Lost & Found: A 1984 photo reappears to revive memories

Year: 1984  
Location: Plant No. 3 (Typewriter Plant), Godrej & Boyce Mfg. Co. Ltd.  
The Scene: Final Mechanic, Danny Jalnawala pours over a Prima typewriter, listening intently to the sounds it makes while he tests the keys. His colleague, Mr. Gopal Shetty, stands a few paces behind him, watching him, “making fun of him for working so hard”.

Sooni Taraporevala, photographer and screenwriter, who recently curated an exhibition titled Parsis: The Zoroastrians of India: A Photographic Journey – a definitive work on the community, counts the photograph among her personal favourites. She was particularly tickled by Mr. Jalnawala who “was tuning the typewriter as a piano!”

The warm camaraderie of this photograph is a vivid window into factory life in all its vibrancy and diversity. Mr. Subhash Raut (left, foreground; sitting), a test-typist at the time does not recollect the day, but recognizes his colleagues - Final Mechanics, Polishers, Packers and Cover Fitters, who made up the Quality Control section in Final Assembly. Frozen in time, but lending a casual hum-drum to this factory scene are Querobino Fernandes, Mr. Lopez, Kalim Haider, Mr. Baig, Mr. Lad and Vinayak Karnik.

We are grateful to Mr. B S Wadiwala (Corp. P&A) for bringing the photograph to our notice and Mr. Raut (Prima) for helping us identify our former employees.

Godrej and the Indian Standard Institution (ISI)

Six files on the Indian Standard Institution (ISI) and Godrej’s involvement with the statutory body are now catalogued and ready for reference. The collection includes published Standard Specifications and correspondence regarding the formation and workings of sub-committees.

The Indian Standard Institution was set up by a resolution adopted by the Government in September 1946 - a time when the political awakening of the country was accompanied by the realization that industrialization on a large scale was to be an important corner stone of prosperity. Improvement in quality brought about by standardization was an obvious pre-requisite to success... contd. on pg.2
in industrialization. It was believed that “planned industry may be barren, if the manufacture of goods is not based on sound technical grounds and (fails to adhere to) uniform quality.”

Accordingly, ISI set up working groups and sub-committees that were assigned the task of drafting and finalising standards covering a wide array of items such as raw materials, equipments, manufacturing techniques and methods of testing and analysis. 111 of these standards finalised by ISI between 1951 and 1953 are available at Godrej Archives. These also include standards for items manufactured by Godrej such as Sliding Door bolts for use with padlocks and Toilet and Laundry soaps. Correspondence files in the collection reveal that Godrej & Boyce was invited to be part of sub-committees: Safes Sectional Committee and Doors, Windows & Building Furniture Sectional Committee (BDC 11) in particular. The papers filed away by company nominees S. F. Desai (also served as Chairman of BDC 11) and M. J. Jal map the entire process of drafting these standards.

Some important documents in this collection are: Drafts of Indian Standards for Burglar Resisting Safes; Constitution of ISI; Annual Reports, Style Manuals and Technical drawings

Tracing the Godrej history in the North East
A brief Report

Godrej Archives has often received queries about the intricacies of servicing the remote lands of the seven sister states of North Eastern India. That, coupled with our own inherent curiosity coaxed us into planning a trip to the region. We are happy to inform that a fairly clear picture of Godrej operations has now emerged following Oral History interviews conducted with dealers and senior employees familiar with the North-East.

Interactions with dealers such as the Agarwals, Mr. Sunil Kumar Banik, wholesale dealers of Tripura, Abhay Koly of New India Typewriter Co. and the Moodys of Pheonix Automobiles Sales & Services Ltd. shed a great deal of light on supply-chain management and the business repercussions of regional politics.

The Moodys, who set up a motor servicing establishment in 1928 and later diversified to include Godrej products, shared valuable documents such as Agreements, Dealership application formats and prevailing price lists. Their correspondence with Godrej from 1975, i.e. since they took on distributorship, gives an insight into the reasons behind appointing dealers in the region and the subsequent sub-dealer network established in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.

