

TRIBUTE TO A HEAD MASTER-HAYMAN OF GURUTALAWA

1) To pay tribute to one whose sense of sacrifice and generosity was endless is no easy task. The depth or reach of the pockets in his khaki shorts was proverbial. So was his commitment to Gurutalawa and the hundreds of students he moulded and nurtured to be responsible citizens in Society. He did reach deep in to his pockets in order to give us all he had. He took away nothing when he left Sri Lanka. The standards and traditions created, maintained and handed down live on. Truly he lives in the hearts and minds of all who passed through him. No Tribute can therefore do justice to the greatest of Head Masters who created at one time the best boarding school not only in all Sri Lanka but in the whole of Asia.

2) Dr. Hayman thought teaching was his vocation. He was sent by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to Sri Lanka. His services were first sought by Trinity College, Kandy. He had however joined the staff of S.Thomas College, Mt. Lavinia in 1929. He was a fine Maths and Physics Teacher. He involved himself fully in the life of the College. He became a great House Master. He was reputed for his generosity. He took a keen interest in Scouting and was the Master in Charge. It was however in Swimming that he made his special contribution to sports in Sri Lanka. In the early thirties there weren't many swimming pools. Dr. Hayman stepped in and gifted the school with a superb Swimming Pool, the first of its kind in a school. He pioneered Swimming and Life Saving in Sri Lanka. Generations of Thomians and others owe him an immense debt of gratitude for having learned to swim. He went further. The Fives Courts, towards the Library, the prizes, the dormitories etc. nobody knows the exact amount. "Thalassa" belonged to him. He gave it to College in 1963 for a price paid by him 30 years before.

3) He was appointed Sub Warden in 1935. In 1942, when the College split up, he was appointed Head Master at Gurutalawa. He pioneered the foundation of an independent school belonging to the Thomian Family with 56 boys. Gurutalawa also benefited from his generosity. The Swimming Pool and the Dormitories are some. Keble House and the land attached to it were his parting gifts. Dr. Hayman is supposed to have opined that the value of a gift lay in how the recipient made use of it. One wonders what Dr. Hayman's thoughts would be if he saw the campus today.

4) According to Professor C C De Silva, a one-time member of the College Board of Governors, "No single man has done so much or given so generously both materially and intellectually to S.Thomas' College or to any other school for that matter in Ceylon at any time of her long history. I think I can pronounce that as an indisputable, incontrovertible statement of fact." On the memorial tablet of the Science Laboratory which was named after him are inscribed the following words " to spend and be spent in the service of others is his greatest privilege."

5) In 1964, the M B E was conferred on Dr. R L Hayman by the Queen. His name appeared in the New Year Honours list. Truly Dr. Hayman, Tea & Cricket may be considered Britain's greatest gifts to Sri Lanka.

6) In 1945, when food shortages were the order of the day and there was much dissatisfaction, he had lunch with the boys seated on a bench in an open shed, which passed as a Dining Room. It is said that in a short time, he underwent a marked reduction in weight.

7) In 1948 the number of Boarders increased to 134 and 04 Day Boys. Now, Gurutalawa was attracting boys on its own merits.

8) Although, Gurutalawa may in a sense be described as an "accident" or a place that had to be improvised during a time of crisis and one would have expected it to have wrapped up once the crisis was over it so happened that from the late 1940's right up to the 1960's, parents clamoured to send their sons to Gurutalawa in preference even to Mt. Lavinia. Thus almost all students left

S. Thomas' Prep School, Bandarawela for Gurutalawa, whilst some discerning parents of students of S. Thomas Prep School Kollupitiya too sent their sons after Standard 5 direct to Gurutalawa in preference to Mt. Lavinia. Gurutalawa was also the recipient of students from schools all over the Island. Word had spread of that wonderful school in the Hills superbly administered with the discipline necessary for the times by Dr. Hayman. By 1962, it can truly be said that there was no School like Gurutalawa, anywhere in Sri Lanka.

9) He was a great lover of wild life and nature. The scouts looked forward to their camps at Wilpattu and Yala. His photographs and films of wild life and Sri Lanka were proverbial. There was little he did not know about the country. He was the operator of his Projector through which he gave the students that little entertainment Gurutalawa had on Friday evenings of movies preceded generally by his feats of filming of the Jungles and the Wild Life of Sri Lanka and other interesting events which had taken place in College.

