

EDITOR'S VIEW

An old-school journo with a good heart

MY FATHER died in January 2016.

Later that year I was appointed editor of the Daily News – the first time I changed jobs after his death.

When my dad was alive, I would call him whenever I took up a new position. I did so because I wanted his blessings. But I also looked forward to the reassurance that I knew he would give me.

"I'm still here," he would say. "You have nothing to lose."

October 2016 was therefore different. As I drove to the office to start the new job, I felt emotional and alone.

While driving, my phone rang. It was Farook Khan.

He had heard about my move to the Daily News, a title he had worked on, and called to wish me well.

"You have my support," he told me. "What else do you need?"

I will never know why Farook called me at that particular moment, but I do know that I am grateful he did. And ever since that day I think of Farook every time I drive on that stretch of road.

I never worked with him. By the time I joined POST as a young reporter, he had long left and was making himself a household name on the Daily News.

But I would see Farook in the building. You couldn't miss him. He had a presence that forced you to take notice. And even though we didn't work together, he always had something positive to say when we met.

In 2010 when I returned to newspapers and to Durban, Farook was one of the first people to call me and offer me his support. By then he had retired from full time work.

But Farook was always a journalist at heart. It was a profession that came naturally to him because he had a deep sense of justice. He was driven to make the world better, be it helping people or fighting a cause.

He would often try to rope me in on whatever his latest project was.

A few weeks ago, only days before he was admitted to hospital, Farook was pushing me to cover the story of a young lady who needed help to fulfil her dream.

That was Farook, always trying to do something to help someone else. And therein lies a lesson for all of us: Random words or acts of kindness may cost nothing but it will ensure our memory lives on long after we have gone.

The Quote

What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything?

VINCENT VAN GOGH
Source: www.mantelligence.com

Paying tribute to the legend that was Farook Khan

Youngster inspired by enigmatic and colourful journalist

AROUND the time of my 19th birthday in September 1980, I found myself recently kicked out of the University of Durban-Westville in the aftermath of student protests and trying to work out what to do with the rest of the year; indeed, the rest of my life.

My mother had let slip at one point that the news editor at POST was a former pupil of hers. I asked her to take me along to meet him.

The offices on the 5th floor of the Daily News Building at 85 Field Street were filled with desks and typewriters. (Computers were still two years in the future.)

A haze of cigarette smoke hung over the office. And sitting in the corner, at that stage still mostly clean-shaven, was a burly guy with a piercing gaze who quickly stubbed out his cigarette and pushed his ashtray away at the sight of my mother.

"Ma'am," he said with a bit of a bow and flourish as he stood up to greet her; clearly at heart still the schoolboy caught smoking by his teacher.

He then looked at me suspiciously.

"What are you looking at?" he said.

"You remind me of Peter Ustinov," I replied.

It was a true statement. In hindsight, now that I think about it, he was relatively young – just turned 36. But, he had the commanding voice and inquisitorial air of the actor who gave life to Agatha Christie's character Hercule Poirot in *Death on the Nile*. The distinctive moustache completed the picture.

Clearly disarmed and chuffed at the same time, Farook Khan gave a broad smile and indicated that I was now worthy of sitting down. He told my mother that he had taken a group of youngsters under his wing to teach them the basics of journalism. He was happy to add me to the list, which at the time comprised Ismail Suder, Jameela Hoosen, and Rashida Dhooma.

The following morning, he gave me a notebook and a pen and asked me to pull up a chair. He picked up random newspapers from a pile on his desk and began dissecting articles for me.

Lesson 1: "Every story must have a Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How," he began.

Lesson 2: "You have to put all of that into the first paragraph. That way, if they don't read more, they still have the story."

Lesson 3: "You have to learn to write an inverted pyramid; the most important information at the top, the least important at the bottom. That way, they can cut from

JUGGERNAUT



KANTHAN PILLAY

the bottom.

"Right, let's go..."

We headed two blocks down Field Street to Nufield Parkade where we got into his luminous green Chevrolet Rekord and he drove us to La Lucia Mall.

