

# JACK FERNANDES – HIS LAST CURTAIN CALL



Jack Fernandes was born in Cansaulim, Goa on 13th August 1933 and died in Nairobi, Kenya on 29 April 2015. Loving husband of the late Olga Fernandes, beloved father of Ian and Elaine; father-in-law of Paloma and Vernon; adoring grandfather to Georgia, Kayleigh, Kayla and Aiden. The funeral service was on Saturday 2nd May, 2015 at the Consolata Shrine, Westlands, Nairobi.

## **Eulogy delivered at the Funeral by his son, Ian Fernandes:**

More often than not, when a relative or close friend comes up to eulogize the deceased, you expect to learn something new about their life and times. However, that may not be the case for Mr. Jack Fernandes, my father, your friend, the tiatrist and most importantly an amiable icon of the Goan Community.

From the hundreds of emails, visits and phone calls we have received, from Kenya and the world-over, it was apparent his popularity and openness ensured so many knew so much about him and the wonderful life he lived.

I am sure, these last few days, having heard of his demise, many of you had fond recollections of Jack and I can guarantee you, it brought a smile to your face. Yes, that was the sort of person he was. Always jovial, always smiling, always comical yet always gentle.

So, whereas we may not learn something new perhaps we can spend a few moments reminiscing the good times we shared with Jack, my father.

Joaquim Vincent Fernandes was born on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1933, in the village of Cansaulim Goa to Pedro and Angelina Fernandes. He was the second last in his family of three sisters and one brother.

Joaquim grew up to be a handsome, sporty and talented youngster. In his young age his flair for acting and singing emerged and it was not long before, as a young 9-year-old, he would grace the stage at many concerts in Goa.

In 1952, aged 19, he travelled from Goa to Kenya to join his father who was on a working assignment in Mombasa. He came by steamer and during the long 17-day journey, upon the insistence of many, he was requested to sing for the guests during dinner. As if that were not enough, he would then be requested to go from cabin to cabin, to provide similar entertainment.

Within days of reaching Mombasa, he was called on to perform at his first Konkani concert in Kenya. It was here that he acquired the stage name JACK, a name that then stuck for the rest of his life.

Not only was he a talented entertainer he was a prominent sportsman and it was not long before the Boy-from-Goa was winning most of the sprint events at the athletics meetings. He would later-on be part of a formidable 4x 100 relay team, that included the legendary Seraphino Antao - the first Kenyan to ever win a Gold Medal at the Commonwealth Games. His talents were also found on the football field where his speed and trickery earned him a place as the right-winger on the Coast Select team.



Jack worked for the Kenya Post and Telecommunications at the telephone sales section. His afternoons were spent on the sports field and his evenings were spent on stage. To supplement his singing talents, he took up drumming and was part of the popular band known as The Amigos, who performed at many prominent Mombasa Clubs. Jack, continued drumming until he was 80 and we all, will miss seeing him, in the choir, on his drum-kit at masses celebrated by the Goan community, in Nairobi.

Dad would always tell me that his salary went straight to the bank, and the money he earned through music ensured he led a comfortable life. He would save enough to travel back occasionally to his beloved Goa.

In the 1960's dad was posted to Nakuru and it was here that he met my mum, Olga Fernandes. In 1965 they were married in Nairobi. Now, most of you know that if Dad was known for his sporting and acting talents, my mum was renowned for her kindness and compassion. Through her deeds she touched and left a lasting impression on many. My sister Elaine and I are blessed to have such wonderful parents.

Having moved to Nairobi, Jack the Tiatrist was quickly assimilated into the Management Committee of the Goan Institute, Nairobi. He served in various capacities including Dramatics Secretary, Catering Treasurer and Social Secretary. The GI was always a big part of dad's life. He currently holds the record of having served on the GI Management for no less than 18 terms. During most of this time he worked at the Nairobi Hospital where he served as Chief Cashier for 23 years.

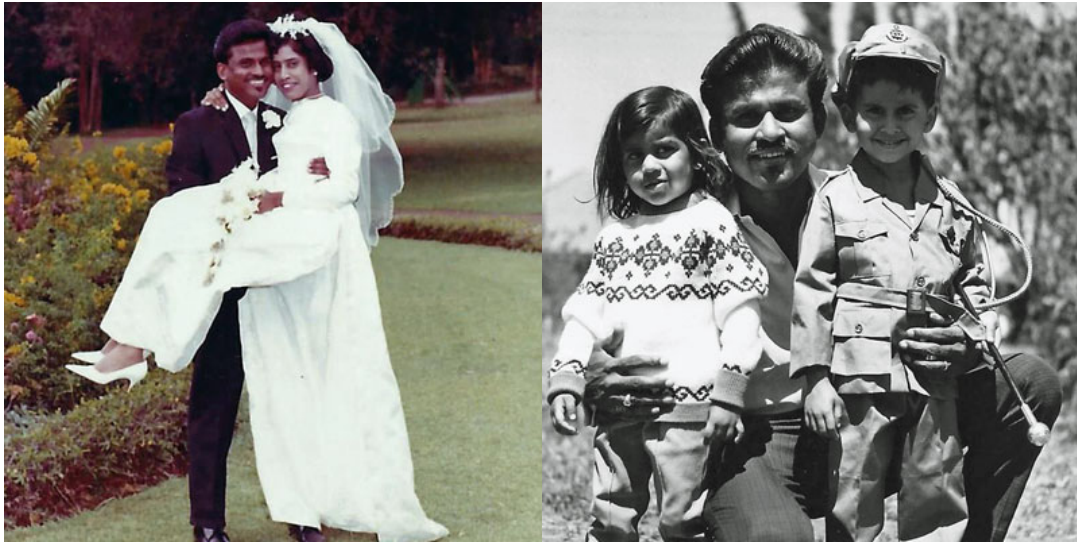
Dad loved singing; our home was always filled with music. However, it was not a radio or a CD player, it was always Dad singing or whistling. His tunes would range from Fat's Domino's Blue Berry Hill to Lorna's Tuzo Mog ... the variety was endless