10) He used to be in the Sick Room helping Mrs. Hayman. He also taught the Lower 6th and Upper 6th Students, Physics and Mathematics apart from handling the Administration of the school. After tea, he could be seen daily at the Swimming Pool till late evening coaching Swimming and Life Saving. With his "On your marks, get set, go !!" ringing out like a Pistol Shot in the revered environment of the Pool and Chapel. He supervised the boys as they served dinner at the hatches.

11) Mrs. Hayman assisted him in his noble endeavours. She devoted herself to the Sick Room, the cleanliness of the Dining Hall and Kitchen, the animals and the fauna and flora of College.

12) This was a man of whom it is said that those who had the good fortune to come under his influence never ever forgot him. The impact he had on their lives has been lasting.

13) My own memories of Dr. Hayman commenced even before I became a student at Gurutalawa. My elder brothers preceded me at Gurutalawa from S. Thomas Prep School at Bandarawela. Dr. Hayman utilizing his personal relationship with the school authorities at St. Michael's - Batticaloa had established an annual event of several teams proceeding to that school for various sports activities. He never failed to drop in at our home on his way to Batticaloa. I have vivid memories of my parents entertaining Dr. Hayman to tea in the garden and he made a note of the 3rd brother who would follow suit at Gurutalawa. Years later I was myself to scoot off on the way to Batticaloa and have a good meal at home with friends and collect some pocket money.

14) Dr. Hayman conducted school assembly on one day of the week making all important announcements, appointments of Prefects, as well as games captains etc. He was very fond of comparing shortcomings in our Society with the position in U K. and was wont to say "When I was in England....." This would raise a loud hum from the assembly of 300 odd students which of course Dr. Hayman was quite used to and he would carry on regardless.

15) Another stormy entrance he would make would be a short while after the commencement of evening prep when he would make a sudden appearance and announce, "someone has interfered with the lighting and bulbs in the verandah. This is too bad. There will be school on Saturday." This would again raise the proverbial loud hum from the gathered 300 students and Dr. Hayman would turn on his heels utterly unconcerned, march out of the hall visibly angered by the mischief to the electrical circuit, but ignoring the hum.

16) He had his Lunch and his Dinner without fail, every single day in the Staff Dining Room, which was a part of the Students' Dining Hall . We had no doubt that the masters' behaviour was more curtailed during meal times than that of the students by Dr. Hayman sitting at the head of their Table. My recollection is that he would not sit at the Staff Dinner Table and start eating until the last student had been served at the hatches and taken his seat.

17) As Head Master, he together with Rev. Foster made it a daily part of their routine to visit each Dormitory after dinner during Room Time and thereby got to know each boy individually.

18) He would visit us in our Dorms at least 3 days of the week. He made these visits after Dinner and during room time. Of course, all the students were in any event well disciplined and there was no loud noise at that time. The Prefects who were given a separate cubicle were much respected and entitled to enforce strict discipline. In fact, there was no need for a Supervisor or Master to enforce discipline in the dorms. Dr. Hayman used to come to the bedside of almost every student. He would talk to almost everyone.

19) His visiting the dormitories after dinner during room-time was a very regular occurrence and so he would in fact meet each student at least thrice a week in the dormitory. Behind him would come Father Foster also more or less to fool around with boys whilst Dr Hayman's visit was more of a serious nature. Following Fr Foster would be Ariyadasa the sick-room attendant. They would all generally be armed with torches.

20) Sometimes, there was some delay on the part of parents to remit School Fees. These occasions were very rare, few and far between. I have heard it said that Dr. Hayman used to wait sometime and thereafter, write a personal letter to the parent concerned saying that the parent may have by an oversight forgotten to settle the fees and requesting to make payment. He would never make this an issue. In fact, we understand that he was generous enough to pay out of his pocket, the School Fees due from several students whose parents had some difficulties.

21) The End of Term Reports had a separate section for the comments of the Head Master. As he knew each and everyone of the 300 Students in his care, his comments were short, terse, to the point and very appropriate. I have with me all my Reports from 1958 - 1962 and in each one of these he has highlighted the core-issues, relevant for that period of that time spent in College, whether it was in relation to Studies in each subject, Sports or Health.

