Gunaratnam, MP. Ranaweera, T. Vinayagalingam, JS. Gunasekera, GC. Rodrigo left the EFac during 1972-78 where PeraEfac lost supremacy as the only EFAC in Sri Lanka.

PeraEfac is making elaborate arrangements to celebrate the 2025 Diamond Jubilee. Today I wish to glimpse the long and distinguished service of Prof. H.B. de Silva. Hettihewage Benedict de Silva fondly known as HB was Born in April 1915 and did his schooling at St Thomas' College, Mt Lavinia and St Joseph's College Colombo. He obtained his BSc in Physics, Mathematics from University College Colombo, earning the Government Scholarship and Muncherji Franji Khan Prize in 1932. He then joined University of Cambridge, Cavendish Laboratory to follow a Special Degree in Physics and a Diploma in Geodesy and Advanced Physics.

HB de Silva followed BSc Engg at Ceylon Technical College and also obtained MSc in Photogram metric Research, Advanced Soil Mechanics, Elasticity and Photoelasticity from University College London to become a Lecturer at Ceylon Technical College. He was one of the first recruits to Engineering Faculty established on 1 July 1950. HB de Silva earned many professional distinctions as Licensed Surveyor and Leveler, Chartered Engineer and Fellow Institution of Engineers Sri Lanka, Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and Fellow, Sri Lanka Rep of the Institution of Structural Engineers (London). HB de Silva was a visiting Senior Lecturer and member of the Advisory Board of the Institute of Surveying and Mapping in Diyatalawa and was a visiting Researcher at Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio, USA on a Fulbright Scholarship. He continued his service at Pera EFac to become a Professor and Dean 1972-1975. HB de Silva served the EFac from inception till his retirement in 1980 as a very popular teacher in Surveying with many humorous stories on the annual EFac Survey camp. Survey camp for the 4th year Civil Eng students was a highlight of student activities.

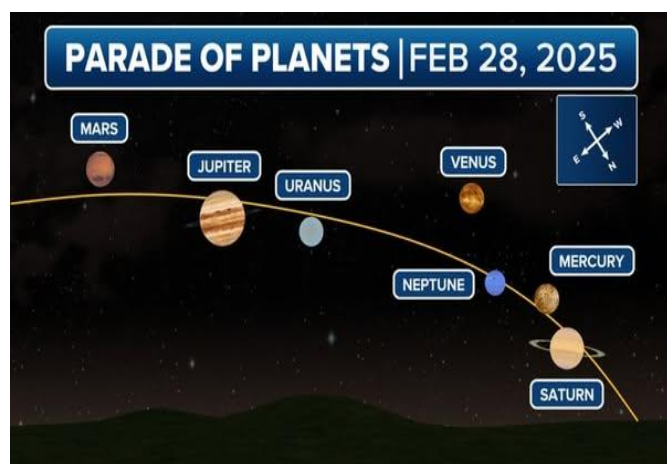
It used to be held at Diyatalawa in 1960s and the salubrious climate, hills, valleys, roads, tunnels, and evenly spaced triangulation stations were great attractions. The camp fire at the end was a social event enjoyed by all students and staff of EFac. I had the pleasure of associating friendly, effervescent HB closely at Peradeniya and accompanying him on many site visits to plan survey camps, enjoying his tales. My wife Piyaseeli also attached to the Survey lab served as lady chaperone in camps.

The old uncle 'Mame' in Survey lab was HB's trusted lieutenant loved by all at EFac. During his long, distinguished' career Prof HB has given his best efforts to guide students in Surveying to serve as planning Engineers in many development projects. Surveying was a major component in Civil Engineering and PeraEFac was fortunate to have H.B.De Silva who was recognized as an expert by the Institute of Surveyors. HB loved to teach his pet topics in Astronomy Sun observation and star observation. Those who had the fortune to get to know him, admired his teaching interspersed with entertaining anecdotes, spicy humour, and pleasant, unassuming nature.

Prof HB de Silva also served as a Member, Board of Directors, Ceylon Hardboard Corporation, Engineering Glossaries Committee, and Steering Committee of the Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy. In recognition of his exceptional service to the to the surveying profession he was honoured with a distinguished Service Award of the Institute of Surveyors Ceylon.

