

Bikram Singh: A larger-than-life role

*C.R. Irani**

** Editor-in-Chief, The Statesman, New Delhi.*

The death occurred in Delhi on July 18 of Bikram Singh, who held key managerial positions in *The Statesman*, Delhi, after a prolonged illness. He was 78, and is survived by his wife and son. A large number of his friends and former colleagues attended the funeral at the Lodhi Road crematorium.

Belonging to a family connected with the Press, it was inevitable that he made his mark in newspaper management. But that came about only after a knee injury prevented from pursuing his first professional choice - a military career. For this he had been well equipped during his education at the Col. Brown's School and RIMC in Dehra Dun and the Aitcheson's Chief College, Lahore.

In a career with *The Statesman* that spanned several decades, Bikram Singh was witness to this newspaper's transition from British to Indian ownership, its editorial leadership leading it through difficult times, and eventually played a part in its developing a multistoreyed building that reflected the ambience of its old red-brick edifice.

He loved an "outdoors" life. A top class cricketer he played for his state in the Ranji Trophy and then, like so many others, switched from a willow blade to hickory shaft and the golf greens. He was also an avid *shikari*, and a motoring enthusiast.

Never one to remain in the background, he was ever ready to associate himself with the organisational aspects of the interests he pursued. Hence he became the prime mover of The Statesman Vintage & Classic Car Rally in the capital and the secretary of the Vintage Car Club of India.

Similarly, he did more than enough to be elected, and re-elected the President of the Delhi Golf Club and conducted its jubilee celebrations with much success. He was also involved with the affairs of the Delhi State Rifle Association.

Despite all that he found time, for several years, to contribute Shikar Notes and Motoring Notes to the columns of this paper, also serving as the golf correspondent of *The Statesman*.

CRI adds: Bikram Singh was already in charge of the Circulation Department of *The Statesman* in Delhi when I joined the paper in 1968. He went on to become Advertisement Manager, but always filled a larger than life role for the organisation he loved so well. No chief executive could wish for a more dedicated colleague devoted the company's interests at all times and in all situations. He also ran The Statesman Vintage Car Rally as Secretary until ill health forced him to ask to be relieved of the position. He was President of the Delhi Golf Club and was very well known in Delhi's social circles. His genial personality was a comfort when times were bad and challenges had to be met.

The Statesman's landmark new building in Delhi owes its beginning to him; it was way back in 1980 that Bikram first came to me with the proposal and set the ball rolling. That it took 21 years to complete the project was not his fault; it was Rajiv Gandhi's animosity towards what the paper stood for and his determination to punish us for resisting his outrageous demands that we not expose his partners in white-collar crimes, that required us to go repeatedly to the Delhi High Court and finally to the Supreme Court for a writ of mandamus commanding the authorities to approve *The Statesman*'s building plans.

Bikram's association with *The Statesman* and friendship with me and my family continued long after he retired from service and lasted till his death. Never did he seek to exploit this relationship; he was a gentleman to his fingertips and never have I heard a harsh word about him from any quarter. He belonged to that rare breed of men who commanded affection and respect from all who came in contact with him. I join in paying tribute to his memory.



[Courtesy: *The Statesman*]