

Observations made by Mr. Lakshman Jayatilaka re AGM and Re-Union Day Celebrations

1. The AGM is fixed for Sunday February 23,2003
2. It is hoped to dispatch Notice of Meeting well in advance.
3. The Notice of Meeting will be accompanied by-
 - a. Audited Accounts of the OBA upto March 31,2003
 - b. A copy of the Current Rules and the Proposed New Rules
 - c. The Secretary's Report as at December 31,2002
 - d. Programme of events in connection with the AGM and Re Union Celebrations.
 - e. Headmaster's Report.
4. The Re-Union Dinner will be in the new Dining Hall on Saturday February 22,2003. This is open to all Old Boys who come to Gurutalawa.
5. Copies of the Agenda & Programme for the years 2002,2001,2000, 1999,1998,1997 & 1996 are enclosed.
6. Only Members should be entitled to attend the AGM which will be held in the Foster Hall. Members were informed of this restriction in the years 2002 and 2001. In fact the restriction was notified to include the Fellowship and Dinner too in those two years. Despite this notification, a large number of non-members were admitted and present during the AGM, the Fellowship and Dinner. This practice is incorrect. Whilst Old Boys may be perfectly free to participate in all celebrations in connection with the Re-Union, the AGM must be restricted to Members of the OBA only. Failure to do so could create unnecessary problems to the organizers and the Ex-Co in the event of there being an election to fill any post.
7. A Registration Desk at the entrance manned by the Secretary or the Asst. Secretary of the OBA or other authorized personnel armed with the Register of Members and Security under the supervision of the Headmaster working in co-ordination with the OBA is a must. All points of entry and exit to the Foster Hall should be controlled. On one occasion a bottle of whisky was snatched away by a stranger while Fellowship was going on. No unauthorized personnel should be permitted inside Foster Hall other than the technicians involved with Sound and Lighting etc.
8. It has to be determined as to who should sit at the Main Table. The question whether on election of the Principal Office Bearers, they should be invited to the Main Table must be determined. In normal practice the entire proceedings are conducted and until its conclusion, the outgoing Ex-Co would hold office. They cease to hold office only at the end of the meeting. Thus the record of the proceedings of the AGM should be maintained by the incumbent Secretary and not the newly elected Secretary from the point of his election. In March 2002 a proper record had not been kept by the outgoing Secretary.
9. The motion to adopt the new Rules which have been circulated should be moved at the initial stages of the meeting, perhaps after the Welcome Address by the President (Headmaster).
10. Unless discussions are had with other parties that may show an interest in seeking office and steps taken to avoid a contest or election with a mutually acceptable Team it may not be possible to avert it, unless of course when another name is proposed and it appears an election is inevitable, the first party (or some of them) withdraw their candidature to avoid ill feeling etc.

11. An effort must be made to obtain the Headmaster's Report in advance and circulate it together with the Notice of Meeting etc.
12. The singing of the National Anthem has not been a part of the Agenda at the AGM. Consideration must be given whether it should be included.
13. Some form of Dress Code is advisable, at least Smart Casual. Members of the Ex-Co should be at least in Tie if not Lounge.
14. A suitable venue should be decided for the Old Boys get-together or Fellowship which takes place immediately after the AGM. Foster Hall may not be appropriate as the necessary glassware, water, tables etc, are not available and all these have to be brought from the Old Pantry and New Dining Hall. Subsequent proceedings get delayed because it takes quite a while to organize things for the Fellowship if held in Foster Hall ie the same venue as the AGM. Unless the stage is used for any Band or Group to provide some music during fellowship, it may be preferable to have the Fellowship at the entrance area of the New Dining Hall where the required glasses, plates, cutlery, tables etc are readily available. It will also facilitate the serving of bites which are prepared in the kitchen next door. Retiring to the entrance area of the New Dining Hall after the AGM and thereafter moving to occupy places for the sit down dinner on the sounding of a gong and announcement of dinner would be a better arrangement.
15. Another aspect which requires attention is that **ALL SHOULD SIT DOWN TO DINNER AT THE SAME TIME AFTER THE CHAPLAIN SAYS GRACE**. Old Boys trickling in at all times, while Dinner is in progress after Dinner speeches are in progress devalue the occasion and reduces its prestige. We must try to regain some of the lost traditions and encourage the younger Old Boys to adopt themselves to a more disciplined approach. This is best done if the entire Programme of Events is countersigned by the Headmaster and he is actively involved in these arrangements without making him and the Chaplain were observers or bystanders. It was observed in past years that whilst some Old Boys are engaged in the Fellowship etc in Foster Hall others have finished their Dinner in the Old Dining Hall including those at the Head Table. Fellowship in Dorms etc, should also be discouraged.
16. On the last occasion, the Chaplain after the AGM had gone back to his quarters near Keble, had his dinner and retired to bed. He had not been briefed. An Old boy had to run from Foster Hall all the way to Keble (the road being blocked due to congestion of vehicles) in order to bring the Chaplain back to say Grace before dinner. When he did come, half the Old Boys had finished their dinner. Therefore the main event of the evening should be set out in the programme and all Old Boys advised of the items which are to take place following some part of the Christian tradition. Additional copies of the programme of events must be distributed in the Dorms and perhaps the Main gate too.
17. After dinner speeches must be restricted **and short in duration**. The organizing committee should decided who should be billed to speak and those persons must be advised in advance. As to whether any impromptu speeches by persons who are not billed but wish to speak is to be allowed must be discussed.
18. The payment of some cash to the Minor Staff has been traditionally followed after the Dinner. If this is to be continued the arrangement with regard to collection of the money must be decided. Usually it is a proportion of the money collected to defray College Expenses in providing accommodation and Food to the Old Boys.
19. The National Anthem is to be sung after dinner whilst the college song is sung at the end of the AGM. This must be thought out afresh.

