

FROM A GURUTHA (LOVER) THOMIAN

Going down memory lane I have so much to say that simply writing about the wonderful and interesting moments of the past and remembering them with great joy has proven to be a source of strength, a feeling of indebtedness to my Alma Mater. Today, I am what I am, is only because this unique College in the Hills, made me to be what I am. Being a student during the “Hayman – Foster” Era, I consider this period to be for those “Gifted Ones”. I have no hesitation in attributing my success in studies and sports to Dr. Hayman, Canon Foster and indeed Mrs. Hayman, a rebirth of “Florence Nightingale”. If I were to describe in three words, how we were built to be almost perfect Personalities, they are “Discipline” “Love” and “Care” Dr. Hayman for Discipline, Father Foster for Love and Mrs. Hayman for Care. I firmly believe that if one needs to be an almost perfect human being, one needs to possess these three ingredients as a base. Indeed all the Thomians of that era have been comprehensively and successfully served with these.

Dr. Hayman: -

An incredible human being God created with unique qualities that I have not seen in anyone to date. One who didn't limit the word magnanimity simply to its word, but displayed its reality to its true meaning. He was a mobile “Workshop” wearing a baggy pair of Khaki Shorts up to his knees, with large pockets stretching down to the bottom band of his shorts. A frequent “Night Walker” as we all know, visiting every dormitory after Dinner and chatting freely with all the Boarders. During these visits if he came across a malfunctioning electrical circuit board or any kind of electrical problem, you could see that huge right hand sliding into his right side pocket coming out with mini screw driver and a mini plier. What comes out of his left pocket would be a piece of wire, insulation tape and the balance requirements needed for the job, within minutes the job is successfully completed. His pockets were so large that one could not believe the items he was carrying. The shortest way to put it was “You Name it and He had it.”

His first step into a Dormitory brought about the observance of a “Pin Drop” silence. He did the talking and the Boarders did the listening. And the answers to questions were short and precise.

I vividly remember an incident that took place when I was the House Prefect of Garnier Junior. My Co – prefect being Harsha Weeraseskera. On this particular day I was conducting “Dorm Prep” when one boarder who was on the “upper bunk” attempted to break the monotony of silence by standing up and bringing down his Sarong, to display *‘his family*

jewels' (You know what I mean!). I warned him politely twice, but he did not respond. Thus I was compelled to walk up to him climb the bunk and slap him on his face. He turned his head to avoid the slap, and I ended up slapping his right ear. His ear started to bleed profusely leaving me spellbound and apologetic. However my pride overcame my desire to apologize. Thus I stood firm justifying my action, his exaggerated reaction by rolling and screaming did not upset the other boarders as he was very unpopular amongst them. Without wasting any more time I carried him to the sick room with the assistance of a couple of boarders for treatment. I became jittery and nervous when I saw Mrs. Hayman and Ariyadasa. Without wasting time inquiring into the incident Mrs. Hayman treated the wound and whilst mentioning that an old blood boil had ruptured, she quietly inquired as to how this happened. I boldly explained the incident in detail irrespective of what the consequence would be. I was shocked and amazed at the anti-climax when Mrs. Hayman bluntly told the victim that I had done him a favour saving him from undergoing a minor surgery. The victim being defeated and with the added humiliation stared at me with disgust and anger. If stares could kill I would have died. Dissatisfied with Mrs. Hayman's comment he informed his parents by means of a phone call.

