

# Obituary



## Peter Athanasius Fernandes

May 2 1949 – December 29, 2013

Nairobi. More than 400 people packed the Holy Trinity Church in Kileleshwa to farewell Peter on January 4, 2014. His ashes were interred at the Langata cemetery the next day.

He was the beloved husband of Jenny, loving father of Jennipet/Errol. Loving Grandfather to Anicia, Ashley & Ethan. Son of late Andre and late Rosa Maria Fernandes. Loving brother to Cyprian, Late Hippol, Johnny, Bridget & Flora. Brother-in-law to Late Ruffiana (Ruffy), Matilda, Yvonne, Marlene, Lola, Marion, Harold, Gary, Philip, Malcom. Uncle to Andi (Godchild) Leon, Carl, Lee -John, Lou Alan, Mary Anne, Michael, John Paul, Priscilla and their families.

## An outstanding career

Peter born and raised in Eastleigh, a few strides away from the St Teresa's Church and attended St Teresa's Boys School.

Peter Fernandes was an outstanding banker with a brilliant mind and an unbelievable amount of knowledge in the industry. Within one week of finishing school, Peter got a job with the Kenya Commercial Bank. His managers heaped praise on him and promotions came quickly until he became one of the youngest Operations Managers in the country. Peter was a self-taught man. He spent his early life reading up every aspect of banking he could find or order from overseas. He learnt all about banking laws, corporation law, rules and regulations, and every aspect of foreign exchange trading he could find. Over the years he would he would continue to learn more and more, so much so that many aspects of management came very easily to him.

It was natural that he would win many honours and prizes. Two that stand out are: Best Computer Manager awarded by Information Computing Technology.

The next one was even bigger: Best Banker in Kenya award by the Bankers Association in Kenya. I think he had to go to London to collect it. It was a proud moment for family and friends alike. Peter loved to travel and two of his favourite destinations were Rome and Australia.

With all his knowledge in banking, it is little wonder that Peter specialised in start-ups. He opened the Trade Bank for a group of Israeli bankers and became their operations manager. He quickly became the "go to" man for any problems.

Next he joined the Kenya South Africa Association (Kensa) as operations manager. Kensa assisted South African businessmen to familiarise Kenyans with their products and business opportunities as well as learning about business opportunities in Kenya. He remained there for a while Operations Manager.

Next he opened the EuroBank where he began as Operations Manager and moved to Managing Foreign Exchange. Most business clients would seek Peter out for advice and solutions both in banking, corporate strategies, investment analysis, growth forecasting, infrastructure regulations, the stock market etc etc. Peter had indeed become a corporate high flyer.

When friends needed help in financial crises, he would drop everything and rush to help them.

For someone so intensely involved with his work, it is no wonder that Peter was something of a work-a-holic, often coming home late in the early hours of the morning.

Ironically, it was banking that caused you the greatest hurt. You spent the last 10 years attending court almost every month but no evidence against you was every presented. We always knew you were completely innocent.

# Memories of My l'il brother Peter

Cyprian Fernandes

At the outset I would like to thank my brother Johnny and his wife Matilda for a making a marathon journey from San Francisco to be here to bid Peter Farewell. I would also like to thank anyone else who has travelled from afar. As well, we will all remain eternally grateful for your prayers, the masses you have offered, your words of comfort and for the smallest kindness you may have shown my brother Peter while he was with us.

Perhaps the greatest compliment we can offer the memory of my brother Peter was posted on Facebook by his daughter Jenipet:

Thank you for being a Great Dad, a Great Husband and a loving Grandfather who devoted his time to his family at every opportunity. We were so blessed to have you. And yet you did your job and it was done with honour. You would drop everything when friends or family needed help. Most of all I will surely miss my confidant, my loving father. I will not say goodbye but will look forward to meeting you again. I know you will be watching us and smiling from Heaven. Jenipet.

In a few words Jenipet says it all because that exactly how my brother would want to be remembered. Nothing more.

However, I will attempt to paint a picture of Peter some of you did not know.

You slipped away into the silence of the night and when the sad dawn arrived grieving with the news the devastation spread around the world to your brothers and sisters and their families, and your many friends. You will be missed by your nephews and nieces: Lee-John (Sonia), Lou-Allan (Hilary), Maryanne, Andi (Jay), Leon, Carl, Michael, John-Paul, Priscilla, and their families. You spent your final hours with the people you loved most: Jenny, Jenipet, Errol and your beloved grandchildren, Anicia,

Ashley and Ethan. Ethan asked you dress up as Santa on your final Christmas Day and you did it with such a lot of fun and laughter. The children will never forget that.

We are left shaking our heads, disbelief that the unthinkable has happened. We are numbed into silence by the Lord's wisdom. He wanted you come to His peace, away from the pain and suffering you endured these past 10 years without a hint of regret or complaint but always with that wonderful smile that melted so many hearts. So while the world slept, you quietly went to Our Lord. Few are given this great gift.

Didn't we speak just eight days ago when you tried to get me to come to Nairobi. "There is nothing to fear, Nairobi is safe," you told me. And I said, perhaps in the New Year. You seemed like a man with a new lease of life. You were renovating your home and so proud about how it was turning out. We said goodbye to each other in the happiness that we had talked and the promise of a meeting in Nairobi in the not too distant future. Did you know that would be the last time we would be talking to each other? At least I will have the memory of that to cherish me forever.