It is a happy coincidence to share this post on Prof HB de Silva today 28 Feb 2025 when we are witnessing a rare planetary parade.

We fondly remember Prof. HB de Silva who passed away in September 1989 with gratitude.



## Honouring the Founding Fathers of Pera EFac VI:

### Prof T. Sivaprakasapillai

The Engineering Faculty of the University of Ceylon was established in Colombo on 1 July 1950 and was moved to its permanent home at Peradeniya in October 1964.

The Engineering Faculty (EFac) continued to recruit the cream of its graduates for postgraduate training abroad, but since 1974 the number returning was dwindling. Prof. E.F. Bartholomeusz, and Drs. K. Sanmuganathan, A.R.T. de Silva, S. Rajendran, G.P. Karunaratne, and S. Selvalingam left the EFac, creating a void during 1974–1975. Prof. T. Sivaprakasapillai, who served from inception, retired in 1975.

1975 dawned with the palm trees alongside the road at Peradeniya Sports Grounds on the Science Faculty side blooming, signaling a bad omen for the Peradeniya campus. Several unfortunate incidents occurred: Rupa Ratnaseeli of Agriculture Faculty became paralyzed after a fall off the Ramanathan Hall balcony, and W.M. Weerasuriya from Arts Faculty died due to police firing during a student demonstration. Unending student unrest spiraled into the closure of the campus, disrupting academic programs.

The only silver lining during this dark period was the Silver Jubilee celebration of PeraEFac, with an exhibition open to the public attended by Prof. E.O.E. Pereira and R.H. Paul. Many school children swarmed the EFac in long queues, to the delight of everyone.

PeraEFac is making elaborate arrangements to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee with another grand exhibition in September 2025 and many other Jubilee activities. Today, I wish to glimpse the long, distinguished service of Prof. T. Sivaprakasapillai.

Thambyahpillai Sivaprakasapillai, born on 26 February 1910, had his school education at Jaffna Hindu College and entered Ceylon University College in 1927, earning an exhibition pass in 1928 and a BSc London with a government university scholarship in 1930. He joined Imperial College London (then called City & Guilds Engineering College) and earned a BSc Eng. (London), winning the Henrici Medal for Mathematics in 1933.

Sivaprakasapillai obtained good industrial exposure between 1936 and 1950 at the City of Oxford Waterworks, Peterhead Harbour, and Penmaenmawr Road Diversion Works in England. He then joined the PWD Ceylon and Colombo Port Commission (CPC), becoming the first Ceylonese Chartered Engineer at the CPC. He retired as a



Harbour Engineer to join the Engineering Faculty of the University of Ceylon as a pioneer teacher in July 1950.

In 1964, Sivaprakasapillai's blue Moskvich car was most prominent at Pera EFac. We also recognized E.O.E. Pereira (EOE) and T. Sivaprakasapillai (Sivaps) in white suits, strolling daily down the majestic EFac corridor at 8 a.m. with a welcoming smile. Sivaps and Bartho would always show up whenever EFac students faced trouble at Peradeniya. Sivaps's presence was especially prominent in sports, cultural, and religious activities.

I remember Sivaps handling much of Part I teaching at PeraEFac and imparting ethics and professionalism through general engineering in the final year. He used to go from person to person with a smile, marking coursework attendance. In 1968, when I joined the EFac staff, I took over fluid mechanics teaching from Sivaps, and he kindly gifted me his well-preserved textbooks in Engineering Hydraulics.

He was President of Section C of the Ceylon Association for the Advancement of Science in 1947 and President of the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka (IESL) in 1973. He also served as a member of the Industrial Court and the Wages Board for many years since 1958. He spoke freely in the language of the workers and gave an impressive summary of the history of the labour movement in his IESL presidential address.



Prof. Sivaprakasapillai retired from university service in 1975, having served since 1950. He also headed the committee that submitted the proposal for the establishment of the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Jaffna in 1979.