20. The Volley Ball match between the Old Boys and Minor Staff had been a not starter during the past few years. If this cannot be had there is no point in including it in the programme.

21. Any other sports activities could be considered but this might interfere with the main sports activity being the cricket match. The Headmasters observation will be useful in this connection. As the cricket match starts very late a Basket Ball match earlier, perhaps may be appropriate.

22. Some effort must be made to have the Swimming Pool in proper working order so that the water is cleaned well in advance. The condition now is pathetic.

23. The College provides dinner on Friday; Breakfast, Lunch, Tea and Dinner on Saturday; and Breakfast on Sunday to Old boys who wish to participate in the Re-Union celebrations at Gurutalawa. Bites are also provided on Saturday at the grounds whilst the cricket match is in progress. Old boys bring their own liquor.

24. On the last occasion, ie March 2002 a sum of Rs.500/- was charged to defray costs at Gurutalawa including a cash gift to the domestic staff. Tickets are sold by the Treasurer during the Celebrations. The cost for March 2003 will have to be worked out with the Headmaster and his staff. Some Old Boys have participated in earlier years without purchasing tickets. Even outsiders have been observed at the Dinner without tickets. An effective system is required to be put in place starting from the Security at the main gate so that Vehicle Numbers, names of Old boys are noted, with a counter-check as to whether they are members of the OBA. Whether the tickets should be sold at the gate is another matter to be worked out with the Headmaster. Certainly no person should be permitted to participate in the Dinner who does not have a ticket or is an Uninvited Outsider. These steps should be taken so that the Re Union celebrations do not end up as a "Comedy" or "farce". In all these matters if it is the Headmaster who is seen to be organizing some part of the programme, there will be better respect and observance. The OBA should give him all the assistance.

25. The question arises whether Letters of Excuse etc, received by the Secretary should be read out. The fact that a person informs of his inability to attend is sufficient intimation. Reading out letters containing adverse remarks made by one Old Boy against another Old Boy should not be permitted as happened in March 2002. This type of conduct opens the door for unnecessary conflict, and ill feeling. A sample letter totally uncalled for and most probably orchestrated is attached.

26. The Minutes of the previous Meeting need not be read out as they have been previously circulated as also the Headmaster's Report and the Secretary's Report. On the last few occasions a fair number of Old Boys were dozing off because listening to the Secretary, labouring over the Minutes and his report was so boring and painstaking for the listeners. Instead that time could be utilized for discussion of matters arising from the Secretary's Report, the Headmaster's Report and the Audited Accounts which members would have had adequate time to peruse the 02 weeks before. Instead of reading out the Minutes of the previous AGM it could be accepted as confirmed on being proposed and seconded unless any changes are moved.

27. Although there is an item titled "Vote of Thanks" this in fact does not take place. It may thus be avoided.

28. It would be good to determine the identity of those who are to participate in sports activities well in advance so that they will be advised and will be appropriately attired.

29. It may be better not to involve the College or its Minor Staff in the sale of liquor or beer. A practice has been made for the Minor Staff to run a beer stall at the grounds and at the Fellowship Dinner. The appropriateness of this arrangement must be discussed by the Ex-Co initially and then with the Headmaster.

30. Transport arrangements to Gurutalawa should be made only if there is a sufficient number interested. For this purpose advance communication by the organizers is advisable.

31. Arrangements must be made through the Headmaster so that the Toilets of the dorms are cleaned well before Old Boys come in to occupation of the dorms.

32. Belongings of the students whether lockers, cupboards, almirahs, suitcases or trunks should be properly secured by them before their departure from school for their mid-term holidays.

33. It has been reported that the Dinner after the AGM is a much looked forward to event by the Minor Staff and their families and relations, friends, well wishers in the surrounding villages. It is said that the food cooked in college is partaken of in the village homes long before the Old boys sit to Dinner. On the last 02 occasions we observed Old Boys who came in late for Dinner having Fried Rice only with tempered beans. There was nothing else. The Food Matron and her staff do not work late hours on many nights of the year. The OBA Re-Union is only once a year. It is most unfair to give this treatment to old boys. The Organising Committee in consultation with the Headmaster and the Food Matron, should determine the Menu, the quantity of food required and ensure there is reasonably good service. Serving the head table and accepting the packet of money therefrom should not be the target of the minor staff on duty in the Dining Hall that day. If this is the attitude a caterer from Bandarawela can easily be arranged and the kitchen staff in college given a holiday.

34. The Organising Committee must ensure that lights and sound are properly provided. On the last occasion in March 2002 these arrangements were not made by the Ex-Co. A standby generator, sound system etc were provided by an Old Boy. This aspect must be properly looked in to and attended to by the organizers with the Headmaster. Old Boys must be advised not to make their own private arrangements for bands etc without referring to the Ex-Co and the Headmaster. In short all arrangements must be co-ordinated by the Ex-Co with the Headmaster.

35. Whilst no Old Boy should or will grudge paying a uniform sum of Rs.500/- or so to defray the college expenses, some consideration should be paid to the fact that some Old Boys come only for the AGM and/or Dinner and depart immediately thereafter as against some who take residence from Friday evening till Sunday morning. If it is possible to work out a more reasonable method it may be good.

36. It is hoped the Executive Committee will consider these observations and make suitable adjustments, for the future.

Colombo

November 10,2002 **Lakshman Jayatilaka**