

FOND MEMORIES OF GURU

It has been 42 years since I left Guru to join Mount in 1965, but memories of Guru will always be with me till the day God decides to end my suffering on earth. Guru no doubt was the best school in Sri Lanka during the time of Dr. Hayman as head master. If God asks me to make one wish in life-I would tell him to take me back to my school days in Guru.

There was nothing that we lacked in Guru. The food was good, teachers were excellent, many sports facilities were available; there was Scouting, Cadetting, Hiking, Wood Work, Shooting & Swimming. Added to all these was a well maintained Orchard and a farm. Everyone knew each other and we lived like one family. I still keep in touch with the wonderful friends I had in school. Some of them - Philip Jayawardena., Mahendra Liyanage (Buckka) K.L.D.Perera. Zacky Hameem, Kamal & Harish Nilaweera Ana Amaranath to name a few are abroad but we have been visiting each other & keeping the friendship alive. Whenever or wherever we meet we never fail to discuss about the good times we had at Guru.

Although I didn't do too badly in studies I took sports more seriously. Whenever we had some free time I used to go and play some game with my friends. I played almost all the games that were there at Guru but basketball took pride of place. We in fact did quite well in this game and all my BB friends were able to get into the Mount team as well after joining Mount. In 1967 we reached the finals of the inter school BB tournament & the majority in the team were from Guru. I am proud to mention that the basics I learnt at Guru helped me to represent Sri Lanka in BB.

Horse Riding & Cross Country running were enjoyed by me thoroughly. I will not forget an incident that happened during a cross country race. There was a guy by the name of Nanayakkara (forget his first name) leading the race and was out of our sight few minutes after the start. I was in second place & after a couple of miles of running I saw him fallen on the ground with a cramp. When I saw him in pain although we were running a race I could not think of passing the fallen friend without helping him & go on to win the race. I helped him to revive & we started running again & he beat me to second place as he was from the area & knew the short cuts.

As you know all areas beyond the school perimeter were out of bounds for us but being a bit on the naughty side, one day we scooted out to Welimada to watch a film. Watching a film was a great thing for us those days and we watched not one but three films. In the night we came back avoiding the watcher by creeping through the bushes and jumped through the space between the door and the ceiling in to our dorms & went to sleep as if nothing had happened. The next day we were summoned to Dr. Haymen's office and ended up receiving 6 cuts each-obviously some one had seen us coming in the night & reported us to the Head Master. Even to date we don't know who he was.

Plucking fruits from the Orchard avoiding the surveillance of father Foster who had his binoculars around his neck all the time was also great fun for us.

Every Friday was a vegetarian day during our time in Guru which we didn't like very much. My good friend Zacky wanted meat with every meal and Friday was no exception. What we did on Fridays was to go to the farm, buy a chicken which was slaughtered by Zacky according to his religious beliefs and get it cooked by Piyadasa who lived close to the school with his family. We also got Piyadasa's family to make us string hoppers, Pol Sambol & Kiri Hodi which we enjoyed very much. This was a ritual on every Friday. However the episode of Zacky cutting the neck of the bird with a sharp knife after saying his prayers and throwing it into the bushes & watching the bird die will never fade from my memory because I really felt sorry to see the painful death of the chicken.

I don't think we could ever forget Bell Simon who was such an obliging fellow. He used to ring the bell everyday at 6.25 PM signaling it is time for prep at which time we are still in the playing field. We just had 5 minutes of time till Simon stopped ringing the bell to get to the prep hall, if not we would be punished by the prefects. The 5 minutes we had was sufficient for us to have a bath, get dressed & run to the hall before it was 6.30PM. Some days when we were a little late & Simon sees us running with our books, still sweating after a cat bath, he would keep ringing the bell until we reached the hall. What a nice guy he was.

To-day it is heartening to see a revival of our old school from its decline. I know things would never be the same, any way lets hope we will get somewhere.

Lt.Col K.Amarasinghe (1959-1965)
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