

GURU THOMIANS CELEBRATE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THEIR OBA

There was a historic gathering at S. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa on 28th February and 1st March when close upon 200 old boys of the School converged on their *alma mater* from all parts of the island and some from overseas for their annual re-union weekend and 50th Annual General Meeting of the Old Boys' Association.

The School authorities and the OBA Executive Committee had been preparing for the event from the beginning of the year. The College campus looked pristine and many who had returned after a lapse of years commented on the environs. Accommodation was provided at the Junior Dormitories – part of the original building erected by Dr Hayman and facilities were 'five-star' with the new set of washrooms and toilets erected by the STCG OBA to commemorate the Golden Jubilee. The food was as usual of very high quality, the menu and cooking having been overseen by the Senior Vice President.

Over 100 members arrived by the evening of Friday 27th an unexpected but pleasant surprise. Old Boys' Day commenced with the annual Old Boys vs Present Boys Cricket Match. The ROOTS Challenge Trophy donated for the first time went to the Old Boys team that won the match by one run while M. P. M. M. Weerakoon of the present boys was adjudged 'Man of the Match' for a sterling performance at the crease and for taking the highest number of wickets. The atmosphere at the College Grounds was that of a mini 'Big Match'!

A sumptuous lunch was followed by a Swimming Tournament and Basket Ball Match between old boys and present boys and the traditional Volleyball Match between the Support Staff and Old Boys. At 5 p. m. the newly installed Cricket Astro Turf and practice wicket donated by Sri Lanka Cricket was declared open by a pioneer Old Boy and former Member of the Board of Governors and Manager of the School Mr Gerald A. W. de Alwis who had been instrumental in obtaining the generous donation for the School.

The 50th Annual General Meeting was called to order at 6.30 pm. with the participation of a record number of members present. It was a privilege to have had the founder Secretary of the STCG OBA Mr. P. S. Duleepkumar and pioneer members Messrs Bradman Weerakoon and Gerald de Alwis among the gathering. The AGM was preceded by a special power point presentation prepared by the members of the College Computer Club which was a tribute to the School and to a number of legendary figures who had guided the destinies of the School and moulded so many lives since 1942. It was well received as was the annual report of the progress of the School presented by the Headmaster.

A time of Fellowship followed with a live band playing in the background and after about an hour the formal dinner in the Dining Hall at which all were treated to a grand meal. After dinner speeches were made by the Headmaster, the Senior Vice President, and two pioneer members Mr. Bradman Weerakoon and Mr. P. S. Duleepkumar. The final event of the day was the planting of a special tree to commemorate the event outside the Dining Hall by Mr. Duleepkumar. Four other trees were planted on Sunday morning after the special Chapel Service – 5 trees to commemorate the 50 years.

The traditional Sunday morning Service was held at 8 followed by Fellowship Breakfast after which the old boys departed. Yet another successful reunion weekend.

The STCG OBA was inaugurated at a special meeting of Guru Old Boys convened by the legendary Headmaster of Gurutalawa Dr R. L. Hayman at the College Hall in Mount Lavinia on 21st February 1959. There were 70 old boys present. The objective of the Association as laid out in the

Constitution adopted was threefold. These aims were inspired by Dr Hayman's vision for the future – a vision he elaborated on in his address to that first gathering. In fact the founder Secretary has written that 'Implicit in its raison d'etre is the custodianship of the School's traditions' pointing out that it was 'for this reason that Dr Hayman discussed with some old boys the urgency of forming an association when he had decided to retire.'

At the inaugural meeting Dr Hayman became Ex Officio President by virtue of his office as Headmaster while Mr S. K. Wickremesinghe was elected 1st Vice President while Mr P. S. Duleepkumar and Mr K. C. Selvadurai were elected 1st Secretary and Treasurer respectively. The following were elected to the 1st committee: Canon A. J. Foster, Messrs. L. W. A. Fernando, Benjamin Fernando, H. E. Wijesuriya, S. A. Cader, Nawaz Cafoor, S. K. Punyadasa and L. K. Amarasuriya. The following were also elected Life Members of the Association: Canon R. S. de Saram, Canon R. H. Bowyer Yin, Canon A. J. Foster, Revd J. Elliot, Warden C. H. Davidson, Messrs. S. J. Anandanayagam and V. P. Cooke. The first Old Boys' Day & re-union weekend was held on August 8th and 9th at Gurutalawa that was well attended according to the records published in the College Magazine. Hockey and Soccer matches were played between Old Boys and Present Boys, both being won by the former although the Old Boys lost the Volley Ball match played against the College Servants. The sports activities had been followed by Fellowship Dinner and a Film Show.

The OBA has been guided after this pioneer group by a number of sterling old boys who gave exceptional leadership as Senior Vice Presidents and Secretaries to the OBA and contributed much to the School over the past fifty years. Having started small in 1959 the STCG OBA has a registered membership of over 500 members to date.

The History of STCG published to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Foundation of the College in 1992 records Bishop A. R. Graham-Campbell of Colombo speaking at the Prize Giving of the School in 1962 stressing the role of the Old Boys thus: 'If you want to see what a School is like, you must see what sort of boys it has turned out; you must look at the old boys of the school as well as the present ones.'

All those who passed through the portals of this unique School owe their alma mater a nurture fee that can never be fully repaid. It is up to all alumni to rally round the College and fulfil this calling. Guru is on the way to reviving its past glory and the participation in this venture of all old boys must be forthcoming if the Headmaster and his staff are to achieve the goals that are dear to the heart of all old boys.

A special Service of Thanksgiving for the STCG OBA to celebrate the Golden Jubilee will be held on Saturday, 7th March 2009 at 9.30 a.m. in the Chapel of the Transfiguration, S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia followed by a time of Fellowship at which the Hayman Foundation & Trust Fund will be launched in the College Hall to which all members of the Thomian Family and well wishers are invited.