



A THREAD OF BLUE – 1971 VINTAGE

S. THOMAS' COLLEGE, MOUNT LAVINIA, SRI LANKA **THE CLASS OF 1971**

NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2010

Foreword

The Class of 1971 represents students who joined S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, Sri Lanka in January 1963 (and thereafter) and appeared for the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) examination for the first time in December 1971.

In September 2005, a few alumni of the Class of 1971 embarked to establish a Database of Contact Details for the Class of 1971 and at that time I was nominated as the "Administrator".

It was a very modest beginning, with contact details available for only six alumni on the first day. Five years later, the total is 149 in September 2010, which, sadly, includes 15 deceased alumni, and contact details are currently being sought for another 42 alumni.

In August 2010, it was suggested that an inaugural newsletter be prepared in September 2010, to commemorate the 5th anniversary of establishing the Database of Contact Details for the class group.

It is very pleasing that this suggestion has now been crystallised, with journalistic talents, creative juices and photographs flowing in abundantly, particularly from the United Arab Emirates. Must be something to do with the sunshine!

The title of the newsletter *A Thread of Blue – 1971 Vintage* also has a deep meaning. It represents the thread that wove us, the Class of 1971, together.

The articles and photographs in this newsletter have been provided by alumni of the Class of 1971, and thanks are extended to them for their support.

Thanks are also extended to Prof. Priyan Dias and Kesarralal Gunasekera in Sri Lanka and to Ruwan Gunasena in the United Arab Emirates, who provided editorial input and guidance on development of the newsletter.

Feedback is welcome and can be sent to stc.classof1971@gmail.com or indrank@xtra.co.nz

ESTO PERPETUA

Indran "Kula" Indrakumar (Administrator – Class of 1971)
Auckland, New Zealand
30 September 2010

The Rev. W. A. Stone (8th Warden of S. Thomas' College)

Live for S. Thomas'. Do anything for her whenever you are asked to do it; if necessary die for her.

A Thread of Blue – 1971 Vintage

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CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
Modest beginnings and progress after five years	3 – 8
Go Thora Go	9 – 10
A bond beyond brotherhood	11 – 13
My thanks to the Class of 1971	14 – 15
Long lost.....but now found	16
The first call	17
Brains and statistics	18
The seasons of a school boy	19 – 27
College experiences which meant so much to me in later life	28 – 30
Sowing seeds of peace – the Thomian way	31 – 33
Reunion held in London	34 – 35
Recollections of the inaugural reunion in Colombo	36 – 39
Remember?	40 – 44
The Triangle	45
Just a normal Saturday	46 – 50
Reminiscences	51 – 55
Photographs	56 – 60



The Chapel of the Transfiguration – Mount Lavinia

Mr. S. J. Anandanayagam (13th Warden of S. Thomas College)

Have faith in the boys you teach, even the most difficult ones. Understand them, love them, sympathise with them and expect great things from them.

MODEST BEGINNINGS AND PROGRESS AFTER FIVE YEARS

By Indran “Kula” Indrakumar (New Zealand)

In September 2010, the Class of 1971 celebrated the fifth anniversary of establishing the Database of Contact Details for the Class of 1971.

This prompted me to put the clock back by five years and think of how it all started.

Database of Contact Details

Most of our class mates, including myself, turned 50 in 2005.

This resulted in a few of us who had been in contact with each other, contacting each other and wishing them on their 50th birthday, and then exchanging banter in the traditional Thomian manner and restarting our school days from where we left in 1973/74.

I received three calls on my special day in September 2005 from Thomian class mates, two of whom were re-establishing contact with me for the first time after I had left college – a vast gap of nearly 33 years. They then took great comfort in reminding me of the ageing process, and never had I come across such enthusiasm to remind a fellow class mate of his age!

Nimal “Coomfi” Coomaraswamy from the UK then followed it up with an e-mail, suggesting that we establish a database of e-mail addresses and telephone numbers for our class mates, so that we could keep in contact with each other, and, as in college days, once again be a general source of nuisance and annoyance to each other!

Coomfi then went further and said, *“We must try and form a group e-mail club with the class mates we are in contact with. Who better to organise this other than your goodself. As I remember, you were a very well organised and meticulous person”*. Thus, the task to develop the database was unceremoniously foisted on me, combined with varying degrees of flattery, persuasion and unholy threats!

The primary reason given was that, as many alumni were based overseas, contact details would enable us to meet each other when we passed through their respective cities.

On the first day, we had the glorious number of six names and contact details, based on information that was exchanged between the three callers and myself.

Some discussion was then exchanged via e-mail on a name for the class group.

The term *“Class of 1963”* was suggested in the first instance, this being the year most of us started schooling at S. Thomas’ College, Mount Lavinia and S. Thomas’ Preparatory School, Kollupitiya. Finally, *“Class of 1971”* was agreed upon, as it was a common year when the whole group sat for the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) examination for the first time.

Meanwhile, an attempt was made to obtain a complete list of names from the class registers of 1971 from S. Thomas’ College, so that names were not missed out. Unfortunately, this exercise was not successful. Hence, our memories were put to good use and everyone then tried to recollect the names of all our class mates for inclusion on the list.

To get more momentum, I told those six class mates that prizes would be offered by me for the first 6 additional responses!

In order to replicate the types of delicacies that we eagerly sought while at college, the following were offered as prizes:

1st Prize – plate of chicken buriyani at Pilawoos

2nd Prize – plate of string hoppers at the College Tuck Shop

3rd Prize – one cream bun at Patisserie (an outlet of Perera & Sons that was situated opposite the college swimming pool)

4th Prize – one glass of lime juice at Godwin's Shop on Hotel Road (opposite the basket ball court)

5th Prize – two Gunasiri bulltos from "Cartman"

6th Prize – one amberalla (with salt and chillie) from the "Ammay" outside the Main Gate on Hotel Road.

This ignited them in to action and within two weeks, the number increased to around 20.

The increase in numbers was quite regular from then onwards and we reached 34 by March 2006.

Thereafter, on 3 January 2007, we reached the magnificent number ONE ZERO ZERO (100), with the main sources of information during this period being Ruwan Gunasena (United Arab Emirates), Satchi Suresan (Canada) and Trevor Mendis (Australia), together with Manilal De Mel, Rohan Jayasinghe, Kesarralal Gunasekera, Fazal Issadeen and Chrishan Ferdinando from Sri Lanka.

Within a month thereafter, we reached a total of 163, made up of 105 alumni with contact details, plus 45 alumni for whom contact details were being sought and 13 names of alumni who, sadly, were deceased.

The current position at the end of September 2010 is as follows:

Class mates with contact details	134
Deceased	15
Class mates with no contact details	42
TOTAL	191

Class Reunions

While the database was being developed, "kasilla" (the itch) was also developing amongst many and it was suggested that a reunion of the Class of 1971 be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2006. Coincidentally, the year 2006 happened to be 35 years since we sat for the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) examination for the first time.

The action snowballed and the inaugural reunion dinner was held at the Raffles Restaurant in Colombo on 15 September 2006 and the Warden, Dr David Ponniah, was present as well.

A total of 57 alumni, including 4 from overseas, attended the inaugural reunion dinner of the Class of 1971 in Colombo on 15 September 2006. This was a good turnout, considering that we had a pool of 95 names on the database with contact details in September 2006, 40 of whom were based out of Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, 7 alumni from overseas cancelled their travel plans closer to the date of the reunion, in view of the adverse security situation that had developed in the country.

Informal reunions were also held in 2006 in Australia (combined with New Zealand), Canada and the United Kingdom.

A regional reunion dinner comprising of alumni of the Class of 1971 residing in Australia and New Zealand was held in Sydney on 9 May 2009.

One of the former masters of S. Thomas' College, Mr. Lionel Staples and his wife, Rathna, also attended the reunion dinner.

Details of this reunion were notified to alumni of the Class of 1971 living in other countries as well. This resulted in Rohan Jayasinghe from Colombo being present at the reunion. Rohan's bond to his alma mater and the Class of 1971 was so strong that he revised his travel plans to be present in Sydney on 9 May, thus demonstrating that he was a true Thomian.

All alumni were pleased to meet Mr. Staples after nearly 35 years and he lavishly imparted compliments about S. Thomas' College and its illustrious students.

Jonathan Gasperson from the Class of 1971 made the arrangements for the reunion in Sydney and went to the extent of getting the menu printed with the crest of S. Thomas' College, together with a special flower arrangement for the benefit of the better halves of his class mates!

The latest high profile reunion was held at the residence of Manilal De Mel in Colombo in December 2009. This reunion was well attended and included 7 alumni from overseas, together with a traditional *papare* band, courtesy of Rohan Jayasinghe.

One of the first timers at this reunion, Punnya "Tikka" Wickremasinghe from Perth, Australia, was so enthralled and overjoyed that he reproduced a DVD of the proceedings, copies of which were thereafter circulated to the 9 countries in which alumni of the Class of 1971 were resident.

Reunions are now a standard feature and each time one of our alumni is on a visit to a city in another country, the alumni based in that city organise a reunion.

Archives and Archivists

Many archives and archivists surfaced over the past five years, the core group being Chrisantha "Cidda" de Fonseka from Nevada, Ruwan Gunasena from Dubai and Punnya "Tikka" Wickramasinghe from Perth.

This motley quartet obviously hold boxes full of Thomian memorabilia that were transported from Sri Lanka across the oceans to overseas destinations!

The items shared with class mates by "Cidda" Fonseka were a college timetable and his diaries dating back to 1970 (referred to as "Cidda's Diaries") which recorded homework, the names of every film he had seen on the respective day and some awesome caricatures of academic staff!

Ruwan Gunasena had a collection of photographs dating back to the concerts held in the Lower School in 1964, which are absolute classics and collectors items, together with some excellent black and white photographs of our final year at S. Thomas' College, such photographs being taken on his last day at college.....when he walked around the full area where most of us reigned for 13 years.

Punnya “Tikka” Wickramasinghe was “located” by the Class of 1971 in Perth, Australia in January 2010 and his contribution was very historic in nature. “Tikka” was in Winchester House (boarding for the Lower School) and had photographs of the dormitory and boarders dating back to 1963/64!

These photographs were highly sought after by alumni of the Class of 1971 who were boarders in Winchester House in 1963/64, some of whom even had difficulty identifying themselves on the photographs! The photographs were copied on to disks by “Tikka”, and were thereafter circulated to the 9 countries in which alumni of the Class of 1971 were resident – an excellent display of Thomian fellowship.

Poetic Talent

A poem titled *REMEMBER?* was composed by Roger Hatch of the Class of 1971 and circulated amongst alumni in November 2008.

The poem is a masterpiece. It comprises of 36 extremely humorous verses and is still the topic of much laughter at social gatherings of Thomian alumni of all age groups all over the world. The poem is reproduced in this newsletter.

The popularity of this poem was so high, that it featured in the newspapers in Sri Lanka as well.

Veteran Sportsman

The Class of 1971 has a veteran sportsman in its midst, namely Manilal De Mel, popularly referred to as “Maaluwa” by his class mates, meaning fish.

Manilal was an excellent swimmer while at college, and is currently a regular participant at swimming events for veterans.

He participated in the two mile swim for veterans in Mount Lavinia 2009 and 2010.

In 2009, he was the oldest participant on record for this event. With traditional Thomian grit and determination, he defied nature, age, and strong currents and completed the course, although the spectators nearby had some anxious moments!

He persevered in 2010 as well, and despite the sea being unusually rough, unlike many of the younger swimmers who gave up and got in to rescue boats, the “No Quitter” Thomian went all the way to the finishing line.

Manilal also participated in Royal Thomian swimming relay (Old Boys Event) in May 2010.

Oldest and Wisest Team on the day

A six a side cricket tournament (limited over match) for Old Boys of S. Thomas’ College is held at the Big Club grounds in Mount Lavinia each year.

The cricket tournament comprises of the year groups of the old boys of S. Thomas’ College in Mount Lavinia, Gurutalawa, and Bandarawela and S. Thomas’ Preparatory School in Kollupitiya.

With extensive use of its database and network, the Class of 1971 has successfully fielded a team every year since inception of this event in 2008, with the team being referred to as the “oldest and wisest team on the field” for three consecutive years!

The sole criteria for selection was that the players from the Class of 1971 should be able to last more than one match of six overs!

The most recent tournament was held in September 2010 and the team from the Class of 1971 had the luxury of having “3rd year coloursmen”, whose experience from previous tournaments was of great help.

The Three Professors

The Class of 1971 is proud to have three of its alumni achieving professor status in their respective fields of expertise:

Professor Priyan Dias – Former Head of Department of Civil Engineering, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

Professor Samantha Hettiarachchi – Former Head of Department of Civil Engineering, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

Professor Rohan Mather – Director of Research, School of Accounting, Faculty of Law and Management, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

Alumni Network for Professional Development

Dr. Ranil De Silva (Sri Lanka) and Dr. Dhammika Amaratunga (U.S.A) are two of our alumni who share common professional interests.

They linked up through the network of the Class of 1971 in November 2009 and met in Dr. Ranil De Silva's Genetic Diagnostic Laboratory in Colombo for the first time after leaving college – after nearly 35 years and are in collaboration in medical research and data analysis. This is an excellent example of the Class of 1971 network being used across vast distances!

A joint article by them is included in this newsletter.

Dr. Ranil De Silva was also awarded the National Award for Research 2006, which was presented to him in Colombo in July 2010 at the ceremony covering Presidential Awards for Scientific Research.

Thomian Brotherhood

An article titled “*Sowing the seeds of peace – the Thomian way*” was prepared by Kesarralal Gunasekera of the Class of 1971 and published in the Daily Mirror on 24 January 2008. The article was based on the reunion of alumni of the Class of 1971 that was held in Colombo in January 2008 and was a positive reflection on S. Thomas' College and fellow Thomians.

The contents of this article reflected on ethnic harmony and the friendships established whilst at S. Thomas' College, disregarding all forms of racial bias. This article was widely circulated amongst international Thomian alumni and was hailed as a benchmark for strong friendships devoid of racial groupings and also featured prominently in the magazine published by the STCOBA of New South Wales, Australia for their annual Dinner Dance in May 2008.

The article is reproduced in this newsletter.

Felicitations of Past Academic Staff

The inaugural Teachers Felicitations Dinner for past staff of S. Thomas' College was held in Colombo in December 2007 and was hailed by the media as the first of its kind in Sri Lanka.

The 2nd Teachers Felicitation Dinner was held in December 2008.

Alumni of the Class of 1971 have been in the Organising Committee for this event since its inception. Kesarralal Gunasekera was in the Organising Committee for this event in 2007 and 2008 and Ananda Welikala in 2008.

Regional Recognition

The 10th anniversary of construction of the helipad at the Royal Perth Hospital was celebrated in March 2010. At the time of construction, it was the first roof top helipad in Western Australia and it currently serves approximately 200 patients each year.

While researching the history of the helipad, the media identified the person who made it happen. It was a Thomian from the Class of 1971, “Tikka” Wickramasinghe, who is the Manager – Facilities Development for the Royal Perth Hospital & South Metropolitan Area Health Service.

ESTO PERPETUA

The Rev. Canon R. S. De Saram (10th Warden of S. Thomas’ College)

We have inherited from the past something very good. It is something to be proud of and to be thankful for. But that’s not enough. We in our day must preserve it, keep it alive, increase it, carry it on and hand it on. We come and go but S. Thomas’ – Esto Perpetua. In the present day and they are difficult days – it all rests on you. Do your best in the classroom and in your games, but above all in the way you conduct yourselves in the ideals you set before yourselves. There is much that is vulgar, cheap and tawdry and loud and raucous in contemporary ideas. You come to a school like this to get a right judgment of these matters.

Wardens come and go, boys come and go, but the School goes on, and that is what matters. You will be here most of you to carry it on. Make a good job of it. I know you will. We have something in this school which is good and precious. Guard it well, keep it bright. It wouldn’t be at all a bad guide for life if each of us says: ‘I shall never do anything that will bring shame to S. Thomas’.

Mr. N. Y. Casie Chetty (Headmaster of S. Thomas’ Preparatory School, Kollupitiya)

In a day when we cynically and despairingly observe all around us, that a decadent and degenerate society has spawned human beings of mediocrity, myopic vision, duplicity, mendacity, venality, warped values and sycophants who flourish and thrive supinely conforming to the dictates whilst slavishly doing the bidding of their political patrons, such noteworthy values as idealism, integrity and independence inculcated and ingrained in Thomians over generations, to always think critically and with unblinkered vision, to always be honest and incorruptible in ones personal and professional activity and always to act boldly and independently devoid of petty considerations of political correctness and personal advantage, assumes special and heightened significance.

GO THORA GO

By Prof. Priyan Dias (Sri Lanka)

I can't remember whether this was a frequent rallying call during our days at the school by the sea, but it certainly is now. I claim to have inside information, having two boys in college. Although it sounds a bit jingoistic, I can't say I don't like it – sounds good at rugby matches, and after all we are a school next to all the thoras in the sea. My distinguished ancestors probably made a living by giving them a run for their money (or life, I suppose).