A crowd had gathered there to welcome film star Cameron Mitchell, at that time a celebrity in South Africa as a star of the television series *High Chaparral*.

"Take our your notebook," he said.

"Take notes."

We headed back to the office thereafter where he asked me to write the story. I had never used a typewriter before, but I picked at the keyboard with two fingers and after a half hour had put together something. I handed it over hopefully.

"No one is going to read this," Farook said.

"Remember that little boy he hugged?"

I did indeed. I sat watching as Farook's fingers flew across the typewriter keyboard and poured out the story of how a little boy had his day made because "Uncle Buck" gave him a hug.

The story appeared on the front page two days later. I was reluctant to take any credit for it, but Farook was insistent, pointing out that I had gathered the facts and he had just rearranged them into something readable. I earned my first pay cheque – R11.

I worked under Farook Khan for about a year from that day and every day was a learning experience.

He regaled us with tales of his adventures in the Grey Street Casbah and around the world. He had a well-thumbed contact book which was his constant companion and there seemed to be no end to the people he knew. Tina Turner was listed in his contact book, as was Muhammad Ali.

"Do you really know him?" I asked.

Ali had recently come out of retirement at the time and had been defeated by Larry Holmes. Farook responded by picking up the phone, asked the switchboard to connect us to the US, and spoke to Ali.

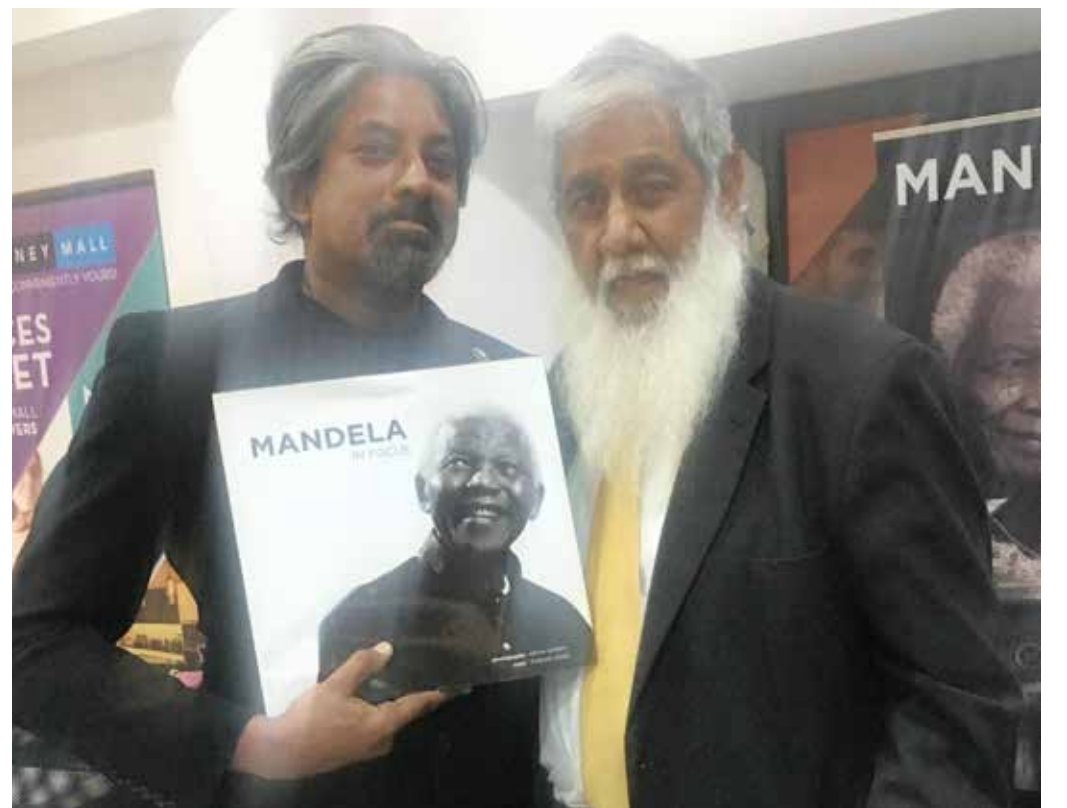
"I have some youngsters who want to say hello," Farook said, passing the phone to Rashida and then to me.