Jumping Jack, as he was affectionately known, had the enviable distinction of either signing or acting in every Goan Theatrical production in Nairobi over the last 50 years. He only had to walk onto the stage and the audience would be laughing. He composed hilarious songs and his comical antics always had the audiences in stitches. In 1978, performing at the Goan Institute, having just sung his own composition Kung-Fu Fighting, the audience could not have enough. With the repeated shouts of “Encore, encore!!” the hundreds gathered did not let the next act go on, until he came back on stage for a repeat performance. It did not stop there; he had to perform the song SEVEN times before the rest of the concert could continue.

I was only 11 years old and after most of his performances I would often run backstage to carry his small suitcase and walk alongside him as he came out. As many would run up to congratulate him I would ensure I was right beside him so that all would know that I was his son. I was extremely proud of my father.

In 1990, after my mum passed away, dad was a different man. He took it upon himself to look after Elaine and myself. As many of you know Mum had a gift in cooking but while she was alive Dad would never step into the kitchen. After she passed on, he took it upon himself to perfect his culinary skills and ensure that there always was a tasty meal on our table. He took it upon himself to ensure Elaine and I were always comfortable.



Thereafter as years went by, it was our turn to look after Dad. If the first part of his life was basking in his own fame, then he lived the next through his children and later on his grandchildren. He always took a keen interest in what Elaine and I did, but never interfered in the choices we made. My Dad was so proud of our achievements and as Elaine will testify.... especially mine. Every-time I mentioned that I got a promotion or an award, there was this special glint in his eyes. Seeing how much it meant to him was enough to make me want to go further and further. I will unashamedly admit that his pride and joy drove me to getting to where I am today.

Many of you may have probably noticed, my Dad worshipped me. Being in the media business, you do get the benefit of having appointments and photographs published prominently in the newspaper. Whenever this would happen, Dad would take the copy of the newspaper and go out and tell the whole world. From watchman to taxi-driver, he would point to the photograph and say you see this man ... he is my son. Yes, the tables had turned from the time I was 11. Then, I was proud to be his son ... now he was so proud to be my dad.

You would also have noticed that Dad could never sit in one place; the title Jumping Jack suited him. If it were a feast or a dance he would always be the first on the dance floor. He would waltz with the old, do the chacha with the not-so-old and he would boogie with the young. Dad loved fishing and it wasn't just the sport – he loved eating the fish he caught. If he were going fishing he would not sleep the previous night. He would then come home and immediately deep fry the Tilapia till it was crisp. He would go on to eat it, and not a bone would be left.

Dad always found a way to keep himself occupied, be it horse racing, playing Bingo or watching a Man Utd. match. He was a die-hard Man U fan. It was tradition for both of us to watch every game together with our United shirts on. Watching a Man U game will never be the same for me.

Dad was very keen about his appearance, his hair had to be perfectly brushed, his moustache perfectly trimmed. Besides his hair greying, dad never seemed to age. Many would say that he looked the same 50 years ago... and that made him very proud. Meeting somebody for the first time he would often ask "How old do you think I am" and when they replied 68-69, he would smugly say "Actually, I am 81 years old". He ensured he remained fit and although aged 81, he would do a 3km brisk walk every single day.

His energy levels, his smile, his laughter were the envy of many. He lived life to its fullest and it is no wonder that many were shocked on Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup> April when hearing he had passed on. Many can still not believe he is with us no more. The fall he had in December, while on holiday in Goa, unfortunately got the better of him and over the last 4 months, he was never fully himself. We however accept God's will and thank God for the amazing life of Jack Fernandes. He had a blessed life and lived it for 81 years. There can be no regret. I am sure he is now with his friends of yesteryear, but most importantly back with the love of his life... my mum Olga.

Dad's absence will live a huge hole in our lives. My wife, Paloma treated and looked after Jacko, like her own and this is something Elaine and I are extremely grateful for. Georgia and Kayleigh will miss their Papa Jack who dropped them to school every morning. You all gathered here, will miss a warm and genuine friend who had the uncanny ability to put a smile on everyone's face.

So today dear friends as we celebrate his life and as he takes his final curtain call, I hope you don't mind if I ask you to do something that you have probably done before. Something you did, many a time, after he sang and danced and after he made you laugh.

Ladies and Gentleman for the very last time, please put your hands together for Jack Fernandes.

Mr Jack Fernandes ... Dad ... may you rest in eternal peace ... till we meet again.