Anyway, we are all proud of STC and the slogan also stands for what we do or have done after we have left the school. Most of us like to feel that we have been the first to go places, to achieve. The first swimming pool in schools, the first gymnasium, the first (and many other) Prime Ministers of our land, the first international cricket captain (Anura Tennekoon in ODI's). Becoming first is a matter for pride but also a responsibility stemming out of the privilege of being part of a school like STC. Becoming first does not make us exclusive (for very long anyway). Our pool is now the smallest among schools, we have not produced many Heads of State recently or even national cricketers – others have overtaken us. In some ways, that is the price of being first. Look at England – pioneers of cricket, rugby, football and tennis, but nowhere near the top in any of those sports. Nevertheless, Lords, Twickenham, Wembley and Wimbledon still remain the most prestigious venues for those sports. We can be happy that we pioneered things that others have taken on – we just have to look for new things to pioneer.

Maybe we could look back to our pioneers – our founder and early wardens. They certainly went places even if they were not Thomians. In fact the guidelines under which STC was set up indicates that the warden should be a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge. The point is that those wardens were willing and able to immerse themselves in what must have been the backwater that was Ceylon, because they felt the urge to “go” – perhaps seeing it as a responsibility after the privilege of receiving an Oxbridge education. This then is a model worthy of emulation. When we are looking for places to go, maybe we could consider paths less often trodden, areas less resourced and situations more difficult than the ones corresponding to our comfort zones.

The idea of “going” can also refer to social mobility. This I suppose is what the mission schools gave us, however mixed their interventions are now perceived to be. Currently though, a large number of boys in college are in fact sons of old boys – whose families have themselves achieved such mobility, perhaps even in a previous generation. The question arises then as to what extent the college contributes towards social mobility.

There is however one of our brother schools that does this now more than any other – that is S. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa. Guru has been going through a bad patch and is still far from being out of the woods. Its main problem, among others, has been an inability to attract boys to the school for a variety of reasons. It still has the potential for providing an excellent boarding school experience in the hills, but needs funding to enhance its attractiveness. Fortunately we now have as its Headmaster the Rev. Marc Billimoria, himself a distinguished product of Mt. Lavinia. He is a clergyman with a postgraduate diploma from Oxford University and a historian who was commissioned to write up the history of STC at Mt Lavinia just after he left school, when STC celebrated 75 years at Mt Lavinia (1918-1993). Anyway, the boys at Guru are those who would fully benefit from the social mobility that would arise from attending a Thomian institution. Could we, as the '71 batch, think of supporting this process? (Mount old boys supporting Guru – A path less often trodden, perhaps?) More details about Guru can be found at <http://www.stcguru.com>. I have been informed by the Headmaster that the urgent need at present is to raise around Rs. 1 million to upgrade the Primary School, but there are other

needs too. I am sure we can easily meet this together. Please let me know if you are interested (priyandias55@gmail.com) and I will send you the necessary information.

Esto Perpetua is Guru's motto too. Guru needs that motto – it has got to be there and not fold up. College needs the motto as well, so that it can serve many more generations of Thomians. But as for Thomians themselves, we can't forever be in the same place.

Go Thora Go.

College Rivalry – extracted from Wikipedia

Pairs of schools, colleges and universities, especially when they are close to each other either geographically or in their areas of specialisation, often establish a college rivalry with each other over the years. This rivalry can extend to both academics and sports, the latter being typically more well-known to the general public. These schools place an added emphasis on emerging victorious in any event that includes their rival. This may include the creation of a special trophy or other commemoration of the event.

Royal-Thomian rivalry refers to the competition, both in academics and sports between Royal College, Colombo and S. Thomas' College, Mt Lavinia in Sri Lanka. Both colleges have rich histories of academic excellence, as well as sport competition and college pride. Both were founded in the nineteenth century, and between them they have produced a large number of Sri Lanka's most prominent scientists, writers and politicians, as well as noted figures in many other fields.

The oldest rivalry is in cricket. Known simply as the Royal-Thomian, cricket has been played by the schools from 1838 onwards. The annual cricket match is the longest uninterrupted cricket match series in the world, played for the D. S. Senanayake Memorial Shield, and is affectionately known as the “Battle of the Blues” due to the college colours. The original match was played between the Colombo Academy and S. Thomas' College in 1879, thus was known as the Academy College match until 1881. The first match was played with schoolmasters participating as well as schoolboys. From 1880 onwards, only schoolboys were allowed to play in the match.

As of 2010, the tally stands as Royal having 33 wins and S. Thomas' with 34 wins. This is regarded as the most prestigious cricketing event in the country. This is also preceded by the legendary Cycle Parade which usually happens on the day before the big match, with the official objective of visiting the captain's house to encourage him.

Following the annual three day long match, known as the “Big Match”, the colleges meet two weeks later for the limited overs match. This series has been played for the Mustangs Trophy since 1975.

In 2010, as part of Royal College's 175th anniversary celebrations, the first ever Royal Thomian Twenty-Twenty cricket match was organised for the J. R. Jayewardene Trophy and was played at the P. Saravanamuttu Stadium (The Oval).

Similar rivalry is also shown in other sports such as Rowing (T. N. Fernando Trophy), Rugby (Michael Gunaratne Trophy), Water Polo (Dr R. L. Hayman Trophy), Boxing (Senator Sir Cyril de Zoysa Shield), Tennis (E. F. C. Pereira Memorial Cup) and Swimming (Creon Corea Memorial Challenge Trophy).

A BOND BEYOND BROTHERHOOD

By Kesarralal Gunasekera (Sri Lanka)

'Kula' brought us here

Five years ago when my friend, Indrakumar Kulasingam, affectionately known as 'Kula' started creating a web based network culling together the scattered data of the Class of '71, I was still new to the concept of social networking via the internet. I know you are nodding in agreement right now, because for the mere fact that we did not grow up with computers. We were not the 'computer nerds' and we still aren't and we are mighty proud of that fact. However, what the database did to us, cannot be expressed in a few words. Hence, I write my thoughts:

I exaggerate not when I say that 'Kula' brought us here. First and foremost, it was his concept to create this database. It started initially as a collection of data of our contemporary college mates. What it did unwittingly is that it brought back and revived old friendships from our school days. Our friends have travelled far and wide and conquered many fields both conventional and unconventional. From traditional aspiration of being doctors, lawyers, engineers, our brothers have achieved great heights in information technology, arts and even fashion designing. Imagine that! How we all have created our own destinies. Not only that, our class of friends have settled in countries across the world. Without this database, we would not have known how well our friends have excelled in their chosen professions. The database reunited us in no time. We started communicating with each other much more frequently and made it a point to meet whenever we could. From a sheer surreal cyber experience, we made it so real, every time we met. It also reminded us that although years have passed since the time we left college, the bonds of true friendship that went beyond being just Thomians, has remained. True, that we have made many friends since we left college, while engaging in higher studies, during our professional lives and through in-laws (and sometimes even outlaws!), but the one friendship that has truly etched into our hearts and souls were the ones we have embraced during the college years. What bliss it is to reconnect with the same guys and make the friendships even stronger? We had not met each other (most of them) in 25 years, when we first began five years ago. But eventually when we did meet, the friendships were safely intact. I still remember once when we all went to the Jawatte cemetery to pay our last respects to the mother of a friend, who has passed away. We heard that C D Fonseka ('Cidda') as he was affectionately known in school, (probably because CD roms were not invented at the time!) was in town and would be attending the funeral. We awaited his arrival so eagerly. I still can see in my mind's eye how he walked through the gates of the cemetery. We all felt an immediate connection with him. So did he. Why? Because the friendships that we have developed during our college days were for life. At St. Thomas' friendships were never based on ethnic, religious or social standing, friendships were formed for friendships' sake and nothing else. But we would not have realised this fully if not for this database. Kula's efforts indeed made that possible. So, I tell no lies when I say that 'Kula' brought us here.

One lesson that we, as truly bonded friends can share with the rest of Sri Lankans is this unconditional and unswerving friendship. At a time when we need to make an effort to build bridges of peace, this is one lesson that we all can turn to and draw from. To trust each other without reason and to believe in each others goodness.

New Age – New Page

As the Class of '71, we have got together many a time, and it has occurred to me a number of times, that we are indeed a very strong group of people, capable of making a significant difference in our society. I therefore have this to share with not only my school mates, but with every adult in Sri Lanka.

Almost every school with a significant history in Sri Lanka has a past pupils association, may it be girls' school, boys' school or co-ed school. It is a wonderful system to support the school and develop it. Let me talk about what I am mostly familiar with, the Old Boys' Association (OBA). It is a fact that OBA's do so much for their alma mater. This fraternity sometimes becomes the lifeline of the school. The OBA's in every school has the same structure – a patron, a president, a few vice presidents, secretary, treasurer and other committee members. The working committees meet and plan out events, there is an annual general meeting (AGM) and election of office bearers take place in the very same way of proposing and seconding and going in for a ballot, if and when necessary. Within that structure, I have observed that there are groupings according to age. OBA's are great in number and follow a constitution with one goal – to serve the alma mater. But since the early 80's, the inevitable formation of groups and classes have come to being; probably because with the vast number of old boys, there is a need to bond with those of the same age. These class groups are not part of the OBA unfortunately, yet they conduct their own programmes, and execute them very well. The like-mindedness and the friendships help them to plan and implement programmes easily, especially because there is no formal structure in these groups.

We are in a new age. Traditional (formal) structures are required in certain instances, but informal groups are increasingly becoming effective. I believe that we all need to review the formal and sometimes bureaucratic structure of our OBAs. Does it really help or hinder the programmes that are well meaning? Is there a way to co-opt the class groups themselves into the main body of the OBA, in a way to involve larger groups? I believe that it is very possible. The constitution of the OBA needs a minor amendment to accommodate at least 10 to 15 most active class groups into the main OBA Committee (i.e. only the nominated representative of each class group will attend the OBA meetings). These representatives from class groups undoubtedly are committed and are supported by their peer groups to achieve more not only for the school but for the community as well. Therefore, the concept of traditional and formal structures of OBA's should under go rapid and dramatic changes to accommodate more meaningful participation from all groups.

Rivalry no More – Chivalry to the Fore

Going one step beyond, I feel that it is time to shed the traditional rivalry and limit it only to encounters of sports and other competitions. Traditionally St. Thomas' and Royal are known to be arch rivals. This rivalry is only in the spirit of games and sports. However, Royal and St. Thomas' have been linked with each other for nearly a century and a half by now. Except for some exhibitions and fun fairs, it has been rare to see these rival schools working together to achieve something greater. Imagine what a lot we can achieve if St. Thomas' and Royal OBA's got together for a long lasting smart project for the society. That would certainly be path breaking and innovative for others to follow. If these two schools lead the way in doing something for society, I am certain that other schools such as Ananda and Nalanda, St. Peters and St. Josephs, Thurstan and Issipathana, Trinity and St. Anthonys and even girls' schools and outstation schools will follow suit. The possibilities of such unity and the power of such harmony will be unparalleled and will step up to rebuild the country.

In this new day and age, it is high time we turned a new page and explore ways in which to serve society.

Serve those who Served Selflessly

We, in the Class of '71 have been toying with an idea to best honour our teachers. Our teachers have given us some of the best lessons and unforgettable memories during our college days.

They took upon that noble profession so seriously. Teachers of that era were a cadre that is well worth the worship, for they served selflessly. I have been much perturbed by the fact the teachers of today can even contemplate going on strike and placing children's education and future at stake. In comparison, the teachers who taught us everything they knew and guided us to find ourselves are truly remarkable. They were so committed to their profession and the school. They have done so much to make the school proud. But in the sunset years of their lives, some of them are not doing so well, some have health issues and linked to that there are always financial setbacks. And we cannot turn a blind eye to this. They are our teachers, artists and sculptors who moulded us into worthy citizens.

During the last five years, the suggestion came up within the Class of '71, to establish a Trust Fund to support the retired teachers from college, with the support of the Warden. We held several rounds of discussions in this regard within the Class of '71 and went in so far as to draft the trust deed. It came to light that at least an initial sum of 15 million rupees is required to ensure that the most needy teachers are provided with a substantial monthly allowance to ensure their general health and well being, to live a life of dignity. After all we owe it to them.

Raise a Million Hands

Now, 15 million rupees may sound like a lot of money. But in fact it is not. Like we all raised our hands in class when we knew the right answer, it is time now to know the right answer and raise our hands to raise 15 million rupees. I doubt not for a moment that our class mates and school mates will not support this cause. Contributions from those of you who are gainfully employed overseas, and those of you who are so successful in your chosen professions in Sri Lanka, can make that difference.

As I congratulate the Class of '71 in reaching the fifth anniversary of our revived friendships, I leave you with this thought:

We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give – Anonymous

ESTO PERPETUA

The Rt. Rev. James Chapman (First Bishop of Colombo and the founder of the College)

The real end of all education is not to sharpen the intellect or improve the mind alone, but to form the character of the future man to mould his habits, to fix his principles, to make him good as well wise, and no system which aims at less than this, which would take any standard short of it can be worthy of our esteem and service.

May it be our care to provide, under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, that all that is here taught may rest upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone. In building for God, in working, in spending for God, we run no venture, we hazard no loss, we cherish no vague or uncertain hopes. Though unseen, when founded on true faith, hope is never unreal. Enduring works are often of humble beginning. The few fishermen of Galilee were the evangelisers of the world; the noblest cathedral was once but unhewn masses of stone. England, whose mission now encircles the globe, was once a nation of idolaters; the greatest university was at first no more than an Alphabetical School; the Son of God Himself had but a cradle manger.

Education must be the great work for me to look to, to lay the foundation if I can and leave others to build it hereafter.

MY THANKS TO THE CLASS OF 1971

By Ruwan Gunasena (U.A.E)

The starting of this Seventy Oners Alumni, I think was one of the greatest achievements of our post school period, so initially let me thank Indran profusely for it.

The request by Indran to contribute an article on the 5th year anniversary was gleefully accepted by me, but after I isolated myself from my family and the cat and began to think on what to write, I found it difficult to find a topic.

I then looked at the Roll Call list.....what a list. Still nothing.

Then I looked at the names individually, each time closing my eyes.

Memories flashed against most of you. I could even picture you.

I did this for all names.....

Some of you have (admittedly, most shamefully from my side) faded from memory, but most of you remain fondly stored in the memory cells.

At the end of going through all the names, I realised that I had to write about what I felt about all, in a summary.

For those who did not know, my parents were Buddhists, I hailed from Panadura and we did not have any old boys of STC in our family, but being the only child, my father (bless him) pulled whatever strings he could and got me to STC. I must have done something good in my afore birth to have been granted this prized opportunity.

I was an only child, who longed for a sibling. Meeting over 100 of you was like opening a treasure trove. Who could ask for a bigger and more diversified family with different cultures and upbringing to learn about life?

As the years passed, each one more eventful than the previous, each of you gave me something to remember you by. If it was good, I have learnt to follow it. If it was bad, I have learnt to stay away from it. I hope I have, in some way, done the same for you.

I have laughed with you, fought with you, competed with you, cried with you and sometimes looked on helplessly – when in College – as you have with me.

I have laughed for you, fought for you, competed for you, cried for you and sometimes looked on helplessly – whenever I have got news about you after College – and I am sure you have done the same for me.

But the bond I feel has not diminished and it remains as strong as it was 40 years ago.

I believe that after being together from 6/7 year olds to at least 15/16 year olds, 9 months of the year, 7 hours of the day, our characters were no doubt moulded to a great extent by what we learnt from each other, what we saw in each other.

Academically we may have reached different levels but the man in us, no doubt, belongs to all of us.

There is some part of all of us in each of us.....

I have had a few unforgettable moments in College, being appointed Captain of Tennis and Athletics, being awarded College colours, walking into the Cop Shed (Prefects Room) on the last day and having all the Cops in the room stand up (I remember P.L. Munasinghe was one of them, the others I cannot remember, as I broke down), giving the vote of thanks at the 1975 Prize Giving (I asked for two holidays instead of one!) and winning the Victoria Silver Jubilee Gold Medal for the Best All Round Student in School for 1975.

The pinnacle of course was being appointed your Head Cop. I was the youngest amongst you but on that day, I was indeed a proud boy and to this day remain a proud Thomian.

I bow my head and say a silent prayer for those who have gone before us. We will remember them at all future reunions with a minute's silence. I know you will bow with me for them.

Now I bow my head to all of you for all that you have shared with me.

In 1963, a small boy in blue shorts and white shirt, white socks and black shoes walked into the Form 1 C class in the Best School in the World, with 37 other boys of around the same age.

He did not know then what a journey he was embarking on.

He did not know then that in the next 13 years, his life would be shaped by a great set of teachers and over a hundred "brothers" of different nationalities, religions, sizes and shapes.

In 1976, this boy left the Best School in the World, in a white shirt, white long trousers, white socks and black shoes, a wiser and a knowledgeable man carrying the un-erasable mark of a proud Thomian of the Class of 1971.

