

## Speech by Commodore Sarosh Karani – at the Renaming of the Mandwa Club House.....

### DEDICATION OF CLUB HOUSE

On behalf of the Bombay Sailing Association, I welcome Jeanne, Nadina, Nadish, Larissa, Taron, members of the BSA and friends of Kerse Naoroji on this lovely Saturday afternoon to dedicate the Club House in honour of a man, whose name is synonymous with that of Bombay Sailing Association and Mandwa.

- Much has been said about his passion for sailing and have heard the many humorous anecdotes of the many sailing expeditions that Kerse undertook in the company of Da Silva, Adi Unwalla and others. However, I doubt whether we are acquainted with Kerse's absolute and complete devotion and commitment to BSA and his most favorite place of residence --- Mandwa. It is for these very reasons, that the Managing Committee of BSA thought it fit to dedicate this Clubhouse, as the Kerse Naoroji Clubhouse, as a token of it's appreciation of what he did for BSA.
- To know Kerse and his contribution to the BSA and Mandwa, I turned to the well-chronicled minutes, of the proceedings of the BSA since 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1951, which most probably would have been drafted by him. Though many minutes are damaged over the ages, there is enough on hand to throw light on Kerse, the legend.
- The Managing Committee of that day included Kerse as a member , along with another gentleman Mr. Mario Levi, who happened to be the Trustee and Hon. Treasurer of the BSA at that time and a person who along with Kerse played a significant role in the history of BSA.
- The Association was established in 1892, and it did not have all the property which we see and enjoy today. It functioned from leased premises. Whenever an opportunity came along and the price was right, BSA went on to acquire a property.
- One such opportunity came along in Nov'51, when the Managing Committee went on to acquire the property of one Mr. Klein for Rs. 4000/- in spite of the fact that it just did not have the money to buy the property. So the Managing Committee decided to take a bank overdraft of Rs.5000/- from the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, on the personal guarantee of the then Trustee and Hon. Treasurer Mr. M. Levi and Cmdr. Mr. D. S. Cowan.
- The present land on which the BSA Clubhouse stands, was originally owned by one Ms. Tehmina Umrigar, who had purchased the lands sometime in May 1945. BSA was desperately in need of a shack which it could call a clubhouse. Kerse managed to convince Ms. Themina , to rent the entire property of 7 acres and 28 gunthas, to the BSA, along with various bungalows, out houses, power houses and all furniture fittings, appliances etc for a sum of Rs.130/- per month. She appointed the Trustee

of BSA, Mario Levi, a good friend of her family, as her agent to look after her interest.

- As time went by, Ms. Tehmina Umrigar was on the lookout for a buyer and Kerse suggested to Levi, that he should approach her, as their families were known to each other.
- Sometime in 1960, Levi purchased the entire property from Tehmina Umrigar for a princely sum of Rs.25,000/- and rented the same on similar terms as that of Tehmina i.e at Rs.130/- per month to the BSA. Unfortunately for Mario and his wife, they were not agriculturists, as per the then statute and it was Kerse, who suggested that BSA should buy the said lands in "as is where is" condition. Mario sold the lands to BSA for a sum of Rs.25,000/- i.e the same price at which he had purchased the lands. The bond of friendship between Kerse and Mario and their love and commitment for BSA, would be difficult to replicate in these days. This then, is Kerse's contribution to the BSA, for which every member of the BSA would ever be grateful !! Unlike most Clubs of Bombay, which are located on lands leased from the Government or local bodies, BSA is proudly situated on its own lands.
- In 1984, the Clubhouse needed extensive repairs, but then as is now, the BSA, had no funds to carry out the repairs. So Kerse came up with an idea that the members of the Committee should provide an interest free loan of Rs.10000/-, which most did contribute. The Clubhouse, that we as members enjoy today and the art on the walls and the birds we see today, is the genius of Adi Unwala, a contemporary of Kerse. He was rightly conferred with Hon membership for life, by the then Managing Committee.
- Another interesting fact that came to light, is that BSA never had a Patron, till such time as Kerse decided to invite the most distinguished Governor of Maharashtra Shri Ali Yavar Jung , who accepted the invitation. It was a proud moment for BSA , which just a decade back, did not even have a Clubhouse, of it's own..
- If there was a reason for him to be so committed to the BSA, **was** his love for Mandwa and it's inhabitants, as is evident from the reading of the several minutes .
  - In 1977, at the request of the Collector ,he raised funds to build huts for the villagers.
  - In 1980, he galvanized the MC to reconstruct a village school at Rahtla Village.
  - In 1985 he put in all efforts to get piped water to 65 villages in and around Mandwa.
  - In 1984, he ensured that every member of the Managing Committee contributed Rs.5000/- per member to the Rewas Regional Tap Water Scheme.
  - Again in 1984, he persuaded the top brass of the Indian Navy, to help clean up the pollution on Mandwa Beach.

Kerse became the Hon. Secretary of the Association sometime in May 1953, a position which he

held for over a period of 40 years for and upto 1992. In 1966 he was elected the Commodore of the Association and held that place of office till 1992. He was elected Trustee for life in 1975 which he held till the very last day.

One could go on and on, for Kerse was no ordinary mortal – he was a Legend and I doubt whether there can be another who can fit in to the Sheperd's shoes.

- Thank you Kerse.