Peter was the little brother who followed my shadow wherever I went and whatever I did. There were those wonderful fishing trips all over Kenya and that unforgettable episode at Stoney Athi. The car that was bringing the guys who had left Nairobi after work got bogged down in heavy rain. We had already left in the morning to set up camp, put the goats on spit and the beer on ice.

In the blackest of nights, with the heavy rain pelting down, you ran more than the distance of the marathon to make your way to the camp and bring them rescue. You ran virtually blind and on instinct. And yet you never made a big deal of it and did not want anyone to fuss over you. With so much wildlife in the area it was certainly a very dangerous undertaking.

Then there was that day when we fishing for bass in Athi River and you accidentally got a fish hook stuck in your ear and you did not even flinch. The 60s were a happy time in Kenya with lots of parties, picnics, dances, hops and plenty of sport. You had a ball with your classmates.

You became a read-a-holic. We each used to read between three and four books a day. We read until the early hours of the morning and were eventually chucked out of the front room, the kitchen, the bathroom and eventually read by street light. I was fascinated with words, especially long words. While loved reading, it was numbers and all the different ways you could use them that captured your imagination.

We also shared a love of music and movies. You were always a fashionable kid with a great love of Italian suits. When you did make the rare speech, it was always a treasure to behold. You were blessed with a terrific sense of wit and humour and made everyone laugh heartily.

That was typical of you. You were generous to a fault and ready to help anyone who needed a hand. You loved your mother and father, your brothers (Cyprian (the late Rufy), the late Hippol (Philomena) and Johnny (Matilda) and sisters (Flora (Harold) and Rose (Gary)), with a love that was uncompromising. You showered Flora and Rose with gifts galore. In later years, Flora would dedicate her life towards helping you cope with the trials and tribulations that life challenged you with. You formed a special bond with your brother Johnny and his wife Matilda. When my daughter Andi was born, you were the natural godfather and you spoilt her rotten. When we lived in Westlands, you

were the perfect little brother who was there for my late wife Rufy while I travelled the world in search of the truth.

But you had enough goodness and greatness in you to save your special love for Jenny, and Jenipet and the grandkids, Anicia, Ashley and Ethan. You lived for them. You taught them to read, write and you got them to know the wonders of the world. You saw far into their future and you did everything you could to prepare them for it. Your every waking moment was dedicated to their happiness and welfare. In recent years, they were the most important people in your life and rightly so. You also found in Errol a worthy son and you admired and respected him beyond words. It is God's special gift that you spent your last moments with the people you loved.

But it was Jenny who stole your heart one New Year's Eve in Goa. Intoxicated with the both the flavour and spirit of Goa, you danced with this girl you thought was the most beautiful in all of Goa. To say that you were smitten is an understatement. Problem was, you could not for the life of you remember who she was the next day. You knew you had met the girl of your dreams, but who the heck and where the heck was she. You brought all your detective skills in action, found her, charmed her and eventually married her. For the rest of your life, she was the only woman for you. You were completely loyal to her. You confided in her. You trusted her and you loved even though life was not always smooth. Jenny will never forget you.

You told me once that the greatest moment in your life came when you held Jenipet for the first time. You were absolutely blown away by the miracle of life you held in your arms and you thanked God for the rest of the days of your life for the gift of your daughter. From that first moment you dedicated every second of your life to Jenipet. It was your love that made Jenipet into the beautiful person she is today.

There was another moment that I will never forget. The day you told me, a few days after finishing school, that you had got a job in a bank. You were truly proud of your humble achievement. From that day you began 35 year love story with banking.

Life was not always a bed of roses. You had some tough challenges but throughout all the hard times you were forever the optimist and in your darkest times you still managed a smile. After all, you had your God in your corner. Your faith was your saviour.

The Railway Goan Institute is almost no more. It lives in the fading memories of a generation that is rapidly vanishing. You, along with your gang from school, were member of the Railway Institute. As well as the concert for the jubilee celebrations, we made a lot of everlasting memories. Later you moved to Nairobi Goan Institute.

You learnt the love of horses and horse betting from your mother. As a very young girl, Jenipet would take her grandma to Brighton and help her place small bets. Although she could not read or write, your mother had a wonderful instinct for winners. You owned two horses and regularly went to the racecourse. You did that from a very young age.

You also like to make a minor contribution to economic welfare of international casinos by dropping a shilling or two.

You were a generous supporter of that wonderful organisation, the Goan Welfare Society and the Goan Institute. You used to play darts and snooker and sponsored cricket, soccer and other events. You were also a member of the Goan Gymkhana and have many friends who remember you well there.

As I said reading was your great love. You read the local papers and financial press every morning and you infused your grandchildren with a love for the crosswords. You would spend hours sitting with them doing crosswords and playing word games.

As I said your God is with you. You were a deeply religious man who prayed devotedly every day for at least an hour or two. You spent a lot of time talking to Father Lewis. You were at peace with God.

Little brother, everyone who knew and loved you, will miss you forever. I will never forget you

---