ESTO PERPETUA



Prize Giving (1975) – Ruwan Gunasena (Head Prefect) delivering his speech and asking for two holidays instead of one holiday! (supplied by Ruwan Gunasena)

LONG LOST.....BUT NOW FOUND

By Chrisantha "Cidda" de Fonseka (U.S.A)

I must give thanks to our friend Weli (Ananda Welikala), since it was he who first contacted me from out of the blue back in 2006. The last time I had met him was back in 1986, when I was on a visit to Sri Lanka. Needless to say, I was very happy to hear from him and also learn that a Class of 1971 database was being formed by a guy by the name of "Indran". I wrote back and asked him who is this "Indran" guy.....I do not seem to recall him from College!

He then told me that he was also known as "Kula". Of course, then I remembered him.....but just could not put a face to the name. He then sent me a photograph of Kula. As I am very much better with faces than with names, I was able to recognise him immediately, although I had left Sri Lanka back in 1976 and the last time I had possibly seen him would have been while at College in 1973. The fact that he had not changed much also helped, despite the greying hair and the lack of it in certain areas!

Since then, as you might say.....the rest is history. I have made contact with so many long lost class mates since then, and we also had a great time at a reunion held at Manilal De Mel's house last December where over 35 of our class mates attended. One of the highlights of this reunion was meeting "Tikka" Wickremasinghe with whom I was in the Lower School boarding in Winchester House from 1963 to 1965. We met after about 40 years! I could not believe it when he told me that he has some old photographs of us taken while at Winchester House.

Looking at those photographs brought back a lot of memories and reminded me how far we have all come since then.....I am sure "Tikka" would agree. If it can be arranged I would love to see a Winchester House reunion sometime in the near future.

And not to mention meeting Kula the man himself in 2008 in his adopted country New Zealand (along with another classmate I had not seen since leaving College, Dr Peter Vanniasingham) was indeed a great highlight.

An interesting observation I made after meeting several class mates for the first time since leaving College is that, even though all of us have changed physically, most if not all of us are basically still the same!

Thanks to the database and the dedication of Kula over the past 5 years, I have made contact with class mates about whom I used to only wonder for so many years. Due to my departure from Sri Lanka 34 years ago, I had lost regular contact with many of my class mates except for Katta (Mahes Katugaha). I am very happy that now I am in regular contact with several of our class mates due to the Kula's tireless work and dedication and the database he envisioned which is now a reality.

ESTO PERPETUA

Mr. W. M. N. de Alwis (15th Warden of S. Thomas' College)

Our College has not reared us without expecting from us in return some nurture fee. She has given us nurture in order that she might engage for herself our best energies and talent, permitting us to use for our needs so much and so much only as she does not require for her own. The College needs your help to survive. Every Old Boy must give the College the nurture fee he owes.

The First Call

By Nimal "Coomfi" Coomaraswamy (U.K)

It was middle of September 2005, when most of us were already 50 or turning 50, when out of the blue I received a call from Indrakumar Kulasingam ("Indran" to some and "Kula" to others), and he said "Nimal Coomaraswamy do you remember me, I am Indrakumar Kulasingam, your class mate from S. Thomas' College". I replied "Of course I remember you, but please call me Coomfi".

Ever the diplomat Indran said, "That was your nickname at school, now that we are all grown up we must have respect for each other" and I replied "Calling me Coomfi is the greatest respect you can give, as it makes an old man with grey hair feel like a 15 year old youngster again". From then on, the conversation was like the good old school days and Indran was never at a loss for banter and humour when he spoke to me regularly from New Zealand.

Prior to Indran's call, a gang of us (not the brightest of sparks then or now!) headed by Mohan Rajkumar (also known as Soma or Raji), Ranjan Sundararaj (Sundi), Sri Pathmaraj (Pathu), Dushy Ratnasingham, Jegan Kanagasabay (Jega) and myself were trying to trace and get in touch with class mates to build a database. All we had to show for a years work was about 10 names with contacts written on the back of an envelope, and that too Raji managed to lose on his way from London to Chicago. Such was our efficiency and diligence for the project!

On hearing Indran's voice, it occurred to me that here was the right man for the right job. I suggested to Indran if he could take over the task and he said "are you sure", because he did not want to upset any one who was currently working on it. But when I explained what we had to show for over a year's work, I guess out of pity he agreed to take it on. Within a week or two of undertaking the task, he had almost 20 names and contact details on the database. The rest is history.

My words of exclamation to Indran at that stage were, "This has moved too soon and too fast for me".

I am so grateful for that first call and the great job that has been done. Whilst we reminisce, rejoice and renew our friendship and camaraderie, let us take out a couple of minutes and spare a thought for our alumni who are no longer with us, they have received the final call and gone to a better place to do a better service.

ESTO PERPETUA

The Rev. W. A. Buck (7th Warden of S. Thomas' College)

You belong to one of the best schools in the world, a school with splendid traditions and the most honourable name and I charge you to try and hand down those traditions and that name untarnished and unimpaired. Be proud of being Thomians and make the college proud of numbering you amongst its sons. Remember that what ever you do and where ever you go your life and actions will reflect either credit or discredit on the College where you were and to which you owe so much. You have learned the best lessons in the world at S. Thomas' College. I trust not only English and Classics and Mathematics but true manliness and truth, courage purity and all those things that make a man and a gentleman. Try never to forget them but be men and gentlemen always.

BRAINS AND STATISTICS

By Dr. Dhammika Amaratunga – “DJ” (U.S.A) (www.amaratunga.com) and Dr. Ranil de Silva – “KRD” (Sri Lanka)

It is hard to believe that some thirty-odd years have passed by since our halcyon College Days (almost 40 if we take that 1971 seriously). We have all moved on in life in many ways, in many directions. Look at the two of us. One of us (DJ) has become a statistician specialising in bioinformatics (and still fondly remembers LGB's "samanala kotus", "jolly kepima" and other inventions, not to mention the efforts of “The Bread Man” trying to teach us Applied Mathematics!). The other (KRD) has become an academic in neuro-genetics with plenty of brains (if you walk into his laboratory, you'll see hundreds of dissected ones) and a collection of genetic material from patients with genetic diseases. One is based for now in the U.S.A, while the other remains loyally in Sri Lanka. Both, however, are researchers, and their interests are such that they could potentially have a truly successful collaboration. But what chance of that happening at thirty-plus years and ten thousand miles apart? Not much, you would say. Well, not much, but for The Class of 1971 network!

Together we (DJ and KRD) hope we will be able to derive some really interesting (cerebral!) findings. You may ask what a biologist is doing collaborating with a number cruncher. Well, the world is much more interdisciplinary than our college curricula would have us believe. Biology is the study of living things. In the course of that study, biologists collect and interpret data. Modern biological research involves the use of sophisticated laboratory technologies that produce large quantities of complex data that could be quite challenging to interpret. Hence, the need for a data analysis specialist. Our research project plans include:

- Studying the relationship between the vasculature of the brain and stroke; this will involve studies of the anatomy, pathology and gene expression via microarrays of arteries of the brain.
- Genetic and molecular testing and research in families and individuals with an increased risk of heritable disorders.



Meeting after 40 years in 2009 in KRD's lab – KRD (extreme right) and DJ (second from right)

We have met a couple of times now, towards the end of last year and then again midyear this year, when DJ has been back in Sri Lanka, and we have had some nice discussions related to the brain projects (and, naturally, also our memorable school years!). A few publications are already in the works.

We are singularly fortunate that our batch has someone like Kula to coordinate (more or less single-handedly) the Class of 1971 effort, which has been instrumental in re-uniting classmates and bringing back memories of our class. Thanks, Kula!

ESTO PERPETUA

THE SEASONS OF A SCHOOL BOY

By Roger Hatch (U.A.E)

The 'seasons' that a schoolboy of STC goes through, has no logical explanation.....most of the time.

Like some collective and unrelated DNA, none of which are congenital and would be best described as herd instinct, brought about in every Thomian, a specific activity at a specific time.

Football

The first game that all played on the Big Club Grounds (BCG). The hockey goals were already set up courtesy of the school. One was set up near Winchester House and the other near the pole vault sand pit. Since there were over twenty teams playing football and just one set of goals, 'booking' had to be done according to the unwritten rules.

Each team timed the lunch interval bell like absolute professionals. Two 'runners' were required since each goal had to be booked. They would station themselves right next to the classroom door so that the moment the bell rang, the only evidence of their existence was a cloud of dust. They had to beat every other team's runners and place themselves squarely at the centre of the goal with arms stretched out to the sides and scream 'booked' to every other runner who arrived!!!

That was not enough. The team that booked the goals had to arrive within seconds and begin the game for legitimate squatting rights. This created a problem. Lunch was important too. So, the law allowed a 'practice game' with few players while the rest bought their food from the tuck shop. Of course, food had to be bought for the rest as well and this instilled in every Thomian the art of recall. For the others, food orders varied and no mistakes were permitted even among the best of friends. Orders would run like this:

Two Chinese rolls and a 'pawt' (Portello).

One Chinese roll, a lime juice and a pol toffee.

One mas paan, a pol toffee, lime juice and a wadai.

One pineapple ice palaam, a Bulto and two bulls-eyes.

All this was bought with prices noted and balance memorised. Now came the logistics of transport. God in his mercy gave the boys two hands but they were insufficient to carry all this. The tailors solved the rest. So, the pol toffee went into the shirt pocket. The Chinese roll went into a trouser pocket. The mas paan went into the other. The Bulto and the Bulls-Eyes would survive the hip pocket along with the wadai. If it was an isso wadai, one had to be careful not to get a prick on the bum. The Portello was carried between fingers of the left hand and the lime juice plastic containers were carried with bases snug on the palm of the right hand. The ice palaam was carried in the mouth like a cigar with head tilted back, so that the melt was not wasted.

Now came the danger of delivery. Any schoolboy with his fists of no use and loaded with goodies had the problem of getting through the vultures. Every vulture knew which pocket held which goodie. At times, a smack to the shirt pocket made the pol toffee become pol kudu. The ice palaam was easy meat but if snatched you just told the vulture that you had smut in your mouth. If he was sure of his immune system, he would simply reverse the eating part and throw the other end. However, for the rest of his college days he would be called smut-eater, so there was a good chance that he would return it. The lime juice was a problem. Consumer law

demanded that they be filled to the brim. Buying rights permitted you to take two sips, so that the level would be transporter friendly. The vulture would grab the container and glug down half or should the fancy take him, he would hit the bottom of your palm so that you now carried the lime juice on your shirt. An awful feeling, because that stickiness would be with you for the rest of the day.

So you kept eyes open and that was no mean feat since you had your head tilted back. Like a military scout, you avoided the confirmed vultures, ran through safe ground and made sure you delivered since the unwritten rule was that if you lost it you paid for it. If you were saving for a comic or Saturday 3:30pm show, that was a horrible punishment. Once delivered, you had a part of those goodies squirreled away for when you have time. There was pol toffee kudu in your front pocket. This was reached by bending over and having it fall into your palm. You had well fried bread crumbs in your trouser pocket. All you had to do was carefully pull out your trouser pockets and gather the windfall into your palm. You then got rid of all the threads and bus tickets and sustenance was reachable.

The teams were by now picked and goal side tossed for. The referee would be chosen from an unbiased group and the game would begin. At times, we actually had a football. The second preference was a hard rubber beach ball the size of two tennis balls. The manufacturers chose to produce a vast majority of these in either red or blue. So each team noted the irregularities on its surface for ownership. This was because every ball being kicked around was of those colours. So it was not uncommon to hear arguments of ownership based on a scratch or a small hole or a code placed with a ballpoint pen or a water colour picture pasted on it. Only the God of schoolboys knew how that picture survived the kicks. The most common was a tennis ball. It cost Rs. 2.50 so whoever brought that ball to the game was captain of one side. He would also be taken seriously should he have a complaint or argument with the referee because he had the right to walk off with that ball. God help him later but what a disaster of a lunch interval.

The teams would now compete with one another, running from one end of the BCG to the other end, all in the hot sun and with sweat pouring from every pore. It was serious stuff. Almost life and death. None of the rascals knew all the rules and that included the referee but there would be roars of FOUL....OFF SIDE....OUT....NOT ALLOWED, etc. in such tones of conviction that the game would halt immediately until the point was settled. If it was a false shout, then the other team got a FREE THROW. When one side scored, there would be joy on one side and mayhem on the other. Blame was laid squarely on the full back and the goalie. The full back would swear that he was blocked by somebody, the goalie would be insulted in the most cutting terms. Either he was a 'useless b**g*r' or a 'boakku b**g*r' and he would be promised the bench for the rest of his college days should he let in one more goal.

Kicks to the ankle were allowed, provided you shouted first....ACCIDENT. Pulling by the shirt was not allowed. It had nothing to do with sportsmanship or a healthy respect for one's Adam's Apple.....it had everything to do with a torn shirt leading to a thorough investigation by teacher or mother. The goalie could fling that ball all the way to the next goal if he so wished. The shoulders were used for shoving and at speed one learned that $P=MF$ while looking at the other guy skid along the ground.

At times the tennis ball would split. Necessity is the mother of invention. So, a crackshot would be despatched to any of the trees dotting the outfield of the BCG and with a well aimed stone he would bring down a bunch of kottamba(?) fruit. The fruit would be split and the inside contained a white seed the size of a tennis ball. A good school gardener made sure that he planted a few

of these trees just for these situations. The seed would be rolled in the sand to get rid of the sticky stuff and lo and behold a football was born. However, new rules came into play.

Since the seed could split in two under force, no 'toe kicks', no throwing except underhand and passing the ball had to be gentle and always with the side of the foot. If the game was serious enough, a nylon sock was flicked from any of the shoes dotting the field since some boys played barefoot and the seed would be placed in the sock. Then the sock would be pulled tightly around the seed and tied up. Now the danger of splitting was no more and the game took on its usual rules. It wasn't uncommon to see these innovations whizzing around like heads with a pony tail.

This season lasted for its mystically allotted period and then just died.

Marbles

The coveted spot for this game was in the bare area between the Sickroom and Winchester House. Here too, runners sped to the location and did the booking.

A square was drawn on perfectly flat ground and this was called the Base. Then a hole was made in the middle and this hole was a perfect fit for the marble and was known as a Jill. I don't know why and I never met Jill even in my adulthood to attest to the accuracy of circumference. Four large steps were taken away from the base and a line drawn. It was from here that the players threw in their marbles into the base. All pebbles and any object that will make the marbles go 'Hurathung' were removed.

The players arrived with their supporters. Of the supporters, three had a place of prominence. One was the lawyer who knew everything about the game. Another was the 'memory' who heard every agreement before and during the game and would display that knowledge should the other party forget his promises. The other was the most dangerous.....the witch-doctor.....a very important man who could make or break a game.

This was the guy who if he said a batsmen was going to hit a six.....bowled. If he said a bowler would get a wicket.....six. If he said we would have a free period.....master would arrive and we would have a test. If he said it would be sunny.....wear a raincoat. He wasn't shunned by the gang but he was always treated on a need to know basis. But.....oh but.....when it was marble season, he could command fees of ten cops per interval.....and worth every last cent.

Now the two players squared off and the rules came in. First, the marbles that were going to be 'played' were inspected. No damages were allowed. All the marbles had to be of different colours. Each player showed his 'Tok-ka' or 'Kiri Tok-ka' and declared that, even if he lost, these could not be taken. These were the strikers or the 'Thaws'. Very important marbles in any players' collection. To have won another player's 'Tok-ka' was the ultimate prize, but those games were few and far between. The next rule was that if the marbles were thrown as the bell rang, the game was cancelled providing that they were in mid-air. If they were in the base when the bell rang the game went on regardless of the punishment for being late to class. The last rule was that if the player threw in the marbles while his toe was over the throwing line, the other player had the privilege of choosing a marble from the other's collection....except the 'Tok-ka'.

The game began.....and progressed. There were the usual calls by the players and confirmation by the lawyer:

DOUBLE HIT.....this was when the striker marble hit one marble out of the base and then rolled on to hit a marble in the base..... Loss of turn and the other player keeps his marble.

JILL ADI.....this was when one of the thrown marbles goes into the Jill. Normally the thrower looses a marble but he can redeem himself by hitting the marble out of the Jill and out of the base.

DUDDAY.....this was when the two marbles were together and the striker moved one while trying to hit the other.

The game went on with each player being equal. However, there were times when one player dominated. This was when the witch-doctor was given the nod. He would step forward while the other player was aiming and just before the marble left his hand he would say.....BAAADA BUROOOOOS. End of story.....the player to whom it was directed at would start to loose all his marblesfrom his pocket and from his mind. There was no escape. It was the ultimate curse.

If he was a really good witch-doctor, he would have a wide variety of hexes. He could make a rude noise from his mouth.....or.....if the game was really serious and all other hexes did not work, he would make that same rude noise from under his armpit and he would carry on like a chicken with its wing flapping. He would also keep saying 'sure hit machang' and naturally there would be a miss.

Naturally this guy had 'protection' and the unlucky player dare not even think of a homicide. Of course, there were times when the witch-doctor forgot his talents and told the protection "Machang, our b**g*r is winning, no?" he would be chased around the BCG thrashed and kicked because now 'our b**g*r' was loosing.

Some games had a rule....no BAAADA BUROOOOOS!!!!

That season came and went without any reason.

Cricket

This was the game of all games. I don't have to explain the rules to anyone. We were born knowing the rules.....and we learnt some on the BCG.