22) The way he inter-acted with the Minor Staff, the Tutorial Staff and Staff handling Administration and Accounts coupled with the care of the Students, made the entire population of the campus one big family. The Students who were generally of the ages 12 -16 or so all had regard and affection even for those on the Minor Staff with whom they came into contact. This could be said of the Ground Boy - Gunadasa; the Sick Room Boy - Ariyadasa; the Chef - Manis; the Driver of the School Van - Van Simon; the Ringer of the School Bell - Bell Simon; the Driver of Dr Hayman's car - Piyasena. These were all institutions, no less. Apart from the Minor Staff, all the members of the Staff with whom Students came into contact were also treated with that much more respect. The entire Tutorial Staff lived on the Campus. They all partook of the same food and had meals at the same time in the same Dining Hall. Only the married members of the Staff who had their own separate quarters within the Campus had their meals in their own quarters. I attribute this sense of closeness and affinity to the overall influence Dr Hayman had on everybody. It would be true to say, he held the entire network together and he was the Cog around which everybody else gathered.

23) To us, life at Gurutalawa meant firstly Dr Hayman and secondly, Father Foster and thereafter the rest of the staff and minor staff at Gurutalawa who were also important factors.

24) Dr Hayman traversed different areas of the campus from time to time. Going through the Junior Dormitory Complex, or along the corridors, used to be a common sight. Nobody, not even he, would walk across the quadrangle where the grass grown with care was held sacred. In fact, any student bold enough to walk across would find himself summarily punished by the Prefects or a Master. When Dr Hayman was sighted, students on the opposite side of the quadrangle would stand up with respect until he passed that area. Such was the regard and respect he commanded.

25) His attire would normally consist of a short sleeved shirt with small checks, a pair of baggy khaki shorts with 2 side pockets more akin to two kit bags, for those pockets would hold innumerable articles apart from 2 handkerchiefs, one in each pocket. The articles and tools in his pockets composed a utility travel kit from which he would draw out and utilize various implements which became useful as he trudged along the Campus. He would wear brown shoes with brown stockings. It would be a rare sight indeed to see Dr Hayman in full suit. That would be on very special occasions like the Prize Giving.

26) He would encourage and ensure that the band of his favourite students particularly those in his Physics Class arranged to have the Science Exhibition in the old laboratory adjoining the canal on the day of the Prize Giving. Each exhibit would be explained by either one or two students who were responsible for it, under the patronizing eye and care of Dr Hayman. This would be an annual feature looked forward to by all.

27) On one occasion, a new entrant who was in the Lower 4th and the Winchester Dorm had turned up for swimming during games, i.e. 4.30 to 6 p.m. This boy, short of build and without realizing that the swimming pool had some gradient, ventured to an area which was beyond his height, without realizing his folly. Seeing this boy in some difficulty, I waded across, stretched out and took him to firmer ground where the level of water was manageable for him. Dr Hayman who was standing by the side of the pool towards the deep end had witnessed this insignificant incident and walking up to the other end of the pool, called out my name, nodded when he got my attention, mouthed the words "Thank You" and went away. That night during room-time, on his visit to De Saram Junior he came up to my bed and thanked me once again saying that he had seen what I had done. That was the nature of the man.

28) I occupied the upper bunk at the extreme end of De Saram Junior whilst the lower bunk was occupied by my friend the Neuro Surgeon now in U.K. On my bunk between the side fender and the mattress, I would always have stacked 5 or 6 books mostly novels which I would read during room time etc. when not having a chat. Each time Dr.Hayman visited us, in the dorm, he would make it a point to closely examine the books tacked up, make a few comments and move on. He never failed to mention in his remarks under Head Master's Report at the end of term, the reading habit. But always added that I needed to work at my Maths or that I was very weak in Maths, and perhaps the elder brother could help me.

