

## My recollections SLBC engineering 1961-1981

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I wish to record the incidents that triggered my mind, as valued information from my memory of 20 years at the Department of Broadcasting and SLBC. Overall it was a very happy working environment we had, I valued every day.

I highlight a story that is worthwhile for anyone to remember having heard *“the past stories of SLBC”*

In 1962, Diyagama MW Construction station we found one insulator of a self supporting mast which was designated to radiate 870 KHz, The Insulation was very low. We decided to change the insulator. However that was a calculated risk exercise. Why I refer this as a risk exercise, “Once an attempt of this nature in a South African Broadcasting station, Mast collapsed killing two people involved”

Mr. Buell showed this Information in a Broadcasting Journal to us .Mr. Buell, Mr.Bharathi, Mr. RAG Perera and me planned out the strategy of operation to remove the faulty insulator and to replace. There was a team of ten staff members selected.

I opted to check the alignments and wind sway with the help of a theodolite. Three heavy duty pneumatic supporters (Jack) and were anchored firmly perfectly 120 degree positions in the mast base. Commands for jack operations were given by Mr. Buell, Walkie-Talkie was in my hand to inform the wind sway if noted with theodolite observation.

A day in February 1963, time was around 1530, no wind, no rain. In a quick 10 minutes job was done. We all were jubilant.We celebrated it with plain tea and Ginger biscuits. No one knew, no one recognized, no one congratulated us. This was typical way of treating for the engineering in the Department of Broadcasting In 1964.We commissioned the station with “Sandya Sevaya” on 1030 kHz in April 1963. There was an organized function in the head office at Torrington Square in the studio six to mark the inauguration of” Sandya Sevaya”. It was well attended function from the program that we heard over the radio but no engineering personnel were invited. The officers on duty at that day at the Transmitting Station in Diyagama were Mr.Bharathi, Mr.M.K Perera, and Mr.R.A.P.G. Perera, Mr.Pius Maladeniya and Myself

Mr. Buell did the first log book entry and signed and closed the entry with the term of *“No outages”*

*Incidentally program for Diyagama Transmission was sent via a FM service from Colombo.*

I must state there was an article in **Lanka Deepa News paper in April 1963**, one full page account of MW Transmitters Diyagama with a sizeable Photograph of Mr.Bharathi and Myself with the transmitters under the Caption “*Diyagamin Guwanata*”.

As time proceeded we install six transmitters 10 KW 1+1/ 3-20 KW 25 KW 1+1/ 50 KW  
25 KW 1

All Philips transmitters were installed without any foreign experts. Fabrication of 50 kW combining unit was a master piece of radio engineering then

Mr. Buell passed away without any one recognizing these great engineering feats accomplished under his able leadership.

So I decided to make a film about “Diyagama Transmitters and Mr. Buell”.

### **SLBC TRAINING INSTITUTE (1970-1979)**

I record few of my memories associate with the Training Institute during my service period of 10 years at the training institute. It was a total British (B.B.C) gifted project for programme and Engineering Training. Engineering training was started with Mr.John Hunt (B.B.C expert).Programme training started by Mr. Stuart Wavell. Mr. Hunt took over training institute and gradually updated to be of a standard comparable to any Training Institute in this region. When I was selected for the training institute I was extremely happy for the environment that was prevailing. Mr. John Hunt the Principal Officer who outlined the infrastructure, training contents of courses etc etc was a very able and dedicated engineer with a thorough training methodology.

When he left Mrs.Sumi Munasinghe was recruited. After two years she left Mr.Shanthi Fonseka was associated as the engineer.

Mr.V. Kandaraja and Mr. Sunil Kodithuwakku were the technical assistants of the Training Institute. During the (1970-1979) it was a successful Training Institute we maintained. We had Moratuwa, Peradaniya and Kalaniya universities collaboration in training programs. We had in house training programs and special projects undertaken such as fabrication of special equipment, testing and calibration of field strength meters and measuring equipment.

We had high quality testing equipment for sound level measurements (B&K).Sufficient test equipment were available for conducting training courses full audio chain, full broad cast RF chain. We had two sound studios for training engineering staff and programme staff.

Continuing British gifts – (Heath kit) equipment were coming in batches for anyone to try to be very thorough with electronics. For an example- If an officer undertakes to assemble a Heath Kit RF signal generator in kit form, you have to simply follow assembling instructions, Wiring procedure, commissioning and test. You have mastered that family of equipment. It is so enriching for people to understand technology at broadcasting engineering level.

When the ITN taken over by the Ministry of Broadcasting SLBC training Institute was converted as a studio center for ITN. In a way SLBC was the No one contributor for TV broadcasting in Sri Lanka.Our Hon. Minister Sarath Amunugama was the Secretary of the Information Ministry then. All seniors who were nominated for television had their basic exposure at the SLBC Training Institute.

We converted two training Studios to function as presentations studios. Mr D.T.L .Guruge appointed me as the Engineer of operations for ITN further to my duties as the Engineer in charge in Training.

In 1978 we organized the Training Institute for TV production and training Programs with the association of AIBD Kaulalampur, Malaysia.

**SLBC should proud to proclaim that SLBC was the activity center for originating television in Sri Lanka.**

I put this on record with responsibility & authority as SLRC operations started only after ITN operations was successfully handled by the *SLBC Training Institute Trained Officers in 1978 onwards.*