We also took this opportunity to meet with employees of Guwahati branch and trace it’s history through available documents. One of the files, a collection of circulars received by the branch, maps changes that were brought about in the over-all organization structure such as new appointments to senior management positions and transfers. Inauguration of new branches and showrooms from the 1980s can also be traced through this file.

New Material Received: Visitors’ Registers

“A most fascinating visit”, writes film star Ms.Jabeen Jalil about her trip to the Godrej Garden Industrial Township in September, 1959. The Godrej township in Vikhroli (Mumbai) with its manicured gardens and idealistic environment mesmerized many distinguished visitors like Indian Royals, educationists, ministers, ambassadors, Consul-Generals, Industrialists etc. Visiting in the early 1970s, Mr. Thomas J Bata of Bata shoes and himself a champion of company townships (Batanagar, Batapur, Batovany, Batawa) too referred to Vikhroli as an “impressive industrial organization”.

A compete list of visitors and their reactions, or Visitors’ Registers covering 40 years of the township (1955-1995), is now available at Godrej Archives.
New Advertisements in the collection

It’s a proud moment, when our efforts help build an archival collection that is diverse in terms of age and medium. When supporting information about existing material is unearthed, its cause for a double celebration. This is just what happened recently: not only did we receive a fresh collection of marketing collaterals of Godrej Storwel (above) from Kishore Dhar, we also came across copies of old advertisements accompanied by precise publication details. We now know that the Godrej Steel Almirah, Toilet Soaps and Tumbler padlocks ads (seen in green box, above) were published in June 1935, April 1946 and May 1950 respectively.

Drawings by international Safe Makers

While sifting through a section of our Manuscript collection, we made the happy discovery of blue-print technical drawings drafted by international safe makers in the 1930s.

One of the drawings gives details of ‘Renter’s Deposit Safe’ created by Milner’s Safe Company Ltd. in 1932, while another (see image) is a perspective sketch of a typical safe deposit installation for National Bank of Greece made by Britain’s first safe makers— John Tann Ltd. (est. in 1795).

Although the purpose behind procuring these is not documented, our hunch is that they were probably obtained by Godrej for a comparative analytical study.

Accession details:
Technical Drawings, MS08-01-419-114 (P.II)

The Godrej SYMPHONY 860
Help us get more info

Did you know that in the late 1980s Godrej & Boyce traded in computer hardware and one of the products it sold was the SYMPHONY RISC Workstation with an Intel 860 microprocessor? As there is a dearth of information regarding this particular venture (except for two product catalogues sent to us by Mr. Paresh Mistry), we invite you to share your knowledge and experience with Godrej Archives. Call us on 67964124/2014 or mail us at archives@godrej.com to help us solve this mystery.
SPG’s Picture Postcard Album

The images below show just a small variety of the different types of old picture postcards that Sohrab Godrej passionately collected. Stored neatly in an antique album, the collection is partly an outcome of his extensive travels and partly contributions made by friends and family. Scenic views (topographical), architectural marvels, cards of social history interest etc. make up this marvelous collection of more than 200 post cards.

Above: Johnson’s (London) Post Card Album No. S 376 with a holding capacity of 400 cards

Extreme Left: Warders of the Tower, popularly known as Beefeaters on their way to Church after Easter Sunday Parade

Left: The Clock Tower of Wendover printed by Raphael Tuck & Sons—’Art Publishers to Their Majesties The King & Queen’

Top Left: Aerial view of Hitler’s Reichessportfeld (Berlin)—1936 Olympic Games venue; Right: Reverse of the postcard

Top: Simla—View from the Cart Road

Left: The Bernese Oberland region of the Swiss Alps

The above is brought to you as part of the on-going Sohrab P Godrej Birth Centenary Celebrations.

We’d love to engage in a dialogue. Send us your feedback and comments to archives@godrej.com

Godrej Archives, Plant 19A, 6796-2014/ 4124