During the cricket season, it was common to see boys coming to school carrying a bat. It was also common to see all the juniors carrying the wickets.....the rest of the world called them FORD suitcases.

No other suitcase had the exact width and height of three wickets. They were manufactured especially for Sri Lanka and if I am not mistaken, only for Thomians. When a junior was taken by his parents to purchase this wonder, they must have been puzzled at how the boy checked its suitability.

It was placed standing on its East-West position and then scrutinised with an eagle eye. The breadth of the suitcase was then checked in this position from fingertip to elbow. The height was checked as per the boy's height and age in relation to how many inches above his knee. Then a tennis ball was bounced on its cover. Last and not least, it was given a hard kick. If it passed all these tests, the parents were given a nod. The parents remained puzzled because the boy gave not a damn whether it could hold all his text books or whether the handle was strong enough or the colour was suitable. If it fitted the breadth and the height of three wickets (give or take 6 inches) and could stand fast bowling and kicks of frustration.....THIS WAS THE BAG!!!!

The type of game depended on the circumstances at hand. If the whole class were in the mood, then you had two full teams and two bags would be used. If they weren't, then it was six a side and one bag used. If it pleased the horde then it was each man for himself. If this was a 'two day match' then usual rules applied. If it was a 'one day match', then the number of overs were decided. Unfortunately, STC did not copyright these variations because if they did, the ICC would have paid STC handsomely.

If the class had a player who played for the House, then this luminary was captain, umpire and, after chapel, GOD. Only for the cricket seasonafter that his halo were taken away.

If the game was every man for himself, using a bat for cover, numbers were written in the sand. Then lines were drawn from these numbers and finally the numbers covered with the bat. Each boy put his finger on the line of his choice and once all the fingers were in, the bat was lifted. The number chosen was your turn to bat. Being number 19 was not unusual.

The best bag to take was one that belonged to one of the 'brainy' bunch. This was because the bag would be full of text books and had the required weight to stand up in the wind. Any other bag from the 'rest' would be full of comics and not that heavy. From a 'duffer' or a 'rioter', the bag would be useless.

The layers of covering would have been peeled in moments of boredom in class, which made the tennis ball go right through it or even a wet noodle for that matter. The hinges would have been unscrewed and the screws lost or stuck on a magnet at home. The two clasps which helped to open and close the bag would be inoperable because in its early stages of ownership the bag was duly locked but then after a week the keys were lost while the bag was locked and a compass was used to spring the clasp open. This meant that they remained forever opened and only the index finger of the carrying hand kept that lid in position while being carried.

Ever see a guy running to the next class and suddenly that lid sprang open and all the comics, catapult and sea shells spread all over the ground? The index finger got tired!!

The bat could be anything from a stout bit of wood fashioned into an unorthodox bat or the real thing. The real thing would have the signature of Ted Dexter or Gary Sobers on it.....there were great forgers outside Chands, the sports goods store in Colombo Fort. The handle would have a rubber cover which over time would be unconsciously circumcised until only the binding on the handle remained. That too would come undone with time.

The game would begin. The owner of the ball would bowl, the owner of the bat would bat and every other poor relation would await the pecking order. There were amazing rules.

Hit the ball on to a roof and you were out. If you were running towards the bowlers end and the ball was thrown to the wicket keeper, you could be out..... known as ANY WICKET!!!! If you swiped at the ball and missed too often, your own team bribed the umpire to give out.....time was of essence and no time for messing around. If you played defensive too often, you were called a THATTUWA and that did not bode well for anybody who earned that label, since once again the interval was short. If you misfielded the ball too often, you would find yourself fielding somewhere near the main gate and answered to the name of BOAKKUWA.

Justice was quick, fair and irrevocable.

Book Cricket

This came into force with the monsoons. What an invention!! I have never seen or heard any of today's youngsters play or mention the game.

The game was taken very seriously. A square ruled book would be bought especially for the game. A scorecard of the international cricket teams would be made with the West Indies and England being the favourites. The batting order would be argued on with vehemence and finally agreed on. The opposing team would choose their bowlers carefully and the game would begin with actual scores, overs, runs, etc. noted very carefully.

A member of the opposing team would take Hall's Algebra into his hand and randomly open to a page with hawk eyes watching him. If the page number was a single digit like 1, 2, 3, 4 or 6, then that amount of runs would be scored for the batsmen. A 5 would be agreed on as a NO BALL, a 7 would be a LBW, an 8 would be a stumping, a 9 would be a WIDE, any number that had a zero meant bowled, any number that had twin figures like 11, 22, 33, 44, 55, etc. would be a catch and so on.

Even while the period was going on, the match would be continued. It wasn't odd to see the algebra text book being flipped on a regular basis while the master held forth on Shakespeare. It wasn't uncommon to see silent claps take place when Fagin demanded his pound of flesh according to the master, but according to the scorer Rohan Kanhai of West Indies just hit a six. Portia could win the case in court to the resounding applause of the jury, but a part of the class was crestfallen because a wicket just fell. The tournament would go on for weeks with all the international cricket teams having their fate decided in a classroom at STC and the mere flip of a Hall's Algebra text book.

After the monsoons were over.....so was Algebra.

Gal Siyambala Season

God, in His mercy and generosity, gave mankind all types of fruit for his eating pleasure and one of the mercies to schoolboys was the Gal Siyambala tree.

Its fruit was a sight to behold. Dainty little pods of black or brown satin brittle shells sold at five cents a gotta or ten cents a handful and one of those achcharu sellers had the smallest hand you ever did see or fifteen cents for a condensed milk tin of full overflowing velvet.

One would take a fruit and gently crack it between thumb and finger. Gently because none of that delicious yellow powder should be wasted.....not even that which was in the shells and reached with tip of the tongue. Then the fruit was popped into the mouth and one would stand on tip toe while the sour taste coursed through the taste buds and veins. What a delight for the taster and the ENT specialist.

Once the ecstasy passed, all that was left was the hard seed of reality.....like a lesson in life. What does a schoolboy do with this seed???? Plant it like a good citizen???? Throw it away with contempt????

NO, NO, NO. There has to be some mayhem that could be caused with this seed.....necessity is the mother of invention and so the wooden zip gun was born.

A block of wood was shaped into a handgun. A clothes peg was fastened at the end and top of the handgun. A nail was driven into the barrel end and rubber bands fastened to the nail. A seed was placed at the enclosing end of the rubber band and the rubber band pulled to the maximum elasticity and the seed placed on the teeth of the clothes peg. Release the clothes peg and release a projectile of vicarious pleasure.

There was many a boy who walked the corridors of college, enthralled at the footsteps of history he trod on and blissfully unaware that a sniper had him in his sights. It was nothing personal.....wrong place, wrong time, wrong season.

ZIIIIIIIP.....and headshot or ear or behind the knee.

Look back and there was nobody around with guilt on his face or gun in hand.....Phantom of The Corridor.

I know one guy in our class whose only target was Kotta of the old chemistry lab.....even he could not explain why but offer that the reaction and the danger was mind blowing. Kotta was so mad at this sniper that he promised physical violence if he caught him and naturally the shots increased. It came to a point that when the English medium of our batch entered the lab or even passed it, Kotta would be back pasted to wall whispering sweet nothings in the choicest of Sinhala language. Kotta even offered a reward.....the secret number of drops for perfect titration.....nobody caved in. ZIP. ZIP. ZIP.

The Flame Tree Season

These trees were near the duck-pond.

Sure.....they were years old and probably grand-father and grandson admired, touched and urinated on them when the boarding toilet was fully occupied.

Sure.....they gave out magnificent flowers in season.

Sure.....they were part of college history.

BUT.....did anyone notice that early morn they dropped green sachets shaped like teardrops and filled with liquid???? That all one had to do was snip off the elongated end on the sachet, squeeze and some fun could be caused with the liquid that flew out??????

Of course we did!!!!

No rule, parent, master, cop or any form of authority could make a day scholar arrive at 0700 hours at the college gates, unless there was some unlawful reason. However, when those sachets fell, the area near the duck-pond was like early morning worship. Boys bent in two, heads lowered to the ground, in silent quest for the elixir of fun collecting those sachets with love and glee.

One would be walking from one class to another in the heat of summer when a momentary coolness was felt between the shoulder blades or back of the knees. A smile of thanks turned to a grimace of realisationits Flame Tree season!!!!

A quick look around and all one saw was a batch of boys, every individual halo shining brightly, faces of heavenly innocence and a thousand yard stare in the eyes. Defamation is a serious

thing in college, so you had to have the smoking gun in sight before accusations were made. All the evidence that remained was a squeezed sachet of green lying alone, naked and spent on the corridors of history.

Move on, brother.....and learn.

The Thosai Season

This was the season when the tuckshop, The Patisserie, the cartman and the achcharu man declared bankruptcy because every boy made a bee line to the nearest thosai joint.

What caused it??? WHOOOOO KNOWS.....it just happens.

Some would go to the joint in front of the courts and some would go as far as Dehiwala to their favourite joint. If there was an understanding mudalali who had a backroom for smoke filled repartee.....so much the better.

A thosai joint for schoolboys is a sight to behold.

Dinghy floors scattered with paper. Loud music. Handun kuru. Marble top tables. Loud conversations. Harassed waiters, but ever so extremely diplomatic.

On a scale of 1 to 10 where hygiene is concerned, a joint of this nature scores about a four with unstinting toil.

One enters and spies a table. The occupants are just about to finish and finish they will because the brotherhood waits. The table is booked through a waiter whose name is known, along with all his personal history and weak points. Finally, it is time to take possession of the table.

A rush in that direction and a scream to get the table and chairs cleaned. A junior waiter comes in with a brown cloth that was pure white silk originally.....ten years ago and has never seen water. The table is cleaned of all the remains of the last occupants' meals and the chairs too for good measure. Never dirty the white pants of a schoolboy.....that's trouble. The table is now free of debris which has been replaced with a million virus bearing microbes to which schoolboys are immune.

A middle level waiter now comes in and slaps a banana leaf in front of all. Then comes the walking computer who can take ten different orders at the same time and without looking scream the exact amount payable the moment you come within two feet of the exit.

The thosai and ulundu wadai is brought for serving.

NO.....not on a tray.....the thosai is stacked one on top of the other in one hand and the ulundu wadai is on each finger of the other hand. No gentle serving. The thosai is flipped liked a flying saucer onto each banana leaf and each wadai is then extracted from each finger and slammed down on each banana leaf.....like a challenge.....eat and live if you can.

Next comes the star of the show.

He wears a torn brown banian.....same material as the table wiping cloth and same era and same aversion to water. His sarong is tucked up and tied with a belt....many a time has it been 'accidentally' pulled by some awful schoolboy. In his hand is an enamel bucket filled to the brim

with watakka juice and dhall. It slops on the floor as he walks from table to table and the table cleaning boy does his duty by cleaning the floor with the same cloth he cleaned the table.

The occupants of the table lean back and wait for the miracle performance.

Without aim, without waste and without further ado the juice man dips his ladle into the bucket, careful not to scrape the rust off, and sends one liquid mass of floating yellow to land splat on the assembled thosai. It's the most perfect Murali action you did see and it is said that to get that job you have to first break your wrist and then get a quack to set it. Amazing action.

He then retreats into the kitchen, where the hounds of hell would not step in for the fear of nightmares at the sight that may confront them, and comes back with the chutney. This is made of coconut scrapings and can be yellow or green or pink in colour.....depends on the microbe reactions within. The chutney and juice are free so there are a multitude of Oliver Twists screaming for more.

Once served, the banter begins.

First of all, the checks and screams of.....LEAKING. That means that the banana leaf has split and the juice is now flowing like a river from under the leaf to every nook and cranny on the table. Even onto the banana leaf of the next person. If you are a veteran, you remain cool like the Fonze. With a finger of the left hand you kind of put it into the leak and kind of draw a river to the edge of the table. This finger made river bed then leads the leak to the table edge and will drip till completion of the meal.....that's if you are cooooool.....and we were cooooooooooolllllll.

Then the wise guys start:

Hey machang.....do you know how the cook gets that hole in the middle of the ulundu wadai????

Hey.....I heard that the watakka is fresh but the dhall seeds are from the drain.

The cook has fat underarms.....for forming the thosai.....and no fan in the kitchen. No salt either.

That cloth.....they use it in the toilet after they close.

The banana leaves are reused.

The juice bucket.....that's the vomit bucket from general hospital.

All this to a degree where one of the occupants turns green and gets up....and his meal shall not be wasted.

Then it is to the counter for payment. The human 'computer' at the counter screams out and you pay your 25 cents for a meal that is bursting your stomach. The reward for parting with such a bounty was a teaspoon of cuming seed or multi-coloured mee beti.

ESTO PERPETUA

An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you do know and what you don't – Anatole France (French Writer, 1844 – 1924)

COLLEGE EXPERIENCES WHICH MEANT SO MUCH TO ME IN LATER LIFE

By Neil Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka)

Each one of us Thomians, gained so much in so many diverse ways from varying experiences during our student days at the great “School by the Sea”. The lessons we learnt, whether in the class rooms, in the sporting arena, the boarding, during our day to day interaction with fellow students and teachers, helped us so much when we bid good bye to school and moved on to face the world as adults. These experiences are so wide and varied and impossible to list out in detail but every one of us would, indeed, have a particular experience or two which really stands out, never to be forgotten.

To me, there are two aspects of college life which had a major impact towards a successful career in the tea industry, both in Sri Lanka and abroad.

The first which comes to mind is being appointed a **College Prefect**, a much sought after goal in the school life of a Thomian.

The responsibilities, the recognition, enhancement of one’s personality, the self assurance one would acquire, are some of the many benefits a Thomian gains when made a “Cop”. We all know what it means being a prefect so I do not wish to indulge in an explanation of being a “Coll Cop” but would prefer to elaborate a bit on the funnier side of being a cop, especially when just appointed.

What I wish to write about is the famous “freshers rag” and here again, I will not go into detail about what the “rag” in the Prefects’ Room entailed because all activities which happened in there are for “cops only”! Instead, I will briefly relate my experience about the part of the rag which is open to the public, this, too, being very enjoyable and deriving much fun, a part and parcel of college life.

The newly appointed “cops” had to travel by bus in fancy dress to the Majestic cinema and, thereafter, to the Head Prefect’s home (Yevindra Illangakoon at that time) for a sumptuous lunch. I had to dress like a pregnant member of the fairer sex, saree, lipstick, polkatu, bra and all! It was on a Saturday morning that we had to clad ourselves in the “cop shed” and then walk to the bus stand, first past the amused gaze of the boarders and staff and then in front of the amazed eyes of the public, amidst cheers, hoots and catcalls. By the time we reached the Majestic, we had lost our sense of shyness and self consciousness! It was the heyday of English cinema in the country when Colombo was fortunate to be able to watch the best of Hollywood films, and as expected, the Majestic was packed, all queuing up to watch one of the greatest war films ever, Alistair McLean’s *Where Eagles Dare*. The cinemagoers never bargained to witness the added attraction of seeing the Thomian “Coll Cop rag” on display, which to some may have been even more interesting than the film itself. We freshers, who had to occupy seats in the gallery, were not left in peace even during the interval, as we had to wade through the massive crowd to buy refreshments for the seniors who were occupying much better seats!

Well, after Richard Burton and Clint Eastwood were through with destroying the enemy, when we thought the crowd would quickly depart, we were in for a rude shock as most of them stood around to amuse themselves in watching us freshers making a hurried exit to the bus stand. In the middle of all this, the exertion, tension, stress and strain had its toll which resulted in my delivering my baby then and there on the pavement; my pillow, which I had been frantically trying to keep in place for over three hours, fell on the ground!!! So with the “baby” in hand, my saree pota somewhere else, I ran behind my other co-freshers, who were all dressed up in other

amusing costumes, to catch the first bus which appeared at the stand, not bothering where it went as long as it was moving in the direction of Rosemead Place, our Head Cop's home!

It was all good clean fun, enjoyed by us all. It taught us to be humble, to communicate as a team, to get over our shyness and to be confident in public whatever the circumstances might be, a far cry from the sadistic rags one hears of nowadays. We felt no divisions amongst ourselves, no difference in religion or race, we were all one, we were all Thomians.

The other experience which meant so much to me was being appointed as **Sergeant of the Senior Cadet Platoon**.

I was very much attracted to the uniformed services and it was with great enthusiasm that I joined cadetting as a Junior Cadet.

I was generally soft spoken and quiet, I still I am, unless it becomes necessary to be otherwise!! But I was so soft spoken then, even after attending so many cadet camps previously, that one would wonder how I commanded the cadet platoon in my final year, as Sergeant. For moulding and training me to fit the role, (I can proudly quote an extract from my school leaving certificate, "one of the smartest Senior Cadet Sergeants the College produced in recent times") I must be thankful to our erstwhile Cadet Master, Mr Ananda Weerasekera, better known as "Thamuse". What he got me to do was, during the height of the South West Monsoon, when college did not have the high seaside boundary wall and other buildings on the beach which now act as wind breaks, to position me near the two famous Kottamba trees in front of the Lower School, place the cadet platoon on the sea side of the cricket pitch and then get me to command against the wind!! Well, when I shouted a command for the first time at the top of my voice, no one moved!!! Finally, I succeeded to the extent that I was able to command the platoon when placed even near the sea side wall!! My commands even caused a disturbance to, (probably the afternoon nap), our then Sub-Warden Patrick Gunawardena (father of our classmate, Gamini) at Thalassa and I was so proud of myself when one day, he came up to me and congratulated me on my commanding ability!

