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This 25th Anniversary souvenir was designed by Aruna Wickremarachi, Asitha Ratnayake and Anusha de Silva

A big thank you from the publisher

Twenty-five years ago, when it was decided to publish an English Sunday newspaper, that decision was not moved by any sense of special mission or great vision, though, I, among others, believed there to be room for another newspaper to provide a forum for the expression of divergent views and their discussion. The American newspaper USA Today was a model I had envisaged, both in terms of appearance and content.

The immediate reasons for publishing the Sunday Times were prosaic. The publishing rights of the newspapers of the Times Group, then in liquidation, had been purchased earlier and 'The Times' was yet a familiar name in households taking an English language paper.

I also had unutilized machine time. As a British publisher friend once told me 'Web presses are hungry beasts.'

Again, an English language newspaper in tandem with the Irida Lankadeepa, then already a publication, seemed to make sense in terms of distribution of costs and in providing advertisers with a more attractive proposition than confining their message to one lonely, weekly voice.

Decisions are only as good as the people who implement them. I have been fortunate. Vijitha Yapa agreed to be editor of the relaunched Sunday Times (originally the Sunday illustrated of the Times Group). Vijitha led by example,

initiating news stories and features, and involving himself in every aspect of producing the newspaper, including the rather archaic paste-up system which we used then to make up our pages, limited as we were with financial constraints.

He was bewildered (and secretly infuriated, I think) by my mutilating good news stories, ever erring on the side of caution, quite unlike his previous publisher, who had no qualms about saying what had to be said and indeed relishing it being said as pungently as possible.

When Vijitha left the Sunday Times, believing that his continued editorship could jeopardize the future of the newspaper from unfriendly Government fire, there was a brief period of panic, until Sinha Ratnatunga accepted the post of editor and the challenge to move the newspaper on, under his stewardship, to be the one read by every member of the family on Sunday. Under that stewardship, deceptively laconic in style, but quite like an unseen force of nature, the Sunday Times continues to thrive in his care and in the hands of his dedicated team. My thanks and good wishes to them and to all our readers today.

Ranjit Wijewardene
Publisher
June 3, 2012

The Sunday paper of four times

Anniversaries are times when people generally say nice things about others. An anniversary in the media is a time when we say nice things about ourselves.

The Silver Jubilee of the new SUNDAY TIMES (the old Times Group was begun in 1864 but folded up in 1978) is celebrated following a rather tumultuous period in every aspect. Technology has changed radically. The Internet even hadn't arrived in our newsrooms back in 1987. Personal computers and mobile phones made their entries during this period. Fax machines and typewriters became museum pieces. Online editions came into the scene as the old hot metal rotary printing machines and paste-up artists went into oblivion.

Through it all, the newspaper has won, and retained, a substantial share of the market. Circulation and readership figures – and credibility, the ultimate tests of a good newspaper have remained healthy and steady over a very long period of time. For this, one must also thank those who worked with us over the years in building up the Sunday Times; some of them have passed away, others moved on but they worked with dedication to help this newspaper

rise, and we remember them all.

To use a fashionable term in modern days, 'Team Sunday Times', has prioritised professionalism as the key element in their work. Many have been the slips; to err is human, but strenuous is the effort to remain steadfastly committed to a free press amidst the threats, covert and overt. We have had our share of trials and tribulations, about which you will read inside.

Coinciding with the occasion, Team Sunday Times is launching a 'Style Book' on Journalism which is an essential guide for journalists and professional writers.

With the keen eye of a benign publisher watching over, this newspaper will endeavour to be what it has always promised to be – a family paper – the Sunday paper of our times.

My own task at the helm of editorial Team Sunday Times has been made so much easier thanks to the efficiency and commitment to duty of my desk heads. I could always sleep easy in the comfort that the pages were in safe, dedicated hands.

Sinha Ratnatunga
Editor
June 3, 2012