

DR.R L HAYMAN - A MAN IN A MILLION

By Richard Dwight

Distinguished old boys, members and friends of the Old Thomian Swimming Club, gathered on the evening of Wednesday, the 20th to perpetuate the memory of Dr.R L Hayman - truly a great and noble man, by unveiling his portrait.

Befitting the man, who in life was not given to any form of ostentation, the ceremony though simple was a meaningful and purposeful one. Mrs.Mary Hayman wife of Dr.R L Hayman, who is presently here in connection with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of S.Thomas' Gurutalawa, of which her husband was the headmaster in 1942, was at hand to lend patronage to an important event in her life as well. She was met on arrival by the president of the club, N T Perera, and other officials, whilst little Adriana Achilles presented her with a bouquet.

Mr.Bradman Weerakoon an illustrious old boy of STCMTL and STC Gurutalawa, speaking on the occasion said that it was a pleasure and a privilege, to be associated at a ceremony such as this, which was a mark of respect to this devout man, who did so much and played a leading role in the life of S.Thomas'. There was, he said, two significant phases to Dr.Haymans' life at S.Thomas'. He began in 1929 at S.Thomas' Mt.Lavinia went over to S.Thomas' Gurutalawa in 1942 and came back again to serve at Mt.Lavinia.

He was verily a courageous man, who through his dedication, unflagging zeal and sacrificial nature did much to mould the lives of young men in the years gone by. The other part of his life was so rich and varied covering every aspect of sport. He donated a swimming pool to S.Thomas' in 1934 and later on gifted one to S.Thomas' Gurutalawa.

He observed it was a time when swimming pools were unheard of, it was a novelty then. He reminded the gathering that Dr.Hayman personally coached Allan Smith the Olympic Diver, and the Arndt brothers who excelled in the annual two-mile swim. He did not confine himself to swimming alone but had a tremendous love for all forms of sports and humorously jibed that Dr.Hayman displayed a preference being a leg umpire at cricket and a linesman at soccer matches. Mr.Weerakoon stressed that their evinced from Dr.Hayman the four salient qualities of a Thomian that of simplicity, a sense of justice and fair play, a practical caring love and generosity and above all a spirit of tolerance.

There was no intellectual arrogance in the man, who at all times championed the cause of the underdog. Yes, he was an affable mild mannered man, who carried with him all the virtuous qualities with stoic calmness..... Hayman in all what he laboured for in love.

Mr.Clifford Ratwatte, a senior vice president of the club, yet another distinguished old boy, opened up by saying that he was ordered (summarily) by Justice Douglas Wijaratne the donor of Dr.R L Hayman's portrait, not only to speak of his confidante, mentor and friend, but also to perform the act of unveiling. With a touch of nostalgia Mr.Ratwatte spoke endearingly of this teacher of mathematics, physics, love of sports who did his best to promote swimming in this land of ours. He was a firm and kindly man, who instilled discipline in the boys by involving them in scouting, hiking and shramadana. It could be rightly said, that it was he who first got students to clean building sites, roads and the playground and more often than not, he acted as a building supervisor. Dr.Hayman he said had a special concern for the domestic staff, who help him to build S.Thomas' Gurutalawa.

There were no statues for him, but what he left behind were the buildings, which bear eloquent testimony to all what he said and did. To a man who gave of his time, energy and money, he was much more than the first Headmaster, more even than a founder, for with all his goodness and expertise he was verily a servant of God. So saying, he unveiled the portrait of that much-loved highly -esteemed Dr.R L Hayman of S.Thomas. Mr.Amita Abeysekera, a committee member of the club, delivered the vote of thanks at the close.

We reminisced as we sat for a fellowship get together where we recalled of what was said of Canon R S De Saram, the warden, when he got together with Dr.R L Hayman as sub warden. "A combination was established at the helm of Thomian affairs, engendering one of the vintage periods of the school, spanning a little over thirty years. It was the rarest blends Homer and Einstein". On the commemorative tablet in the Dr.R L Hayman's science laboratory are inscribed the words which epitomizes the man "to spend and be spent in the service of others". But we could never forget the poignant words he uttered with so much feeling when he some years ago said "You belong to one of the best schools in the world a school with splendid traditions and a most honourable name and I charge you to try and hand down those traditions and that name to those who come after you untarnished and unimpaired. Be proud being Thomians and make the College proud of remembering you among its sons".

It is fitting that his portrait found a place in the Old Thomian Swimming Club of which he was a founder member way back in 1956 and for the reason that he did so much for swimming.