He was the proud father of three children—Brahman, Pratab, and Premala—who all excelled in engineering studies with First Class Honours in BSc Eng (Ceylon) and PhDs from Imperial College London, University College London, and the University of Oxford, respectively. His daughter, Sri Lanka's first woman engineer, Dr. Mrs. Premala Sivasegaram, continuously served Sri Lanka as an exemplary professional and academic.

Prof. T. Sivaprakasapillai passed away in January 2007. I am thankful to Premala for family details and photographs of her dear father.

Let me also congratulate Dr. Premala Sivaprakasapillai Sivasegaram in advance of International Women's Day tomorrow for bringing honour to PeraEFac and paving the path for a generation of women in Sri Lanka to pursue engineering education.

## **Honouring Three Founding Fathers of Pera EFac:**

**K. Arumugam (1950-1966), P. Selvanayagam (1950-1965),**

**PHD. Wickremaratne (1951-1961)**

The Engineering Faculty of the University of Ceylon was established in Colombo on 1 July 1950 and was moved to its permanent home at Peradeniya in October 1964.

Three out of the 12 pioneer teachers had left the Faculty by 1966, but I had the good fortune of meeting them when they visited EFac as I stayed stuck to EFac till 2010.

Dr. Arumugam, fondly called Aru, taught our 3rd year Hydraulics and was very active in our Survey camp at Diyatalawa, shuttling between Trig stations like a rolling stone. Having done his PhD under Prof. White at Imperial College, he was ahead of others. Aru did a great job establishing an Imperial College-type Hydraulics lab at Peradeniya.

I took a deep interest in his Open Channel Flow lectures, which led me to do research on the same topic at Imperial College. I was fortunate to keep in touch with Aru, who was a Senior Lecturer at City University London during my stay in London. Aru entertained the Lankan community at his home and was a very likeable person.

Kanapathipillai Arumugam, born in 1925, had his early education at St. John's College, Jaffna, and graduated in Civil Engineering with a First Class from the University of Ceylon. Dr. K. Arumugam left PeraEFac to join City University London in 1966 and initiated the much-appreciated Water Resources Engineering course at City University. In 1986, while walking along City University corridors, Dr. Arumugam collapsed from a heart attack and passed away.

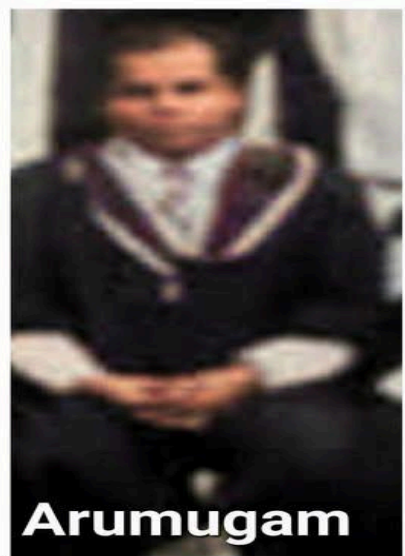
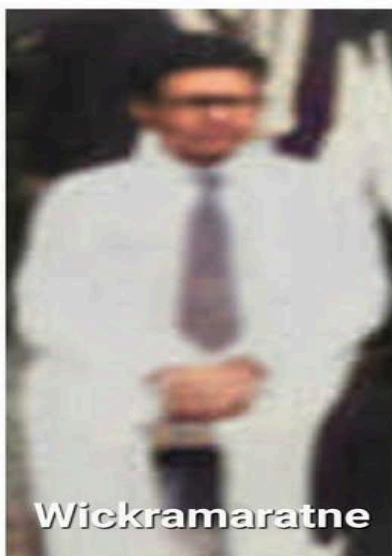
Dr. P. Selvanayagam taught Elements of Plastic Theory and Reinforced Concrete Design at EFac and was a smart teacher who explored out-of-the-box topics like escape velocity when space shuttles were launched to evoke the interest of bright students in lectures. Teachers of this era were very strict in enforcing punctuality and coursework deadlines and insisted that all students bring the slide rule to class.

PHD Wickramaratne (PH) was well known for his witty law enforcement in classes. Once he spotted a student quietly slipping into the lecture a couple of minutes late. "Please close the door," commanded PH, only to be happily obliged by the culprit. "What I meant was close the door from outside," clarified PH.