It was after many enjoyable camps that I got the top post, but not before being almost barbecued when in the previous year, we cadets had to be part of the army which appeared in Lester James Peiris' film, The God King. For this purpose, the cadet camp, that year, was shifted to Anuradhapura and Mannar. As usual, we made preparations for the camp, getting our uniforms ready, boots, belts, etc, all spit and polish, little realising what we were in for. The moment we got off the train at Anuradhapura, we were herded into army trucks, quite unlike the reception we were used to in Diyatalawa where we had to march in full regalia from the Railway Station to the camp, bands and all, the parade of the 3rd Battalion of the Cadet Corps, which comprised of schools in the Western Province. In this instance, we were driven along a bumpy road and then quite unceremoniously, were dumped in a makeshift camp in the middle of nowhere! We were then stripped of our uniforms and were each provided with half a sarong and turban. Then onwards to the dried up tank beds around Anuradhapura and to even drier, dusty and hotter areas around Mannar. We were barefoot and not only did we feel we were taking part in fire walking, the ground was full of shrub and thorn. All we got for the day was a slice or two of bread with a pol sambol for breakfast at 4.00am, then on to the desert like filming locations, a bit of rice and a curry for lunch around 3.00pm and back to the camp when bad light ended the day's filming. All this, with stars such as Vijaya Kumaranatunga, Ravindra Randeniya and foreign actors having a great time under tents just a few yards in front of us, all the time sipping ice cold coca-cola and indulging themselves in sumptuous food! We were given a half a cup of lime flavoured warm water twice a day to quench our thirst!

Back to the camp in the evening, a quick truck ride again to the nearest tank for a bath in muddy water so we became dirtier than before the bath, and back again for dinner, which comprised of “two slices of bread with watery curry”. Well, this went on for about 10 days and by the time we returned home, our skin was peeling off. No health and safety regulations, no labour laws, no protective gear, no air conditioning, no mobiles, and most importantly, no mollycoddling; we were merely insignificant film actors. We overcame our hardships with Thomian grit and returned tougher and wiser!

Once again, as immature teenagers, we faced all this together, we were all one, no difference in race or religion, we were all Thomians, together facing a unique situation, something no cadet had experienced before, or probably would ever experience in the future, something we were not prepared for, or even been trained for.

Events such as this, to be part of it, to hold office, to be part of a great institution such as STC, helped me so much when I embarked on a planting career in 1975 under another Thomian, senior Planter, Maurice Hermon, in Nuwara Eliya.

In later years, during the Southern insurrection, whilst planting on an estate in the Uva, when a group of armed terrorists walked into my bed room at the dead of night, with my pregnant wife lying in bed, all I felt was confidence; confidence to open the front door, to invite the intruders in as cordially as possible and talk straight. Well, it worked, at that moment I felt no fear! Thinking back now, a slight error in judgment and anything could have happened that night.

Later, when I moved to the tea plantations in Africa, thanks to another old Thomian, G. D. V. “Donga” Perera (incidentally he married Yevindra’s sister), I found it so easy to adapt to the different and tough life style in the “Dark Continent”. I must proudly mention that it was a Thomian team, G D V (who returned to Sri Lanka shortly after I took over) and myself, who commenced clearing a forest of abandoned tea bushes/trees growing over 30 feet tall and turned around 2000 acres of abandoned tea in the middle of a snake and malaria infested rainforest into a garden of tea. When I first arrived in Tanzania, with my family and two kids, one aged 2 years and the younger only 3 months old, we lived in a tiny house bordering the jungle until the infrastructure was restored. My office for the first three months was the bonnet of a Land Rover! Six enjoyable and great years in Tanzania and then on to Uganda for another fantastic two years where I was stationed close to the Congo border, at the height of the Congo war, with army units, police posts and armed guards around my bungalow in addition to the baboons and a black mamba which lived in a tree in the garden!

What was so unique about these experiences was that I felt no fear, no tension, no worry at all, surprisingly only enjoyment and loving the challenge!!!

I can very truly say, my experience of being a Thomian Prefect and a Thomian Cadet Sergeant contributed immensely to building my character, to my very open attitude to life in general and my ability to interact and work with so many people in various locations and countries, people of different cultures, religions, races, nationalities, tribes and gender.

An important lesson one learns at STC is to interact together, have no divisions, be fair and treat everyone equally on their own merits. I am indeed proud to have been through the great halls of learning at the best school of all!

ESTO PERPETUA

SOWING SEEDS OF PEACE – THE THOMIAN WAY

By Kesarralal Gunasekera (Sri Lanka)

On 6 January 2008, when 44 of us, old Thomians from the Class of '71 gathered to meet and greet Indran, it never occurred to us that he was a Tamil.

To us he was our old class mate and buddy who returned to the island from his present residence in New Zealand. It is around 30 years since he left Sri Lanka and during this period some of us have met him only twice, but the friendship has grown stronger despite the distance and time.

Let me also tell you that none of us considered it a heroic deed or something unusual that we were obliged to organise, given the present context of ethnic disharmony, it is just our way of greeting a fellow classmate after a lapse of so many years.

At the same function which started in the morning at 10.30 and went on till 5 in the evening, we greeted four more of our fellow Thomians – R. R. (Rampala) Perera, “Chukker” Gunawardena, Sarath Wijemanne and Srimal Wickremasinghe.

Speaking in English and Sinhala, we shared our successes, failures and most unforgettable moments during our years at the College, we exchanged pleasantries, joked and laughed, being Sinhalese, Muslims, Tamils and Burghers did not matter at all, in fact it never mattered to us.

We grew up together as one class of people, neither language nor religion stood in the way, as Thomians we saw more commonness among our clan than the differences. Reminiscing all these, I felt that there is a bigger lesson in this reunion that what meets the eye.

What made us want to welcome our friend with such warmth? It was the strong bond that we had since our school days, we played, sang and made merry mischief together while in school, we did sports, learnt English and Sinhala together, at the same time, the school treated us without any ethnic, racial or religious discrimination.

We grew up learning to accept one another as we are and a strong bond of oneness developed, and what started as friendship among a class full of boys was extended to their respective communities as well.

A prime example is how we Thomians got together to save people and their properties during the '83 riots.

We were the first school in Colombo district to set up a camp for the displaced Tamil families, within the school premises. Why? Because we were never taught to see racial differences but to always help people in need. We were out of school then, when scores of youth blinded by ethnic hatred and racial prejudice led the violence and destruction in the riots.

We may have been a minority at the time in thinking differently, but so many rallied around to save houses from being looted or burned down. We saw them as people, desperately praying to be spared.

The flames of unjustifiable hatred were fuelled by mob psychology, but we stood up to protect them. The camp set up at the College was not a result of a Government request. It was the Warden, the school authorities and the old boys who made that decision, not only food and clothing but also security was provided for the people by the boy scouts. The late Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali who was the first to set up a camp for the displaced in the hangars of the

Ratmalana air base, visited the camp in our school and commended our commitment and efforts.

The young blood which ran through our veins prohibited us from seeing the risks and dangers to our own lives at the time, but I now see how many things that could have gone wrong, but as the saying goes, fortune favours the brave and we were only brave to stand up to what we believed in and the only things we knew – unity and harmony, the rest came right from the heart.

So how did we become so convinced that unity in diversity was the best option? It was due to the kind of holistic and quality education we received at S. Thomas' College, although many people condemn missionary education even today. Schools like S. Thomas' College and even Trinity College, Kandy have done wonders by bringing children of many communities together in the school environment.

One may argue and point out a handful of past pupils from missionary schools have strayed from the concept of ethnic harmony, but it is true that the unity among the people who received their education in a missionary school living and learning in harmony with students from many communities is far greater than those who went to schools where classes were segregated according to race or religion.

Those who still criticise missionary schools, are hardly aware of the fact that Rev. Canon R. S. De Saram who was a Warden at S. Thomas' College in the '50s managed to get the best Sinhalese teachers in the country at that time in the calibre of Mr. Arisen Ahubudu, Mr. S. Coperahewa, Mr. G. L. Jinadasa and Mr. D. S. Jayasekera, because he wanted the best for the students.

Reverend De Saram was a true servant of God many would agree, for he had no prejudices, he kept the best interests of the school and students at the centre of everything he did. Recently, a friend of mine confessed that she did not have a single Tamil or Muslim friend until she found employment after graduating from the University of Colombo, she regretted having suspicions about other ethnic groups and blamed it totally on the education system which prevented her from interacting with others.

Good for her, she has experienced self realisation and today sees people as human beings, but what about the other millions who are still trapped in the cocoon of their own ethnicity, too ignorant to come out?

Sri Lankans refer to many incidents in our own history when they want to make a point. I suggest that we all look back to the point where students were blessed to receive an education without ethnic, religious or language barriers and use some of that learning and also experiences in today's context.

Every generation thinks that theirs was the best, so do I, but, for great many reasons, one school gave to be blissfully blind to these unimportant differences. I am sure that not only my generation but many generations thereafter will agree that aesthetics also brought us together.

I remember going to see musical evenings which took place in the houses of my neighbours and enjoying the singing of Baig Master, Victor Ratnayake, Latha and Dharmadasa Walpola, Milton Perera and H. R. Jothipala. First and foremost, the music was soothing and with that we learnt to appreciate the calmness of the mind and the beauty of aesthetics, so with a clear mind, we were able to see and say things clearly.

Please, reassure me that the popular music of the present day Sri Lanka does the exact same to the listener and that's a challenge, for today's music carries no aesthetic value and imparts no sensitivity, it lacks not only sensitivity but often sensibility as well, thus it fails to contribute to ethnic harmony.

This year has been named as 'the year for elimination of terrorism'. Let's assume that terrorism can be defeated and armed groups can be totally unarmed, but will that create peace? Without creating peace in the minds of people can we talk peace? It seems clear that mere killing of people will never eliminate the seeds of hatred.

Violence will beget violence. No power of gun can remove the pain and the suffering of people in this long drawn battle, so therefore once terrorism is weakened, what we really need is to win over the disadvantaged people in the conflict affected areas, but it is not easy to unearth the acorns of hatred which are now grown into mighty oaks.

Anger and animosity cannot be removed by just talking to people, if we are to create a harmonious society, we must start with generations of children and slowly plant thoughts of loving kindness, it is only then we can stop the brainwashing done by both sides and bring all communities together.

In order to see results in another 20 years, we must start now, and it should be a multi pronged approach, where musicians, dramatists, scholars, educationists and the media have a great role to play. Instead of fuelling the fire of ire, the media in particular can work towards bringing the three main communities together. Song writers and musicians must be encouraged to compose music which encourages unity. Electronic media must popularise these songs. Dramatists must also take centre stage to hail the advantages of a harmonious society.

We must make the word 'peace' a respected, appreciated and beautiful word, it is only then we can show that amalgamation is much better than separation, instead of burning bridges, we must build bridges that will enable the children of this country to come together.

I believe that the school is the best institution to begin this process. I say this because we learnt the value of peaceful co-existence in school. Learning each others' languages will be mandatory in this process.

We all should be proud to learn and know the two national languages of this country. Thus, it is a tested and proven methodology that really works, if we explore how it worked in our schools, we realise that we had so many activities which did not segregate us by race or religion. There were students' associations which focused on the activities, whereas today these same associations are targeting only children of a particular ethnicity.

So, that is why when we said good bye to our friends that day, we were so grateful to our alma mater for the wonderful opportunities given to build bridges of friendship, at the same time, we were sadly asking ourselves, why others' could not see the beauty and the benefit of togetherness which we enjoy even today?

And I am still hopeful that as a country, we are still not late to sow seeds of peace, throughout the island, the Thomian way.

ESTO PERPETUA

REUNION HELD IN LONDON

By Nimal "Coomfi" Coomaraswamy and Ranjan Emmanuel (U.K)

It was a sparkling English evening, in the ancient City of Westminster, now part of Greater London. The Kingdom was at peace. In Buckingham Palace, the Queen was in her counting house, counting out her money. The Duke was in the parlour, eating spicy vadaï. And a stone's throw away, in Sekara Restaurant, three Thomians stood up to welcome their class mates as Big Ben started to toll the evening angelus. It was 6.00pm and the most significant event in London had begun on 11 March 2006.

An entertaining game of "name that slightly familiar stranger" was played. By 6.15pm, all were present except Suresh Navaratnam (the excuse was "the bus was late, sir", as in college!) and the "waiter" came to take the order for the first round of drinks. Having written down everyone's request, he repeated the order and at this point there was a momentary shock that the "waiter" was getting a bit too personal and the Thomians started to smell a rat. Then the "waiter" peeled away the false South American style moustache and revealed to everyone's surprise that he was Lakshman Thurairatnam (Thura), all the way from Sydney – no one had smelt a "rat-nam". There was laughter and shouts of "bonus points" and "well done Coomfi and Thura for pulling off this pleasant surprise" (bonus points were being sought from the "Administrator" of the Class of 1971, Indran "Kula" Indrakumar, for the city that hosted the "best" reunion!). Just then Suresh Navaratnam arrived, in time to place his order for the drinks with the real waiter who had taken charge by then. Even Alfred Nathaniel (Nathu) who had met Thura a few weeks earlier in Toronto did not recognise Thura, and of course Thura took the precaution of standing behind Nathu's chair.



Chicken Curry labelled as "Cock Curry"

Mohan Hallock took charge of ordering the food – he did not even need the menu, he knew it like the back of his hand. The items ordered included chicken curry, which was appropriately labelled as "cock curry" by prior arrangement with the restaurant, to reflect the nickname of one of the popular masters at college. We did wonder whether Mohan owned shares in the restaurant, but he assured us his knowledge comes from frequent visits to the restaurant and not from ownership or from authorship of the menu. He came across as the perfect gent and the brain box that he always was.

The topic of conversation ranged from college to oil explorations but most of the time it was our days at college and this brought the biggest laughs. Some of the things mentioned were:

- Two alumni of the Class of 1971 who were college prefects in 1973/74 teaming together to travel by scooter for the college prize giving, the college prefect who had the scooter was late to pick up the other college prefect, and then both being hauled up by the head prefect for not being on time.
- A few class mates from the Class of 1971 going to the Odeon Cinema, and then at the interval A sneaking out and making a telephone call to B's father, pretending to be a school master and informing him that B was in the cinema with a girl. Consequently, B had a lot of explaining to do when he got home.

- The fight between two class mates from the Class of 1971 in the Chapel Gardens, because they could not agree on which car won in the film Italian Job. The sensible thing to do was for both of them to go and see the film again but at that age our brains did not work like that – so they challenged each other for a fight.
- A master asking a question from a student of the Class of 1971, and when the student provided the (incorrect) answer, the master asked him “Who said so”. The student replied “Sir, my cousin told me this”. The master admonished the student for providing the wrong answer and when the student asked why, the master replied “Your cousin told me so”.
- Everyone remembered the ignominious “kick treatment” received by Coomfi from Mr. L, except Coomfi who claimed he only had vague memories of it, although this was the most amusing event of our career at college.
- Thura being honoured with the title *Order of Jimble*, as he not only shares the surname of the highly respected master who had the nickname “Jimble”, but also makes it a simple thing to turn up at international reunions.

Although many accountants were present, we lost count of the number of bonus points we awarded ourselves. Since Thura had been to all three mini reunions in Sydney, Toronto and now in London, we asked him to tell us which reunion was the best. The roving diplomat somehow managed to wriggle his way out and did not give us an answer.

Thanks to our overseas guests Alfred Nathaniel (Special Guest from Toronto) and Lakshman Thuraiaratnam (“Surprise” Special Guest from Sydney) for joining us. Hope you two enjoyed it as much as we did.

Thanks to everyone for turning up and making it a very successful event.

Guys, this was a real team effort and we are proud to be members of this team.

ESTO PERPETUA

Rev. M. Bilimoria (in the epilogue of '75 Years at Mount')

What has been the source of survival of this College?

What has been instrumental in keeping the School going amidst the many trials that have beset her in all her years of existence both at Mutuwal and Mount?

What is the invisible force that seems to unite the past with the present?

What is the ‘golden thread’ that binds all generations of Thomians?

The answer to all these questions is twofold.

Firstly there is the THOMIAN SPIRIT which will never die. The Thomian Spirit of Unity, Brotherhood, Fellowship, Love, Loyalty to the Truth, Purity and all those things which make Men and Gentlemen. It is that Spirit that keeps the College alive.

Secondly – TRADITION. A word common to all at S. Thomas’ where much stress is laid upon it.

What is it that makes S. Thomas’ different?

What is it that makes schools like S. Thomas’ flourish in the modern age?

One word – Tradition. May this be remembered by all of us who dare to call ourselves Thomians. We must preserve that peculiar quality that makes us unique.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE INAUGURAL REUNION IN COLOMBO

By Indran "Kula" Indrakumar (New Zealand)

The inaugural reunion dinner of the Class of 1971 was held in Colombo on 15 September 2006.