The very next day the father of the victim was seen storming towards Dr. Hayman's Office, fuming with anger. When he reached the entrance to the office I happened to be standing outside awaiting my call to obtain permission for a hike over the weekend. Although he couldn't identify me, I had a funny feeling that he was "so and so". However I decided that he should take my turn to meet "Doc". His vociferous complaint was given a fair hearing by "Doc". Doc immediately called my name as he was aware that I was waiting outside. Sweating is hard to come by in Guru. I Believe, I do did sweat through fear with my imagination running riot, hoping that Doc would repeat Mrs. Hayman's decision. With Doc that was "Expecting too much". As soon as the old man (victim's father) saw me he started gesticulating and embarrassing me. Doc made a dead stop to all his nonsense with one word "stop" and wanted to know my version. On explaining my side of the story Doc stood up and said Mr. XXX if you wish to bring up your son in my College the way you want you can take your son with you now. If you want him to be brought up the way I want, you can leave him to me and go. These strong words were said by Doc looking down at the table. Mr. XXX became spellbound. "A lion turned into a pussycat". The inquiry ended instantly and with a shake of hands, the dejected and defeated Mr. XXX walked out. Doc kept me back and advised me strongly whilst expressing his satisfaction over my dedication for discipline, but issued a final warning in no uncertain terms to refrain from physical response to wrong doers. That's one of the unique qualities of Dr. Hayman. "May his soul rest in peace with eternal bliss in heaven".

Canon A. J. Foster (Father of S.T.C. Guru)

“Father” yes indeed a father in the Chapel and to all the students irrespective of Caste, Creed or Community. He was nicknamed “Amba Deviyo” by the students which he was not aware of. As for me I would call him “Amba Yahaluwa” as he was rarely seen in any attire other than a clean white cassock. Active as ever, frequently he was seen mingling with students witnessing and taking part in almost all sports during the evening hours. The fatherly interaction with the students and the freedom to share jokes with him whilst paying immense respect to his designation was a pleasing sight indeed. I am lost for words to express my indebtedness to this unique person for the encouragement and the facilities provided to me to pursue my athletics in Guru.

Mr. J. De S. Jayasinghe (Uncle Jay)

My eternal indebtedness is due to a hidden personality. A man of few words dedicated and devoted to a particular sport, “Athletics”. Biology in the class and Athletics in the field kept his whole day occupied. He was none other than Mr. J. De S. Jayasinghe better known to students as “Uncle Jay”. During this period I was just another student to him in his Biology class.

The most unforgettable & exciting day of my life :- It has been more or less a traditional event in College to conduct a standard test in Athletics. I was curious to know what this was all about. On making inquiries from a close friend of mine I was told that I had to carry with me a piece of wire, a torch battery and a bulb, this message was given to several other new comers who were not aware of this event, but to have a big laugh at the grounds. However innocently I picked up the items and went to the grounds and walked up to “Uncle Jay”. I said Sir, I brought the items, what should I do next. He held his hips and had a big laugh and went on to say that this must be a “small rag” by the seniors. He ordered me to fold my slacks up to knee level and get prepared to run the 100 meters race. He said run as fast as you can and forget about winning because G.G.A. de Silva the Junior Champion was in my draw. He continued saying “finish the race and light up your bulb with the wire and battery you brought after which you can go back to college”. Ha! Ha! a big laugh.

With my slack folded up to my knee, bare footed, I walked up to the starting point standing right next to the “Burly Black” Junior Champion. I had no fears because I was only interested in completing the distance as I was told. “Uncle Jay” approached me and said “*Ohey Lanthrumba ussagena passata duwannada away*”? (did you come to run backwards lifting a lantern?) I didn’t take it seriously as I was aware that I couldn’t match “G.G.A”. However our heat got underway with the sound of the starter’s Gun. I took off in a flash the next few seconds gave me the feeling that I had a foul start and the only one running. The sound of a loud cheer made me look back. I was astonished to find that I was leading the race by a margin of about 5 yards, so I wasted no time in finishing the race and winning it comprehensively. At the finishing point “Uncle Jay” approached me in a flash a look of embarrassment, ecstasy and amazement written all over his face. I was shocked and