Farook had a repertoire of wisdom, which he would frequently quote.

"When legend becomes fact, you print



Farook Khan with Post staff in the 1980s.



Khan with Kanthan Pillay at a book launch. | Supplied

the legend, not the fact," was one such saying.

"As journalists, we should aim to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted," was another.

Our journey together was cut short too soon.

On holiday in Johannesburg, Farook suffered a mild heart attack. I caught a train up to Joburg to see him in hospital. He was in good spirits, but said he was being removed as news editor because management believed the stress would trigger another heart attack.

Farook left POST to join the Daily News not long after. At the Daily News, he became their most prolific reporter, writing with ease on every subject and many of those editors have since sung his praises.

For my part, inspired by Farook Khan, I went on to set up training programmes in every place I subsequently worked.

The eNews Journalism Training Programme at ETV and YFM's Y Academy have produced award-winning journalists and media stars. All of my lectures to each new class began with the words, "I am standing here today because Farook Khan did the same for me."

Srikanth is one of the names of Vishnu. Another name for Vishnu is Jagannath, "the unstoppable force", which gives us the modern word Juggernaut. Kanthan Pillay writes about understanding the unstoppable forces which shape our lives in technology, commerce, science and society.

Ink remained embedded in his veins

Veteran journalist and Miss India Pageant organiser, Farook Khan, 75, died in a Durban hospital on Thursday, after being diagnosed with colon cancer, and related complications. He was buried at the Brown's Avenue Cemetery in Sydenham, on Friday. Former colleague Brijlall Ramguthie shares some aspects of Khan's colourful life...

HE WAS larger than life. He had the gift of the gab and was a noted wordsmith, although he had the tendency to be over-descriptive at times.

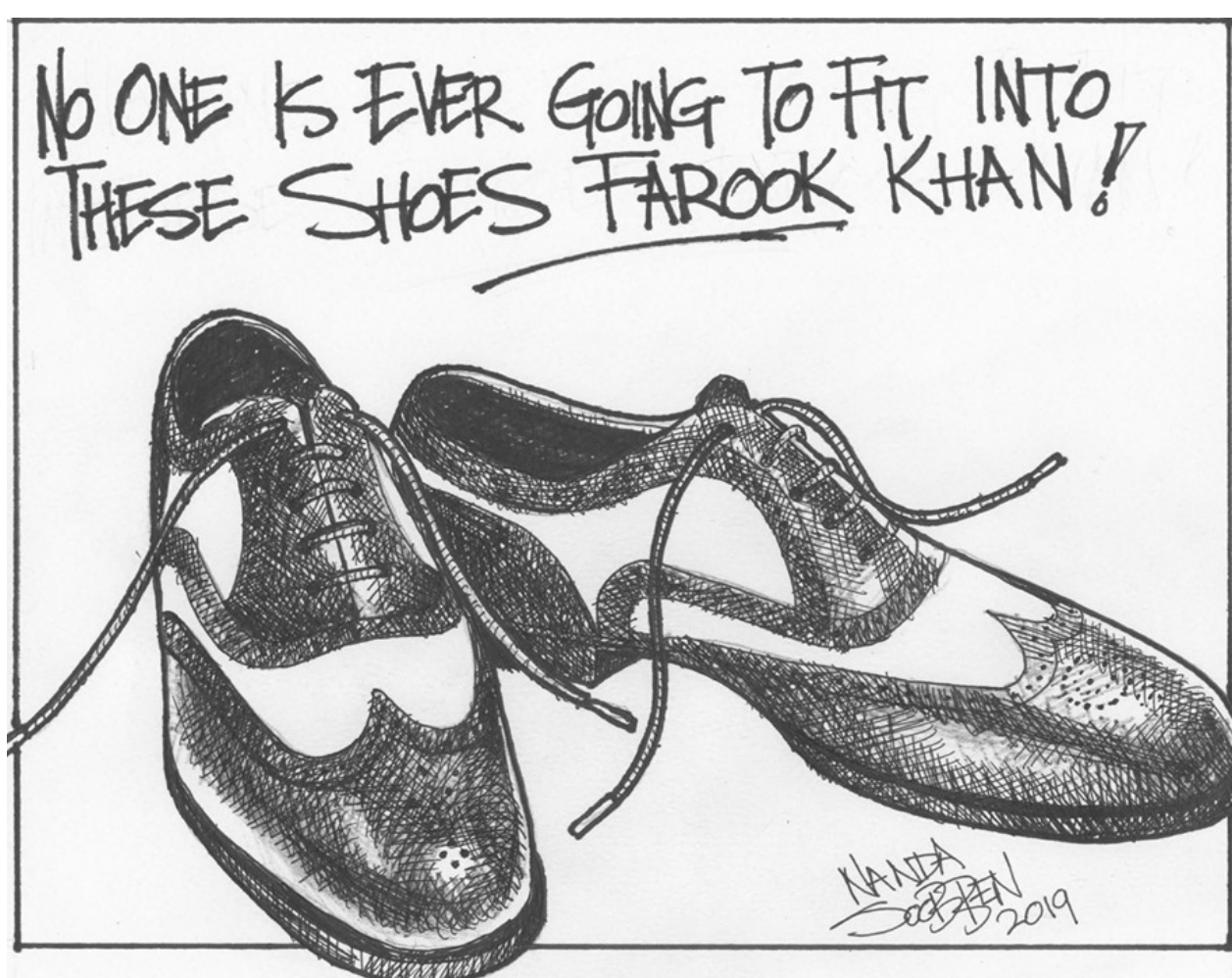
He also boasted a wide range of contacts, locally, nationally and internationally. He was the go-to colleague, when you needed a second opinion.