As I was one of the persons who initiated this reunion dinner, it was emphasised to me by many class mates in Colombo that it was not optional but mandatory that I be present at the inaugural reunion!

Therefore, I made the necessary arrangements and travelled to Colombo together with my wife, Raji.

Upon my return from Colombo in September 2006, I received several requests for an hour by hour commentary of my trip, the proceedings at the inaugural reunion dinner of the Class of 1971 at the Raffles Restaurant in Colombo on 15 September and the day-out in Bolgoda on 16 September. A strange fact was that some of these requests were from class mates who were present at the reunion dinner in Colombo!

I appreciated the request for a description of the reunion, but I have not understood to this day why I had to be the author!

Also, in September 2006, my 51 year old brain just could not understand why everyone wanted to know vivid details about my trip to Colombo after 22 years – had someone leaked out some information?

It was somewhat difficult for me to provide an hour by hour commentary at that stage, since it was over two weeks after the event. However, being an energetic and loyal member of the Class of 1971, I endeavoured to provide a synopsis.

My synopsis went along, thus

My wife Raji and I departed from Auckland to Singapore on 9 September at 2.00pm. Guess who else was on the same flight with me from Auckland – my class mate Peter Vanniasingham, his wife Dilo and two daughters.

We stayed over in Singapore for one night and left Singapore for Colombo on 10 September at 10.00pm. While at the hotel in Singapore, I received a message of best wishes (by fax) which was addressed jointly to me and to the Class of 1971, wishing us an enjoyable reunion, and signed by David Lange, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, who had died a few years ago! Well, this message was signed by "David". However, it made me chuckle, as it did not originate from Heaven, but from a fax number in Sydney. Any guesses – yes, sent from Sydney by none other than our one and only Shiva Sri Ramanathan.

Raji and I boarded the flight to Colombo in Singapore on 10 September and found that we were seated one row behind Rajaseelan Gnanam and his wife Shirani, who were returning from Vietnam. Rajaseelan immediately said it was necessary to provide Raji and me with a red carpet from Singapore to Colombo – and hence his presence on the flight!

It was lovely to meet Rajaseelan for the first time after 1972 (recognition was not difficult) and his wife Shirani for the first time. Raji was also pleased to meet the first of my class mates outside New Zealand and Australia.

Clearance of immigration and customs in Colombo took about one hour and we managed to get a trolley, cleared our baggage and moved out of the airport.

The car and driver arranged through Aitken Spence Travels transported Raji and me to the Hilton Hotel, where we were provided with a glass of lime juice on arrival. This immediately reminded me of the lime juice at the college tuck shop, courtesy of Samaris and Mrs Gauder, but the quality of the two drinks was just not comparable – the drink from the tuck shop was much better!

It was nearly 2.30am when we checked in to our room. Well, here I was on Sri Lankan soil, my first trip back after over 22 years, for the sole purpose of attending the reunion and meeting my class mates.

I received several calls the next few days from about ten of my class mates, offering transport and assistance during my stay in Colombo. This moved Raji very deeply and after the first few calls she said “you Thomians are a very loyal lot”.

The pre-arranged joint telephone call from Sri Pathmaraj and Mohan Rajkumar (who arrived from USA for the reunion and was staying with Sri Pathmaraj) came at 10.45pm on Monday, after I had fallen asleep. “Just checking how you are” they said enthusiastically, while, jet lagged and in my slumber, I was trying to comprehend what they were saying!

I had lunch at the World Trade Centre (next to the Hilton Hotel) on Monday, with Manilal De Mel, Rohan Jayasinghe and Chrishan Ferdinando. This was much to the disgust of Raji, who said “I thought the reunion was only on Friday”. I was back with Raji after over three hours, which she felt was “far too long for lunch, even by Sri Lankan standards”. She was thereafter pacified by Rohan Jayasinghe’s charm and diplomacy!

After an extended stay in Singapore, Peter and family arrived at the Hilton Hotel on Wednesday and that evening Sri Pathmaraj came over and met the two of us at the hotel.

We received news on Thursday that Mohan Hallock was in Colombo and would be joining us for the reunion dinner on Friday. This news was welcomed with much pleasure.

On 15 September, Rajaseelan Gnanam, Ranjan Sundararaj and I went to college, met the Warden and extended an invitation to the Warden to join us at the reunion dinner that evening, which he accepted.

Raffles Restaurant

The proceedings commenced in the outer garden of Raffles Restaurant, Colombo 3 at 7.30pm, with everyone coming in with much anticipation. Joyous greetings and friendly slaps on the back were exchanged, with many a Thomian scratching his head and adjusting his spectacles to determine who in fact was in front of him. This was understandable, since over 30 years of eating and ageing after leaving our alma mater had resulted in different shapes and sizes, combined with varying degrees of loss of hair. Of course, once the name was provided, it was followed by narration of many amusing tales from our days at college, some at the bitter expense of those present. However, everything was taken up in true Thomian spirit, with the culprit laughing away as well.

The topics of discussion included the following:

- Comments about the full head of hair and the innocent and young look of Prince “Congo” Nelson
- Rohan Vannitamby being the “best” student in Chemistry!
- Rohan Vannitamby's current youthful looks and full head of black hair. Russell Juriansz suggested that if Rohan shaved his moustache and wore a pair of shorts, he could gain easy access to STC again!

The speech by the Warden, Dr David Ponniah, was most encouraging and he stated that he was pleased that such an event was being hosted by alumni from all over the world.

Other speeches were made, reminiscing on interesting and amusing events during our days at college, one of which included a descriptive analysis of life in the boarding. It was surprising that there were no paper balls or humming during that speech!

The speeches were followed by an exuberant rendition of the college song, which would have stuck fear in to any Royalist who was within two kilometers of the neighbourhood!

Before commencement of dinner, two minutes silence was maintained as a mark of respect for members of the staff of STC and fellow class mates who had passed away.

By the time dinner had been completed, toxic levels had increased and this resulted in many an exaggerated story about days at college being narrated for all to hear, which was of course met with traditional banter and loud applause.

Just before the night's proceedings concluded, Peter Vanniasingham, Sri Pathmaraj, Mohan Hallock and Manilal De Mel carried me to the rendition of “He is a jolly good fellow” and, in traditional Thomian style, I was flung up and down! I subsequently gathered that this idea was quietly orchestrated by none other than innocent looking Prince “Congo” Nelson.

We finished around 1.00am, after which some went to the Rahumaniya Hotel for tea and cigarettes, to re-live old times!

Following the reunion, contributions were obtained from alumni of the Class of 1971 and a substantial donation was made to S. Thomas' College.

I extend my thanks to everyone who came from overseas and to Rajaseelan Gnanam, Manilal De Mel, Rohan Jayasinghe and Ananda Welikala in Colombo for making the inaugural reunion a success.

From a personal perspective, it was my first trip back to Sri Lanka after over 22 years and the trip was made solely to attend the inaugural reunion. I immensely enjoyed the inaugural reunion and associated fellowship and bonhomie, which will be cherished and remembered.

Bolgoda

At the invitation of Rajaseelan Gnanam, 10 alumni (and their families) attended the day-out at Bolgoda on 16 September.

Raji and I, together with Rajaseelan and his wife Shirani travelled by car to Bolgoda to make initial arrangements, while the others followed in a private bus. The conductor of the bus was

“Papa” Ranjan Sundararaj, who was conferred this honour, being the most senior member of the Class of 1971 and having experience in controlling raucous school boys!

Shortly after arrival in Bolgoda, we went on a boat ride. This was enjoyed by everyone, particularly by Sri Pathmaraj's son, who gave the skipper a few heart attacks. This reminded us of the heart attacks that Sri Pathmaraj gave staff at College, when he was the same age as his son!

Upon return to base after the boat ride, Dushy Ratnasingham conveyed the observation that had been made earlier by his daughter when they had reached Bolgoda. She had said "Daddy, they cannot be your class mates – they are all so old and none of them have much hair on their heads". Well, here was an honest and factually accurate opinion and we all had a good laugh. The comment was valid, since Dushy looked very youthful with a full head of hair in comparison to the others – very much like a model.

After lunch, we got back to lazing around and talking about the good old days at STC. The topics were far ranging, extending from eccentricities of masters, the antics of alumni in the classroom and to their interests in cars, girls and films – in that order!

This amused the ladies, as they saw mature men transform themselves to insolent and boisterous schoolboys within a few minutes!

While all the men were seated together chatting, Mohan Rajkumar slowly sneaked off and spent over one hour chatting up all the ladies in a group. Wonder what was discussed – no doubt the pranks in the younger days of their respective husbands was being extracted from Mohan Rajkumar by the ladies. I tried to dredge this out of my wife the same evening and she was very non-committal. Some thing vague about Mohan Rajkumar describing his work in Chicago! Surely, this would not take over one hour and he certainly would not have had a captive audience of 8 ladies wanting to know about his job!

Peter Vanniasingham was the first to depart, as he wanted to attend the Royal Thomian Rugby Match that evening (sadly, we lost the game 35 – Nil). Before he left, he extended a vote of thanks to Rajaseelan and Shirani, which was loudly applauded by everyone.

Well, all good things had to come to an end and we left for Colombo around 4.30pm, completely exhausted but very content and happy.

As we get on in years, these are the times and memories we yearn to cherish. I will fondly remember and cherish the happy times we had on 15 and 16 September 2006 for the rest of my life.

ESTO PERPETUA

<u>Dr. D.A. Ponniah (16th Warden of S. Thomas' College)</u>

We pride ourselves in a College whose education is not merely confined to the classroom, but much more broadly in our religion, our sport and our discipline. We are truly a plural society. It has been more than an education. It is a preparation for life.
--

The roots of education may be bitter but the fruit is sweet – Aristotle

REMEMBER?

By Roger Hatch (U.A.E)

It started as an idea of a few with vision
Then grew into a lifelong mission
The idea to create a school by the sea
Which turned into a blessing for you and me
For numerous boys entered through those gates
And well rounded men left, prepared to meet their fate.

We were given a flag of beautiful blue and black
A crest that stands out even when the flag is slack
We were given an anthem called the college song
A song which we sing true and strong
It sends a chill down every boy and man
For it's the calling of a brotherhood – The Thomian Clan.

We entered in shorts, carrying a bottle of drink
Looked down on by seniors as the missing link
In orderly lines we moved around
Staring in awe at the Big Club ground
We were aware that we had entered hallowed gates
Closer we huddled and held hands with our mates.

The teachers stood tall with voices of thunder
With a shout they would tear us asunder
Our lives were sacrificed to timetables
Our innocence testified to by our uncarved tables
Umbilical cords cut and made to fend alone
The making of a Thomian began....right to the bone.

Remember Pat that insufferable twat?
See Pat Sing, See Pat Eat, See Pat do that?
Remember 6+4 and carry the one?
Remember some mad b**g*r who had a Hot Cross Bun?
Remember Rufus the cock of the farm?
Remember the prayers to keep us from harm?

Remember the terror when we heard that clink?
It was the Head mixing his drink!
Under those stairs in that dark space he lurked
Quiet and high till his chain we jerked
Then like a nightmare he would appear with a cane
And the piss would flow like a drizzle of rain!!!!

Remember the lunch interval? Football in the dust?
Tasty Achcharu from a bowl of rust?
Crispy rolls and Portello by straw
Gal Siyambala and mangoes raw
What poison we ate; were we ignorant or bold?
No screwed up immune system and not even a cold.

Flanders Field had noxious fumes; we all know that
But no fume equalled the gas of the Big Clubs Lat
A hundred stood in line waiting to leak
One required lungs strong as teak
A gulp of air and a dash to the bowl
Breathe in there and for you bells would toll.

Remember the Cartman – Basheer by name?
Who in his own way earned his fame
What wares he had to dazzle us boys
Gum, Chocs, Birdcalls and the most wonderful toys
Remember the Bombay Muttai man with tinkling bell?
Remember the Yo-Yo that hurt like hell?

Everyday had excitement for us we reasoned
Rubber bands with paper pellets seasoned
Siyambala seeds loaded to a wooden zip gun
A hit to the back of the ear would stun
Remember the 'Flick' with finger-tip?
The best place to hurt was between ass and hip.

The years rolled on and we found our feet
With confidence we claimed our table and seat
We had our patch on the Big Club Ground
And under those trees nobody pushed us around
We formed our friendships into a fiercely loyal gang
We lived each day with a bang.

Then came March and the excitement grew
For THE BIG MATCH had the school all askew
There were tickets to get and bus rides to book
We bought our Flag, Rattle by hook or by crook
What a beauty our Flag with Silver dust on the crest
That Blue Black and Blue Gollywog on our chest.

Remember the Boy's Tent on the Oval grounds?
The Royal Tent out of bounds?
How we booed and cheered as the case may be
Seniors leading us much to our glee
We saw our Clan; Past, Present and Future under that tent
We smashed the overhead takarang roof till it was bent.

Then came the time to the Lower 4th we went
Under a ton of books we were bent
A new place a new life a starting of age
Far away from all as in a cage
Gone were the kid gloves and the tolerance of fun
We now had senior teachers who caned our bum.

Life suddenly took on a different hue
This was the world where you earned your due
This was the beginning of a serious life

Follow the plan or you ended in strife
Just around the corner lurked the O'Levels we heard
Study and pass or be a turd!!

The Upper 4th we entered in a daze
The toilets in front of us smelled of Jayz
The staffroom perched on that slight hill
Eyed by our 'watchers' at the window sill
No more Monitor's books could we carry
It was file paper with an index to tally.

Our batch had evolved into characters of a play
We had a joker, a genius, a carver and a lover of a fray
We had the generous, the crafty, the arty and the brave
We had the neat, the pig sty and the man from the cave
No matter what mantle was carried by all
It was all for one – and one for all.

The 5th Form was the best for the rioters of our batch
It had an air of bedlam that we all jumped up to catch
What a bloody party every single day brought
What a deadly game to riot and not be caught
We enjoyed ourselves and kept everybody at a hop
The target of every college cop.

Then to the Lower 6th our crazy batch ascended
Everybody prayed that our evil was mended
We tried! God knows that's true!
But what can one do when we are a motley crew??
So we went through that year full of gall
Paying less attention to the syllabus and more to Odeon's call.

Upper 6th was when the magic of agriculture took us by storm
For the product of a leaf produced Matterhorn
This captivating and slender rolled beauty of white
Made us find every secluded corner to light
With an initial cough, cloud of smoke and a squandering of our meagre wealth
We were told by the pundits of our batch....menthol is good for the health.

Then came the O'Levels and we were filled with dread
Cramming 8 years of school while lying in bed
Then came that ID card with our photograph that caused fright
Then came the notice....at Mount centre your exams you will write
In that centre collected our incorrigible band
Writing our O'Levels with fag in hand!

What a grand bunch of teachers we had
Each with eccentricities to warm the cockles of a lad
Some were terrors with a history to match
Some laid their sights on taming our batch
Some caught our attention and had us enthralled
Some had the horror of their nicknames called.

Remember the beauty of that singing room?
Melody from her fingers and chest in bloom?
We fought to be the first in the chorus line
Hormones astir and eyes on that neckline
It was the dawning of a realisation then
Those mounds of promise would make us boys into men.

Remember the guy with the directional flaw?
Curls on his head and gritted teeth in his maw
A step to the left and a step to the right
Racing in the wrong direction with all his might
How we waited in ambush to scream that name
So that he whirled and slapped some guy who wasn't to blame.

Remember that treasure who was the king of scouts
He walked the corridor saying....move you louts!
Steady gait and pith helmet on head
He was brilliant – every one of us said
When he was angry we held the wall at his beck
Those foggy bifocals made him cane us on spine and neck.

There was that corporal short and dull
Polished shoes and crew cut on skull
He was the keeper of the books
Tried to intimidate us with his looks
Pity we weren't adults then for it would be fun
To see him try a pack drill, one on one.

Dear God, bless that lovable cigar chewing man
Rumpled clothes but what élan
Entering class he would declare
James Bond is here....beware!
What a smile and what patience he had
For we were horrors in his class...every lad.

Good Lord! Here comes beige suit and dark tans
Square jaw and enlarged facial glands
He sliced our ass with a fine art
If we forgot Amo Amaas Amaat
On Report, Conduct Report he was in charge of all
Smashed us after school in Form 5A....one and all.

Remember that gem and the master of story time
We huddled all quiet....you could hear the fall of a dime
He told us of ghosts, witchcraft and held us enthralled
We never moved till he ended....even when the bell called
I remember him – national suit, smart and neat
He was the only teacher who held me glued to my seat

Remember the friend of us all?
Mr. Jinadasa, to us you always stand tall

What a friend to us you were through thick and thin
Advised us and helped us no matter what sin
No nickname we gave you and no disturbance did you see
Our attention, our respect and our loyalty was for thee.

Remember that mischievous hare?
He would enter class and present a dare
On that blackboard he would caricature draw
It was the fastest insult you ever saw
Not a word, not a hum and only a drawing stared at one
Every time I saw that egg....I knew I was done.