PH was a great asset with good laboratory training at Battersea Polytechnic, London. When he gave a problem in class, those without slide rules were asked to leave. Sadly, I don't have any pictures or personal records of PH and Dr. Selvanayagam. Though their stay at EFac was brief, we must be thankful to these three pioneers for establishing good practices in submission of coursework and punctuality in work.

To assist the Dean and Jubilee committee to publish past EFac activities, I wish to end my posts with Professors S. Mahalingam, WP Jayasekera, and WMG Fernando who served PeraEFac till 1990 and are familiar to most of you from the present era.



## Honouring the Founding Fathers of Pera EFac

**WMG Fernando (1950-1989), WP Jayasekara (1950-90), and**

**S. Mahalingam (1952-91)**

The Engineering Faculty of the University of Ceylon was established in Colombo on 1 July 1950 and was moved to its permanent home at Peradeniya in October 1964. The faculty is making elaborate arrangements to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee in 2025. The activities include a research symposium and an exhibition open to the general public.

The present intake to PeraEFac is 455 and five batches are physically present at the Faculty during regular semester time, adding considerable stress to ageing infrastructure facilities. The Alumni Association PEFAA has stepped in to give a facelift and improve the faculty infrastructure for the Diamond Jubilee celebration activities. It envisages that the general public, senior engineers, administrative officers, foreign delegates, students from other universities and schools will visit the faculty during this period.

Nine out of the twelve pioneer teachers had left the Faculty by 1980 and only the three pioneer teachers listed above survived to guide PeraEFac during its turbulent fourth decade (1980-1990). All three were born around 1925, served the Faculty for about 40 years, and retired around 1990.

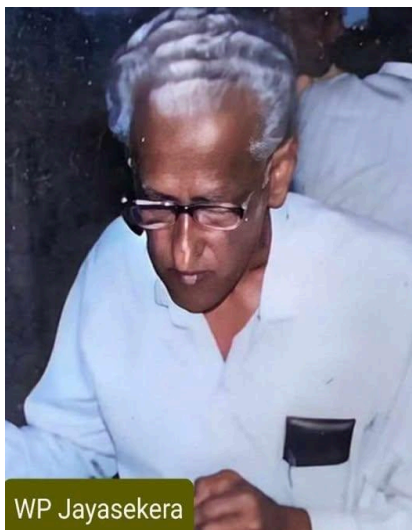
I had the good fortune to interact with them closely and learn the great traditions and history of the Faculty during my long continuous stay at PeraEFac as a member of the academic staff from 1967 to 2010. Their rich tales on the setting up of the Faculty were a great help in guiding me to establish the Ruhuna Engineering Faculty at Hapugala in 1998.

The affable WMG Fernando (WMG) was the eldest of the three. He was approachable by all with a friendly, welcoming smile and was known to be good with his hands as a practical engineer. He and his wife maintained the best-kept garden at Upper Hantana and were generous with plants and gardening advice. They were also keen lovers of classical music. WMG taught us third-year DC machines and was always ready to listen to students and offer guidance. Many stories circulated about how well he looked after his 50-year-old Hillman car.



WMG Fernando and WP Jayasekara were students of Prof. Paul at Ceylon Technical College. Upon graduation, both were granted government scholarships for research training and exposure to Electrical laboratories at various colleges of the University of London. WMG, who had followed a course in Telecommunications, began teaching this subject. During the lean period from 1975 to 1989, the Electrical Engineering Department was the hardest hit with not a single new lecturer returning after a PhD and senior lecturers leaving. Professors WP Jayasekara, WMG Fernando, and JA Gunawardena shared the entire load of teaching and lab work across all four years along with the laborious translation of exam papers. After retirement, Prof. WMG Fernando lived in Mt Lavinia and passed away in 1998.