29) Another regular feature was the payment of pocket money. The amount was 0.50 cents per week. Each class and there were 5, i.e. Lower 4th, Upper 4th, 5th Form, Lower 6th and Upper 6th, received pocket money on one day of the week, so that each month one would receive generally Rs.2/-. We were expected to queue up in the corridor outside Dr.Hayman's office and walk in and receive the -/50 cts. The coins were kept in a box and the pocket money was handed over by Dr.Hayman himself to each student across his table after making an entry in his Register. Father Foster used to stand at the doorway with his hands out-stretched. Being quite an imposing figure, it was not easy to be an "artful dodger". This meant that one had to forego a part of the pocket money to the Lord. That part would be 50% of the receipt. In effect one would drop the -/50 cts in to his hand and pick up a -/25 cts coin from him unless of course Dr.Hayman had given two -/25 cts coins. The wiser of the boys opted to take the pocket money once in 4 weeks which meant you got off with doling out to Fr.Foster only -/25 cts for the whole month. I do not think he ever got wise to that one. If one were to avoid Fr.Foster at the doorway by crouching or creeping, he would let out his customary growl and make a pretence of trying to grab you. The return match would be in the night after dinner during room-time when on his visit to the dorm, Fr.Foster would engage in a mock attack while the boy would be pretending to be asleep or even if awake, trying to grab him around his bed. All this was part of life and Dr.Hayman would quietly smile at the antics of Father Foster whether it was outside his office or in the dormitory.

30) In September 1958, the Prime Minister of the Country Mr. S.W R D Bandaranayake was assassinated at his residence in Rosmead Place by a Buddhist monk. School was in session

during that time. Dr. Hayman made a sudden appearance in the dining hall at a time when the entire school was assembled, may be at lunch, and in a voice choked with emotion, broke the news and walked out as it was too much for him. It did surprise us how this event could have moved him so much.

31) I also remember in the earlier part of 1958, when also the school was in session, communal riots broke out on a fairly large scale across the island. Sinhala people living in the North were harassed and were evacuated. Tamil people living in the South were the target of mob violence. The barber of the area where my parents lived and who happened to be the only Tamil resident was out-numbered. He was assaulted, tied on to a small cart used to transport water in half barrels and taken along the highway by a gang of hooligans who were mouthing obscenities whilst mercilessly assaulting the hapless man who could not budge an inch. The procession came to a halt opposite the gate of our garden. The assaulting continued. The poor man was screaming in pain. My eldest brother who happened to be at home rushed up to the gate wondering what the commotion was. Seeing the predicament of the poor man he rushed down once again to alert my parents. My father who was having a bath stopped mid way and together with my brother rushed upto the gate to prevent further mischief. However, by that time, kerosene oil had been poured on the man and the mob had set fire to him. Nothing could be done to prevent further harm. The man died there. Dr.Hayman who had heard of this incident, in his Prize Day Report and Speech paid a glowing tribute to my parents and my elder brother for the valiant efforts made in trying to save the life of the man. So also during this period saw the foul murder of a Master of our time at S.Thomas' Preparatory School, Bandarawela who was travelling by bus with his father to visit his relative who was a P W D Overseer in the area. They were dragged out of the bus and murdered in cold blood. None of these culprits were brought to justice and they continued to live among the community to which they brought so much disgrace.

32) We were in school during those troubled times but as far as I recollect, the external mayhem and ugly incidents had no bearing on our life in school. We were untouched by the events happening outside and indeed one of the foremost lessons we learnt was that all of us were equal members of the same human race. There was no distinction between different ethnic groups and some of the most enduring and sincere friendships between boys of different ethnic groups were born whilst we were students at College.

33) We have heard so much of Dr.Rollo Hayman. We have personally experienced various aspects of his life with us; what he has taught us not by preaching but by being a living example of all that is good, right, clean, courageous and fair. Thomians who have made their homes in far off places all over the Globe will never forget this great Head Master. They all feel the debt of gratitude they owe to him. We will continue to sing his praises and feel the loss to College and the country due to his early departure.

34) In this Diamond Jubilee Year of the College we look back with a sense of pride, that we had the privilege and good fortune of having as the head of our school forty years ago a giant in every sense of the word, to whom we owe so much; from whom we gained so much; who moulded our characters, our very lives and the immense loss to our country by the exodus of such persons whose absence is felt so very much in these days when student indiscipline seems to be the order of the day.

L.J.

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