I first met the ebullient Mr Khan at the offices of the Golden City Post, later Post Natal, at Goodhope Centre in Queen Street, Durban, in the early '70s, I having joined this-then racy publication on April 1, 1969.

Farook had been redeployed from Johannesburg by our-then employer, Mr Jim Bailey, founder of the GCP group of newspapers, and Drum magazine.

It took this gentle giant just days to assimilate with the team under the editorship of Mr Bobby Harrypersadh, and we, Ranjith Kally, MS Roy, Deven Moodley (with whom Farook lodged initially in Carlisle Street) and freelancers Amos Ngoma and Bancroft Hlatshwayo, among others, soon gelled as a winning unit.

Farook was prolific when it came to churning out copy, many scoops among them, but it was his ability to pierce protocol that often left us baffled.



ARTIST Nanda Soobben's tribute cartoon to Farook Khan, who was known for two-tones. In his post on Facebook, Soobben referred to the veteran journalist as an 'encyclopedia of our history and a great friend and human being'.

He was not only good at name-dropping to get his way but counted Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Percy Sledge, and boxing champs Pierre Fourie and his idol, Muhammad Ali, aka Cassius Clay, as close friends.

He often found himself in Ali's and Fourie's corner, and when I once asked about his role, he said he was there as their spiritual guru.

Such were his persuasive powers that he once got former French rugby star Roger Bourgarel to dine with us at Mr Harrypersadh's Clare Estate home, and on another

occasion, Farook asked me to accompany him to the Royal Hotel, Durban, where, seemingly unannounced, he knocked on the door of West Indian cricketer, Sir Lawrence Rowe, here on a rebel tour in 1982-1983, for an interview, which a sheepish Rowe granted.

While Farook dabbled in other activities such as the Miss India pageant after retirement, the journo's ink remained embedded in his veins as he authored books, while trying to be a regular at the gym, where I often met him, the last, sadly, over six

months ago.

On a personal note, he and his late wife, Ayesha, were always willing hosts at their flat at 17 Yale Court, Randles Road, Sydenham.

It was also here that I freshened up before leaving for Kennedy Road, Clare Estate, one Friday in May 1970, to meet my prospective in-laws, chauffeured there by dear colleague Roy.

Needless to say both Ayesha and Farook peppered me with courting and marriage tips, and 49 years later, I remain as grateful as ever. Go well, dear brother Farook.

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