WP Jayasekara, born in 1925, had his school education at St. Anthony's College, Kandy, before entering Ceylon Technical College to earn his B.Sc. Eng. (London). He received a government scholarship for practical training at B.I. Calendar Cables, London, in 1950. After joining the Faculty as an Assistant Lecturer in July 1950, he had further training at General Electric Co., Birmingham, and pursued his postgraduate research at Queen Mary College, University of London, earning his PhD



WP Jayasekera

in 1957 on High Voltage phenomena. Prof. Jayasekara steered the Electrical Engineering Department as its Head for over 20 years and was the Dean of PeraEFac during the difficult period 1977-1982, which saw regular class and exam boycotts instigated by student unions.

He retired in 1990 but actively participated in the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the University of Peradeniya in July 1992, serving as the editor of the Faculty of Engineering Commemoration Volume published in June 1992. After retirement, he lived in Aniwatte, Kandy, and remained involved in alumni activities and batch reunions. He passed away in 2014.

S. Mahalingam, born in 1926 in Jaffna, had his school education in Malaya before entering Ceylon Technical College, Colombo, for an engineering degree course. He graduated with a B.Sc. Eng. First Class in Civil Engineering in 1950 and joined the Civil Engineering Department as an Assistant Lecturer in 1952. Dean Prof. E. O. E. Pereira persuaded Mahalingam to follow the Mechanical Engineering degree and join the Mech. Eng. Department, which was facing an acute staff shortage. Consequently, he proceeded to the University of Sheffield, completing his PhD in 1956, specializing in torsional vibrations.

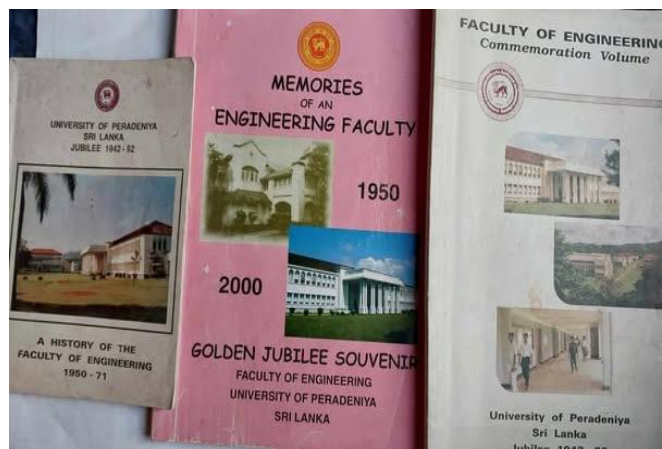


S. Mahalingam

Dr. Mahalingam resumed university teaching in 1956 and actively pursued research on vibrations, publishing extensively. In recognition of his contributions, he was awarded the DSc Eng. by the University of London, becoming the first Sri Lankan engineer to receive this prestigious award. He served as Professor of Mechanical Engineering from 1970 until his retirement in 1991.

Prof. Mahalingam (Maha) developed the Applied Mechanics Lab from scratch, making it a showpiece that attracts large crowds to the Faculty during public events. Despite being a strict disciplinarian with coursework, Prof. Maha was a jovial person full of anecdotes and had the talent to narrate humorous stories with impactful punch lines. He was also a great motivator who appreciated the work of his subordinates.

There were many fabricated stories about how he was gifted a jet engine for solving a vibration problem at Rolls Royce, which he refused to accept compensation for. When asked about it, he laughed it off, explaining that he had written to Rolls Royce asking if they had any discarded engines that could be used for teaching purposes. Rolls Royce responded, offering a sectioned jet engine used for training, provided the freight was arranged. The University agreed to bear the freight cost, and this engine now proudly adorns the Faculty lobby as a fitting symbol of PeraEFac.



Prof. Mahalingam had intimate knowledge of the planning and construction of the University scheme, the establishment of the engineering faculty, and engineering education in Sri Lanka. His authentic records, published in "A History Of The Faculty Of Engineering 1950-71," remain a testament to a scholar and gentleman par excellence, worthy of emulation. He passed away in 2015.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to these pioneering academics who laid a strong foundation for the success of PeraEFac. They are gratefully remembered on this 75th Anniversary of the first Engineering Faculty.



The new-look faculty, with new labs and corridors, many professors and students engaged in research and publications, looks modern and impressive today. I wish PeraEFac many more accomplishments and happy anniversaries.