Remember my friends that gentleman who wore his pants high?
That long fat thing hanging along his thigh?
Is that real? Is that really what we see?
It was....we know....'cos we tapped his knee!
When allowed, he showed much charm
He caused nobody pain or any harm.

Remember that maestro of organ fame?
Tall, wiry and lanky in frame
High above the pews he would play
We would sing in unison before we pray
Clutching register he would glide with head down
If you knew him well....he would rather smile than frown.

Remember Sir Godfrey, the knight of the Gate
Smiling with patience awaiting the bedlam to abate
Then with genius he would talk us down
For that tolerance even now he wears our crown
Another good man and a Thomian to the bone
He should be voted to ascend the College Throne.

The cream of educationists laboured for our cause
Teaching, correcting and moulding without pause
We didn't know then but we do know now
They gave us our future with the sweat of their brow
Thank you Sir and thank you Miss
Its in honour of you that I pen this.

These are but a few to whom I have given note
Jokes aside on them we dote
I leave to others to place in ink
Of all who formed us....the Missing Link
Wherever we go or congregate
Burned in our hearts....Our Mates, Our Teachers and our College Gates!

ESTO PERPETUA

The sole function of education was to open the way to thinking and knowing, and the school, as the outstanding organ for the people's education, must serve that end exclusively – Albert Einstein
--

THE TRIANGLE

By Dulip Gnanakan (Sri Lanka)

During the final stages of habitation in “College”, some of us felt we had grown up and that it was undignified to continue kicking a miniscule tennis ball (together with a good sized tuft of grass and a cloud of dust each time) around and between two stones placed to indicate goalposts on the Big Club Grounds. Hence, we opted for the next best thing to piety and gathered during the lunch interval in the Chapel Gardens. However, this was illegal, as this precinct was out of bounds but one of our class mates was the chief advocate of this convention and he strove vehemently to allay fears of reprisal, with the supreme confidence that is a trademark of the man to all those who know him.

Members of “The Triangle” never wore hoods or had a password but we (numbering around 8 to 12 regulars) did have a quaint rule that was adhered to fanatically (especially by our class mate whose nickname was “Carty”), as we sat with our legs inside the triangular and long since emptied out duck pond that was, if I’m not mistaken, one of three, all dried out, that were in the school premises.

The gardens were leafy, cool and quiet and the ideal spot for meeting up and discussing the day’s issues, pranks, canings and bloopers of masters. It was also the one place where the very fashionable (at the time) practice of using hip slang words, which had been newly added to our vocabularies as we were just beginning to be aware of them, was expressly forbidden. Upon utterance of any such word an immediate fine of 5 cents per common slang word and 10 cents for the heavier ones was imposed and collected by Carty, who was executor and trustee of the funds thus collected. So any given conversation could go something like this –

A – Anyone see P'Bole'?

B – I saw him heading towards the “Pattiserie”

C – That bugger can’t eat!

Carty (interrupting) – 10 cents

C – Shit

Carty – 5 cents.

And so on, with laughter interspersing every time someone was caught out.

Incidentally – remember Pattiserie that was managed by Perera & Sons? Those éclairs were the biggest, juiciest, creamiest, chocolaty mothers this planet ever knew.

To get on with the story – by the end of term, I leave it to your imaginations to figure out how much ‘moolah’ accumulated. Any guesses will come nowhere close to what was actually collected.

Going to the movies was a big thing at the time and as there were many to choose from, four times a day, we had lots of choices for spending some of that money and spend we did – splurging from balcony seats to icy-chocs to cashew nuts to everything that our parents did not stock at home.

We took in a minimum of two movies a day and binged for a week and had some money left over at the beginning of the new term.

“Those Were The Days” as the cliché goes.

ESTO PERPETUA

JUST A NORMAL SATURDAY

By Roger Hatch (U.A.E)

I remember it was a Saturday and I was headed towards the textile shop near St. Peter's College to get samples of shirt materials. While I was there, NG came in for the same reason and we met outside for a chat.

NG was one year senior to me but he was such a lovely guy we got on well and spent many a lunch interval together. NG was overgrown for his age. Broad shoulders, immense strength and palms like dinner plates. His biggest asset was his sense of humour and his laugh. That laugh was from the belly.....then mixed with the laughter from his heart and came out with such infection that it was impossible not to laugh too, even though you didn't know what the hell that insane mind found funny. It was like the Bubonic Plague that laughter.....it just spread rapidly to whomsoever was within earshot. He was also a gentle giant.....even with that strength.

So, when he told me that he had time to kill till 14.30 hours that day and that we should go for a movie, it wasn't difficult to say yes. He needed to kill time because he had to collect a Lambretta bike from a friend and to reach on time he had to catch a "154" which would take to the meeting point. I heard this 154 story ten times in that brief 20 minutes. It was obvious that it was on his mind. Either way, if I were to accompany him, he would give me a bike ride back home. That is a deal nobody passes up.

We had already seen the movie at the Savoy, I hated the Majestic because for some reason being below road level disturbed me, the Liberty was a hassle to get to.....so we headed for the Odeon. The movie showing there was 'Von Ryan's Express'. We reached on time and after getting our tickets were quite surprised to find that there were no Thomians around. We then realised that Thomians don't show up at the Odeon on weekends.....only weekdays. With shame and apprehension at the danger of being seen, we put our collars up and prayed for the National Anthem.

After the movie, true to form I heard about the 154 again and we quick stepped to the bus stand. After half an hour and the same amount of buses, we got the double-decker bus with the magic number and took our seats at the top, two seats in front of the clergy seat and on the sea side. We were approaching Dehiwala junction when my radar started to get a familiar blip on its screen. My electrolytes spun into action, processed the information and the answer came out loud and clear.....MACHANG!!!! JUMPING J!!!!

NG whose electrolytes were a might faster jumped out of his seat, put his head out of the window and like a machine gunner firing blind started screaming ADO JUMPING J left, right and centre. To help him, I put my head out too and directed his bursts in the correct direction with a couple of snapshots of my own. The bus whizzed past JJ and with unerring accuracy she had spotted us and from the mouthed words we knew that the biology lecture on unnatural sex acts had already started.

We sat back and laughed at our exploit absolutely unaware of the other passengers and with NG laughing I wouldn't have noticed the queen herself in the bus. We were enjoying the moment and a moment it was because after about 300 meters, the sound of the engine died and the bus pulled towards the pavement. The bus had engine failure.

The conductor asked everybody to remain where they were, so that he could stop another bus for us. While all the hullabaloo was going on, NG started worrying about getting late and there I was placating him when I heard a very clear threat from down and it rang as.....

KOHAYDA ARA BALLOW DENNA??? MUNG UNGTA DENNANG WADAK.

It was JJ and she had a bead on us.

This was serious stuff. There was only one escape and that was down the stairs where JJ stood, waiting to give us the works. The other option was the escape hatch at the back but CTB lacked a sense of humour when you dislodged that. There was only one thing to do and that was to sit it out. Every passenger on our level started to disembark and they passed us with a look that said what every child had heard.....GOD PUNISHED!!

Unfortunately, JJ stood her ground and was obviously trying to board the bus, because we could hear the conductor trying to convince her that we had disembarked. The efficacy of this ruse was plain to note because now JJ was screaming.....

ADO! MUNG POTTAYEK DA??? ARPU DAY AY BALLO DENNA.....MUNG UNGTA DENNANG WADAK.

It was quite obvious that we were in a spot of bother, with no way out where respect and decorum would be the watchword. NG was now doubled up with laughter at our plight and hysteria took on a new meaning for me. Having detected a modicum of compassion from the conductor, we quietly stole down about three steps of the stairs and having caught his eye, began to indicate to him that we intended to spend the rest of our lives up there on the double decker and JJ was not to be allowed to board. The conductor shook his head in agreement and we seemed to have temporary relief.

However, forgotten by us was the round mirror that was found midway up the stairs which had excellent qualities of reflection which JJ had been using while we engaged in comradely semaphore with the conductor.....she was watching it all and now had found another adversary to vent her anger on and this was indicated in the most subtle of sentences.....

*YOU B**T**DS!! YOU THINK I CAN'T SEE????? THIS LOW CLASS CONDUCTOR IS HELPING YOU??? COME OUT YOU SWINE AND I WILL LET YOU HAVE IT!!*

Stand in Colombo and silently look directly up into the sky and sure as hell there would be a crowd standing by you looking up at the sky patiently trying to see what you appeared to be seeing.

Imagine a scene where a bus is stopped where it should not, there is JJ with hair parted in the middle and the sides held by large red hair clips, face white with chalk or powder, eyebrows a thick pencil black like a Mikado samurai angry at the world, lips a snarling red lipstick, a necklace of olive sized beads green in colour around her tendon filled neck, a black and red floral print dress, large black umbrella in her right hand, a red handbag in her left hand and red high heeled stiletto shoes, screaming away at a bus in the choicest of languages. This was the event of the month and the crowd was gathering.

Before the crowd could sell tickets for the show or start to bring in flasks of coffee and sandwiches for luxury viewing or before they started to call their relations to come out and partake in this tete-a-tete, we had to get out of there.

NG came out with the great escape plan. He would take the lead, with me following closely, and dart to the right while I darted to the left. This sounded like genius to me, since NG was the first to enter harms way. Besides, my initiative curve had kind of become a hyperbola with the tension and stress that flooded my very core. It wasn't that I was scared.....oh no.....not by any means.....I was just terrified.

Without a 'It was nice knowing you', NG clambered down the stairs laughing like a maniac and I followed close behind his heels determined not to die alone on a double decker. NG first ran to the left of the footboard and using the metal pole that stood firmly fixed there as a pivot swung to the right and disembarked. JJ who initially swung to her right at first quickly realised that this was a classic dummy and swung to her left with that umbrella at full swing and hit NG right between the shoulder blades....THWACK !!! I told you that NG was big for his size, so it was like shooting a barn door from six inches.....no way to miss.

All this was a blur to me because I was thin as a bean stalk, terrified, quite convinced that I had many more years to live and like greased lightening I darted to the left and ran like the blazes towards Mount Lavinia. No THWACK for me and I was now smiling at my luck and quite chuffed at myself when I heard NG scream.....

HATCHO HATCHO.....HOLD ON.

I nearly died. Here was this fool screaming out my name and I could see the wanted posters all over Colombo.....

WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE.....HATCHO.....CONTACT JJ.

I could not care less about the 'hold on'.....I just put in more coal into the furnace and I was doing a good amount of knots when the absolute genius of the starter gun at a race hit me. The runners knew that the first shot was into the air but what happened if the gunner got a fit and started shooting into their backs????.....that's how records were broken at a race and like a sprinter expecting a bullet between the shoulder blades at any time, I was hammering away towards College.

Suddenly, I felt a vice like grip on my shoulder and before the scream of the century escaped my lips I heard NG at my side asking me to stop. That was welcome relief because the G Forces at Mach 2 were hell to bear.

We did a quick look behind and there was JJ at a distance of about 200 meters, screaming away at us but making steady high heeled tottering progress towards us. This problem had not ended. She was determined to murder. Then she uttered the sentence that would have every man jack up and ready for action.....

ALLAPUNG ALLAPUNG.....HORU HORU.....OOOO DENNA.....GAHAPUNG GAHAPUNG.

Nobody in his right mind runs when that sentence is uttered. It kind of brings out the primal instincts of the hunter. The best antidote for that kind of libellous poison is to walk calmly with

hand in pocket, looking up into the sky and whistling HELP by the Beatles. Which we did, but the whistling was hard with dry lips.

So, there we were walking towards Mount, followed by a hideous apparition screaming hate and we were keeping a steady distance between us. With my senses raw and alive, I always knew the distance between us and, at that time, it was about 263.6082 feet between us.

We walked all the way to a shop called Samaradeewakara Brothers near Auburn Side and entered it looking like we had seen judgement day. At the counter was a ball headed 'uncle' who knew from experience that we were having a bad day. We explained our sin to him and he immediately put us in his storeroom with words of encouragement that salvation was at hand. After about 30 minutes we heard him say.....

THEY WENT DOWN THAT LANE.

Five minutes later he came in and gave us the all clear. We went to the top of Auburn Side which was a few feet away and could see JJ walking towards down the lane head swinging left and right certain that she had her prey boxed in. What a relief.....we had escaped.

While I was looking at her back and thinking at the same time that I would jump the first bus and get the hell out of there, NG came behind me and now with both hands took a firm hold on my shoulders and screamed at the top of his voice.....ADO JUMPING J!!!!

JJ swung around like a tornado and was now heading towards us.

Distance 301.762 meters...ETA on those high heels 05.21 minutes.....

The human body is an amazing bit of machinery at the best of times but, at times of impending doom and accumulated stress, it becomes a miracle.

Being held by the shoulders immovably, my body from collar bone up was pointing towards Mount – from collar bone down to hip I was pointing towards JJ and from hip down to heel I was pointing towards Mount in the most atrocious contortion, with heels grinding into the asphalt in a blur but with no visible movement. With rubber slippers that blur of feet running in one place was no mean feat.

I don't know to this day whether it was the thought of the Lambretta or the noxious fumes of burning rubber at my energetic heel spins that made NG release me but he did and we both ran like hell right up to Melbourne Motors at Mount and without much further ado jumped the first bus that we saw and headed towards Wellawatte, where we hoped to disembark and get the magic number 154.

This time we sat on the land side, right up there in front, palms clasped over head and head down in a classic crash landing position till we crossed Dehiwala bridge and entered the realms of safety. We disembarked at Charlemont Road and stood at the stand waiting for the 154.

Naturally, courage had made an appearance and we were laughing at our exploits and narrow escape making sure not to mention any word that translated into fear. NG did admit that he was terrified but did not want to show it. I kept a diplomatic silence on the subject where my feelings were concerned and we lapsed into silence but with a smile on our faces savouring the moment.

I don't know why but I can assure you that it was not premeditated and possibly I had the need to do a post-mortem on the events that had unfolded and wanted to laugh again....whatever....I just hissed at him....

MACHANG! JUMPING J....

NG....Mr Braveheart....Mr Overgrown....Mr Immense Strength....Mr Vice Grip....Mr 154.... Mr Laughing Cool....without a side glance or deep breath or common courtesy just ran out of that stand and jumped into a bus that was definitely not a 154 and was probably heading towards Yala and vanished!!!!

I just stood there and laughed....and laughed....

I have not met or spoken to NG for about 40 years now but I do know he is in Melbourne.

Machang NG, if you read this, be aware that I will never forget that episode even though my shrink swears that I will....after six more years of therapy.

Keep laughing....it's all the very essence of YOU!!!

The true meaning of Thomian Brotherhood, as seen by an alumni of the Class of 1971:

- He will give a lick of that popsicle to all of his batch. There is nothing to be squeamish about it.....they are brothers.
- He will share that 4 inch Chinese roll with his batch because surely there will be a basket of crumbs remaining to fill his stomach.
- All Thomians are gold. He will carry his buddy to a safe place and stand by him till he wakes up and asks for another drink.
- The Thomian being interviewed may think macro-economics is a virulent disease but it does not matter.....he is a Thomian.....he is qualified.....he gets the job and he will do a very fine job too, rather than let another Thomian down.
- The mad guy who stands at the centre of a banquet hall at a wedding reception and sings the college song.....don't be ashamed.....walk up to him, put your arm around him and sing with him.....then slap him to death but sing with him to the very last word.
- It is okay to wipe away tears when you are far away and you see old photographs of your college. This is absolutely normal – refer to pages 56 – 58 of this newsletter if you wish to shed a tear or two!

The Hon. Justice E. F. N. Gratiean

What I conclude on behalf of S. Thomas' is that year in year out, she has sent out into every walk of public life so many men not necessarily born with the advantage of wealth and influence, not too well endowed with the enviable gift of superior intellect but nevertheless decent men who marry decent wives and by their own endeavours set up decent homes: men who will stand firm against the bogus doctrines which emerge from time to time in the life of every nation: men who stand for common sense, integrity, courage and faith in the tradition of liberty and fair play.

REMINISCENCES

Contributed by alumni of the Class of 1971

The surgical operation and tuition classes

When we were in the Upper 6th Form, a student from the Class of 1971 saw a certain Mathematics Master pass by the class window, and he called out loudly “L**j*boo”, which was his nickname.

The Master stopped and came into the class and threatened to detain the whole class after school. The student who called out stood up bravely and had the decency to own up to shouting (or did he try to show off in front of his class mates?). He was hauled before the whole class and was given a couple of extremely gentle “kaneys” (slaps) to the face, whereupon the student pretended to be in anguish and said “Forgive me Father, the devil got into me”. The Master (who was also the Chaplain) was taken aback and released the student to his class.

The story does not end there

A week or two later, this particular student’s father (who was an anaesthetist) told him that he had met a very nice Mathematics Master from STC on whom he had to perform an operation and the student’s father had asked the Master whether he knew his son and mentioned his name. Thereupon the Mathematics Master had said “Wonderful boy, very hard working, disciplined” – all the good things a parent would want to hear of his son. Upon hearing this from his father, the student immediately remarked “A very good teacher” and then the student’s father wanted to arrange tuition for his son with this Master!

However, the matter of tuition ended there, with the boy giving some excuse or the other, despite having got only 7/100 for algebra in the previous test!