speechless too. The manner in which he questioned scared me “*Ohey kauda? Nama Mokakda?*” (Who are you? What’s your name?) I humbly answered the questions. Then he said “prepare yourself for the finals, you will be put against the Senior Champion I.A. Munasinghe” he was another burly black panther, technically perfect sprinter, nick named “Blossom”. As for me I did not change my attire and preferred to run bare feet as before, as running shoes and starting blocks were alien to me. “Uncle Jay” was confident of my victory as my timing was supposed to have been better than “Blossom’s”. However the race was about to begin amongst a large crowd of spectators (students, masters and minor staff). Now I was under pressure to deliver and keep up to the expectations of the one sided cheering squad. The barefooted road runner versus spiked technically immaculate Sprinter. “Bang” the race got underway. Once again I looked back fearing it was a foul start. “No” it was “Flier” start and I led blossom by at least 4 yards. The delight pumped me with more energy ,thus completing the distance with a comfortable victory. “Uncle Jay” ecstatic and stunned came charging at me and hugged me. He said “Junaid, I am gifting you with pair of running shoes and a pair of running shorts.” He kept to his promise and I was the proud owner of an Indian pair of running shoes costing Rs. 35/- brought to Guru a week hence from “Diana and Co.” of Chatham Street Colombo. Wow! What a stepping stone given to me with a pride of place. Instant fame surrounded with unstinted encouragement. I told “Uncle Jay” Sir, I promise I will certainly live up to your expectations and bring glory to our College”. I thanked him immensely for equipping me with the basic needs to get started. Uncle Jay in the meantime had made arrangements with Mr. Laffir (Manager of the Co – op) to provide me with soft drink every evening after practices. I subsequently learnt that the cost of the drinks were to be included in his account. What a magnanimous personality. Father Foster subsequently linked up with Uncle Jay to train me for Long Jump. In the year 1963 I competed in the 220 yards and 100 yards Public Schools Championships, in which events I was placed 1st and 2nd respectively. Uncle Jay and I firmly believed that I was the winner in the 100 meters too. Unfortunately the absence of a photo finish camera and S.T.C. Guru being a lesser recognised College compared to Royal College I was unjustifiably denied of 1st place. We took it up with the Thomian spirit of sportsmanship without lodging any objection. The only event I was beaten during my successful athletics career in Guru. The most valuable trophy of all trophies I possess to date is the one I received as “Sportsman of the year 1963” in Guru, for my performance at the Public Schools Championship 1962, as a 16 year old competing in the under 19 events, against some of the top class sprinters in the Island, such as the late M.W. Selliah of Royal College, G.H.A. Amarasinghe of Richmond College Galle, D.K. Podimahathamy and several others, in the capacity of a novice. In mid March 1964 I was offered a place at S.T.C. Mt. Lavana by their sports coach Mr. Brookie D’ Silva. My father’s firm decision overpowered my reluctance and refusal, thus forcing me to concede. I must sincerely confess that my reluctance to leave Guru after “Uncle Jay” having discovered my talent and lifting my standard to National Level was felt as an act of hypocrisy. Father Foster and Uncle Jay blessed me and wished me well for my future success. This magnanimity filled with blessings and good wishes and words of encouragement which came from deep inside them helped me to overcome my guilt. I hold these two unique personalities in high esteem expressing my indebtedness to eternity. As I mentioned before “today I am what I am only because Guru made me to be so. My large list of personalities in my list for

prayers is headed by Dr. & Mrs. Hayman, Father Foster, Mr. J de S. Jayasinghe (Uncle Jay) and Mr. A.C.M. Laffir. “May the almighty God grant their souls with peace and eternal bliss in heaven”. I attribute my successful athletics career to these unique personalities of Guru.

Mrs. Hayman (Florence Nightingale of Guru) –

A lady of unique qualities possessed by the later Mrs. Hayman has yet to be created by God. She was a God sent angel to Guru. If I were to write a detailed description of the yeomen service rendered to S.T.C. Guru by Mrs. Hayman it would amount to a repetition of all the wonderful things mentioned by some most prominent old Thomians in the recent past, some of them living legends. My humble contribution in the form of a poem has been attributed to her. May the almighty God grant her soul peace with eternal bliss in heaven!

Mohamed Jabir Junaid

1958-1964

An indebted Athlete

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