The story ends with this student’s father waiving his fee for the surgery, as a mark of respect to his son’s Master.

Meanwhile, the student was quite confused about three things:

1. Did his father really know the truth and thus waive the fee?
2. Did the Master develop a hernia before or after slapping him?
3. And last but not least, did the devil really get into him?

A few days later, the Master was seen hobbling along the corridors of STC (post operation after hernia surgery) and, on passing each other, both the Master and student had devilish grins on their faces!

Kittens and tikkas

Mr. J was the master for Lower 4C in 1967.

One morning, a few kittens were seen near the water tap, adjacent to the toilet.

P’Bole’ promptly walked up, picked up a kitten (“catnapper”).

The “catnapper” and said kitten went in to Lower 4C.

A piece of twine (kohu lanu) was found, which was tied gently around the neck of the kitten.

The kitten was then placed in the class cupboard, with the twine leading up to the second row in class. P'Bole' normally sat in the last row but that day displaced another student to the last row and instead occupied the second row, with one end of the twine in his hand. He merely said to the normal occupant of the second row ("Mallee, ada passen indaganna" – "brother, sit at the back today").

Meanwhile, Rampi obtained a "tikka" – a metal toy, similar to a large beetle, which had a clip and each time you pressed the clip, it emanated the sound of "Tick, Tick". He placed it under his toe, wedged to the sole of his shoe.

The fun began.....

Mr. J walked in and sat down.

Rampi started off with the first salvo of a series of "tick tick" sounds, without literally moving a muscle. P'Bole' then tugged softly at the twine and a faint mew was heard from within the class cupboard. A stronger tug on the twine was followed by a louder mew, in conjunction with the "Tick Tick" from Rampi's toe.

Mr. J did not know what was happening – he could hear the sound, but could not readily identify its source or origin.

Ink on the Attendance Register

It was the first day of the first term in 1968.

We were in our classes in the Lower 4th Form and about to move over to the Upper 4th Form that morning.

As usual, roll call was made. The Class Master was Mr. D.

He was extremely meticulous and very neat (was an Art master and this possibly explains his affinity towards being neat) and took great pride in the standard of his Attendance Register for Lower 4E. The Attendance Register was neatly covered in brown paper and the description Attendance Register – Lower 4E – S. Thomas College, Mount Lavinia was artistically written by him on the outer cover.

The Register was always marked in black ink with a fountain pen that had a thick nib. After marking the Register each morning, he would meticulously remove the surplus ink with a sheet of blotting paper. When the Register was opened, it was indeed a creation of art (rather than an Attendance Register), with neat 1's and 0's, representing those Present and Absent.

That morning, after school holidays, W brought a water pistol to school. G wanted to inspect it but somehow, they broke in to a small tussle. This was in the first row of the class. Unfortunately, the water pistol was loaded with water, the Attendance Register was wide open on the class master's desk, with Mr. D marking attendance for the last time on that Register for that group of students, before they moved over to Upper 4.

While the tussle was in progress, the nozzle of the loaded water pistol accidentally changed direction (towards the master's desk) and got squeezed. Splash, splash, splash – a large squirt

of water was unceremoniously sprayed across the Attendance Register and completely smudged it, thereby wrecking a masterpiece that was painstakingly created over one year.

The look of utter disgust, despair, anger and disappointment on the face of Mr. D is beyond description. He just had to put up with it, as the whole class was moving over to the Upper 4th Form.

The price we paid for laughter

The year 2009 was special for alumni of the Class of 1971 and we should not let major milestones experienced at the revered seat of learning (S. Thomas' College) pass by without adequate commemoration.

No – we are not referring to the 40th anniversary of man landing on the moon in 1969.

Instead, it was 40 years ago at STC in 1969 that we witnessed a learned master of our college kicking one of our erstwhile class mates in exasperation.

I am referring to none other than Mr. LA kicking “Coomfi”.

The sequence of events is still very clear in my mind, as I was in the first row on that day and got a ring side view of the proceedings!

The sequence is as follows:

Year 1969, Second Term in Form 5 in the Main Block, Ground Floor.

We were seated in Form 5D waiting for the master to arrive for the Chemistry class, but he did not come in on that day.

Instead, Mr. LA was sent to supervise the class, and he said loudly “Read A Book”, while he peered at us by lowering his head and looking above the rim of his spectacles!

Being the law abiding students that we were, we then asked him whether we could read a text book, novel, comic, atlas or logarithm tables, so that we would not get into trouble.

He got very annoyed and said “I said read A book”, with loud emphasis being on “A”.

We then said A book, B book, C book, D book and so on.

Our incorrigible class mate, Coomfi, burst out laughing.

Mr. LA caught Coomfi by the collar of his pristine white shirt (which was made of Blue Line poplin, being the popular fabric at that time) and frog marched him out of the class room and started walking along the corridor, intending to cane Coomfi in the Staff Room (by the R Forms). Coomfi then pleaded in a meek and humble voice and said “Sir, please do not cane me” and burst out laughing again.

Mr. LA then brought Coomfi back to the class room, stumbled over an obstacle being Coomfi's single slipper, which by now had parted company with his injured foot, and then kicked him. Coomfi was a boarder and those not familiar with the unofficial dress code for Thomian boarders should note that Coomfi wore a single shoe on one foot and a single Bata rubber slipper on the other on that day, as he had a wound in one foot!

All the while, Coomfi was going through an emotional roller coaster ride (being stunned, horrified and amused – all at the same time) and the rest of us were laughing.

The consensus thus far amongst alumni of the Class of 1971 is that the master who administered the kick to Coomfi was merely discharging his duties, since such action was essential to discipline a brat such as Coomfi.

A rumour was also circulating in Mount Lavinia in May 2009 that Coomfi came from UK and, together with three other class mates, visited STC and paid respects at the "shrine", where he received the kick 40 years ago (i.e. outside Form 5D – in the corridor of the ground floor of the Main Block, across from the R Forms).

Reliable sources have advised me that a single green coloured Bata rubber slipper (with a fully worn out heel) and a single black Bata shoe was left at the "shrine" as an offering.

We wonder what these could fetch on E-Bay!

The melting chocsicle

We were together in Form 2C in 1964.

Popsicles were a frequent treat for us and "*chocsicles*" had just been introduced by the Aleric's Ice Cream Company and were very popular at the STC tuck shop (half white and half brown chocolate flavoured ice cream on a stick).

One of our class mates was L, who was a boarder in the junior school boarding (Winchester House). He purchased a chocsicle from the tuck shop about one minute before the end of the lunch interval.

He quickly rushed in to class with it and then realised he had no time to eat it. He then wrapped it in his handkerchief and placed it in the left pocket of his short trousers.

During the first period after lunch, it was English. The lady teacher asked him to stand up and read a paragraph from the text book.

Poor L started to wriggle, possibly because of the cooling effect of the chocsicle in his trouser pocket. The lady teacher got annoyed and asked him to stand up on the bench and read (L was in the second row just in front of me).

He stood up on the bench and started squirming, as the chocsicle started dripping down his legs. The lady teacher was aghast, and very likely did not realise that it was the chocsicle. She just chased him out of the class room! L did not return until the next period and possibly went to Winchester House to change his trousers!

Missing cheese sandwiches

While in the Lower 6th Form in 1970, two of us opened the lunch box of Shiva Sri Ramanathan, removed one sandwich each and then replaced it after the lunch interval.

Shiva obviously knew what had happened but did not say anything. On the next day, during the last period before lunch, Shiva silently offered a sandwich to each of us (he probably got his mother to make a few extra sandwiches).

Obviously, the subtle message was "you guys just got to ask" – he was a diplomat from those days! From then on, at least once a week, he gave both of us a sandwich, and mainly feeling sorry for one of us, who was a skinny starving boarder whose staple diet was "rubbery" string hoppers and pol kudu sambol in the boarding! Both of us found the sandwiches gorgeous and multi layered (what we now refer to as a club sandwich, don't think the term existed then), and there was always a layer of Kraft cheese (those were the days when the import of all luxury food items were banned) and Kraft cheese was like gold.

The amorous student

One of our class mates had a girl friend while he was in the boarding.

From time to time, he would receive letters from her and, on such happy occasions, he would always generously treat his class mates to snacks and cool drinks at the Tuck Shop.

It is known that on a few occasions, his fellow students exploited the situation when they felt like having a snack, prepared such letters on their own and passed them on to him on the pretext that they were from his girl friend. This resulted in the happy lad treating his class mates to more snacks at the Tuck Shop, until he thanked his girlfriend one day for her letters and she expressed surprise!

Being the gentleman that he was, he never challenged the “culprits”, although it was not difficult for him to identify them!

The Trio with Surnames beginning with G, H and I

Three students in the Class of 1971 with surnames beginning with “G”, “H” and “I” were reputed for their wit, fun and excellent sense of humour and it was a strange coincidence that their surnames were in sequence to the three alphabets “G”, “H” and “I”.

We have fond recollections of “G” and “H”, smiling shyly and walking slowly and serenely like a bride and groom along the corridors of the Main Block (Upstairs, Lower 6th Form in 1970) in between two class periods, with “I” following them pretending to be the bridesmaid and holding the veil of the bride!

Mangoes, kadalai and Cartman

We had one ammay at the Main Gate selling raw mangoes, with added sand, dust, salt and chillies and two men selling kadalai near the fives courts in the Lower School. One of the men had a cart with boiled kadalai on top of a flame and the other a tray on his head with fried kadalai in a “paper gotta”.

The latter would offer us a handful of free kadalai in exchange for an old exercise book, the pages of which he ripped up and utilised to assemble the “paper gotta” to wrap his kadalai. The going rate in 1966 was one handful of kadalai for a 40 page exercise book and a little more for an 80 page exercise book. Many exercise books of the boys from the Lower School were traded on this basis. I remember the rate for a thick monitor's exercise book (160 pages or 320 pages) being two hundoos (two fillings of an aluminium cigarette tin!) of kadalai or a daily supply of one “gotta” for 10 days!

Of course, Cartman opposite the Lower 4th block of class rooms (De Saram Road) would also exchange almost anything for a student's Parker or Pilot fountain pen – comics, lollies, yoyos, used tennis balls, catapults, pencils, etc. The only pre-condition to patronise Cartman was that you had to be a “graduate” of the Middle School or Upper School, or else the college prefects got you by the collar.

Aaaahhhh we were maestros of barter, trade and exchange in our younger days. Sadly, we have since lost touch and are now slaves to currency notes and credit cards!

Education is not filling of a pail but lighting of a fire – W. B. Yeats (Irish Poet, 1865 – 1939)

PHOTOGRAPHS



College Chapel (supplied by Nimal "Coomfi" Coomaraswamy)



Entrance to the College Hall and part of the Quadrangle (supplied by Nimal "Coomfi" Coomaraswamy)



College Bell (supplied by Sandy Jayasekera)



Old Science Laboratory, bell and part of the quadrangle (supplied by Nimal "Coomfi" Coomaraswamy)



Main Block (supplied by "Cidda" de Fonseka)



The revered corridors of the Main Block (supplied by Nimal "Coomfi" Coomaraswamy)

PHOTOGRAPHS (continued)



"Thalassa" – Warden's Office and Administration (supplied by Ruwan Gunasena)



New Science Laboratory, Swimming Pool Structure and Cricket Scorers Box (supplied by Ruwan Gunasena)



The Arts Block (supplied by Ruwan Gunasena)



The Lower School, as seen from The Big Club Grounds (supplied by Ruwan Gunasena)



Tennis Courts and the roof of the Lower 4th Forms in the background (supplied by Ruwan Gunasena)



The Dining Hall (supplied by Ruwan Gunasena)

PHOTOGRAPHS (continued)



Lower 4th Forms (supplied by "Cidda" de Fonseka)



Winchester House (supplied by "Cidda" de Fonseka)



The Duck Pond (supplied by "Cidda" de Fonseka)



Boarders of Winchester House (1964) including 8 from the Class of 1971 (supplied by "Tikka" Wickremasinghe)



STC Old Boys Cricket Carnival (2008) – Class of 1971, six a side cricket team, with one co-opted player and one player missing! (supplied by Rohan Jayasinghe)



STC Old Boys Cricket Carnival (July 2009) – Class of 1971, six a side cricket team (supplied by Chrishan Ferdinando)

PHOTOGRAPHS (continued)

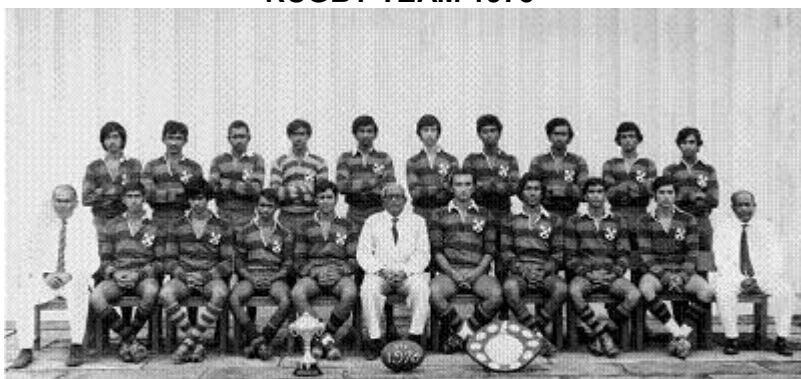
SWIMMING TEAM 1971



Standing (L. to R.): T. P. P. Amarasekera, H. Tillekeratne, P. D. J. Goonewardena, R. Samarasinghe, A. M. De Mel, P. R. Mather, D. K. Weerasinghe, D. Emersley, M. C. K. Perera, P. Mohan, F. F. Girigson, R. S. C. Dias, A. Walloppillai, D. Wickremanayake.
Seated (L. to R.): F. J. Beling, J. Speldewinde, H. D. Goonetilleke, C. M. Anthonisz Capt.), Warden, S. P. Dissanayake, E. T. Keyt, B. S. M. De Silva, E. L. Gunewardena, Mr. B. S. De S. Abeysena (*Master-in-Charge*), S. V. M. De Mel, J. A. B. Mapa, R. Dharmadasa, L. F. Grigson, N. E. Jayasinghe, K. Wickremanayake, W. W. Beling.
Front Row :
Absent : F. J. De Saram.

The team included 6 students from the Class of 1971 (source: College Magazine, Term 3 – 1971)

RUGBY TEAM 1975



Standing L-R Charith Wickremathilake, Ananda Welikala, Darup Pelris, S.K.N.Fernando, Rienzie Fernando, Shane Pinder, Devaka Fernando, Rohitha Artygalle, Michael Jayasekara, Tusitha Jayasinghe
Seated L-R Mr Quentin Israel (Coach) Mahesh Abeynayake, Theodore Thambapillai, Pat Jacob, PL Munasinghe (Capt) , Mr S.J. Anandanayagam (Warden), Stefan D' Silva, Peter Vanniasingham, Loka Tilakaratne, Wilhelm Bogstra, Mr Lassie Abeywardene (M in C)

The team includes 4 students from the Class of 1971 (source: College Magazine, 1975)

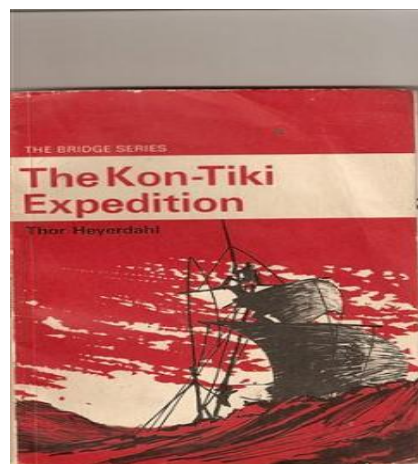
PHOTOGRAPHS (continued)



Lower School Concert, 1964 (supplied by Ruwan Gunasena)

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
E. LIT.	BUDDHISM.	BUDDHISM.	BUDDHISM.	E. LIT.
PHYSICS. (PR)	CHEMISTRY. (PR)	MATHS. (ALG)	MATHS. (GEOM)	E. LIT.
E. LANG. (OLP)	S. LANG.	CHEMISTRY.	MATHS. (GEOM)	E. LIT.
BIOLOGY.	E. LANG. (ETH)	BIOLOGY.	CHEMISTRY.	S. LANG.
MATHS. (ARITH)	MATHS. (ARITH)	E. LANG. (ETH)	BIOLOGY.	CHEMISTRY.
I N T E R V A L				
E. LANG. (OLP)	S. LANG.	S. LANG.	E. LANG. (COMP)	BIOLOGY.
CHEMISTRY.	S. LANG.	MATHS. (ALG)	PHYSICS.	BIOLOGY.
E. LIT.	PHYSICS.	S. LANG.	PHYSICS.	PHYSICS.

Class Time Table, 1970 (supplied by "Cidda" de Fonseka)



Text Book used in 1968 (supplied by "Cidda" de Fonseka)

Mr. M. L. C. Ilangakoon (14th Warden of S. Thomas' College)

We are proud to claim that, while being governed by the education policies of the State, we are no less committed to the religious precepts of our Christian Faith. We have as one of our objectives the communication of our Christian values in every one of our relationships, in discipline, in administration, in sports and in all our dealings with one another.

