

A SCHOOL BOY REMEMBERS

LIFE AT S.THOMAS COLLEGE GURUTALAWA

1) It is generally believed and oft quoted that one's childhood is the happiest period of one's life; carefree and fun filled. To a child who spends 09 months of the year in a school boarding, it must necessarily mean boarding life, if this adage has some truth. To those who spent the better part of 5 years at Guru under Dr.Rollo Hayman and Father A J Foster it can be said without any doubt that those years have left an indelible impression on the young minds. Those impressions have lasted a lifetime judging by the hundreds of boys, some of whom are now in their mid 70's who are still drawn to Gurutalawa. The tough life; the discipline; the oneness of man; the respect for elders and authority; the will to succeed and aim for excellence; to build a strong body and mind, the path to success on the playing field and in the class-room, to share with others what you have; the reading habit; are but a small part that contributed to the Thomian spirit and tradition.

2) Apart from the towering figures of Dr.Hayman and Fr.Foster, other members of the Tutorial Staff, and Minor Staff the next most indelible feature would be the campus itself. The buildings, the gardens, the class rooms, the playing fields, the swimming pool etc.

3) Much has been written about life at Guru. Most remember common features. Some have memories more personal to them, for some reason. An effort is made to pen a few of them however trivial they may appear to be which are special to the writer.

4) I remember very vividly Mr. A.K. Chapman respected and feared as a no-nonsense House Master of Garnier who took the subjects of Maths and Chemistry. He also acted as Headmaster when Dr. Hayman was absent. He was a pioneer Old Boy of the first batch of 1942 who came back to teach at Gurutalawa and spent his life-time doing so ending up as Acting Head Master. I remember him on his way to play Tennis each evening with Mr & Mrs. F L Amerasinghe and their children.

Mr. F.L. Amerasinghe was also a tough man who brooked no nonsense from anybody. He would give 6 of the best to any boy who was at fault. His wife and daughter together with him would walk from the Keble end of the Campus to the Tennis Court end each evening to play their game of Tennis. Mr. Amerasinghe was the Cadet Master, Tennis Coach and was considered a strict disciplinarian. All kept their distance from him.

Mr. J. de S. Jayasinghe a Mahindian was an institution at Gurutalawa. Hundred of Old Boys passed through his classes of Biology and General Science. He ended up as Acting Head Master until his retirement. He was House Master of De Saram and was loved and feared. He had a good rapport with the minor staff and was known to be a great admirer and supporter of the UNP leaders whose photographs adorned the walls of his quarters. Whenever they passed through Gurutalawa on their campaign trail he would never fail to meet up with them. He also played the role of "Ralahamy" to perfection in the several plays of H.C.N. de Lanerolle which were staged by Gurutalawa. He was in charge of Junior Cricket as well as Athletics. He was always fondly referred to as "Uncle Jay".

Mr. Oliver de Soyza was another pioneer Old boy of 1942 who returned to teach at Gurutalawa spending most of his life in the service of College. He was well known as a master of English Language and Literature and was also the Librarian. He too spent his evening on the Tennis courts or playing Squash. Whilst doing Julius Ceaser for English Literature he would take the students to his quarters and seated on his bed, make us listen to his I.P. records of the version of Julius Ceaser which he had lovingly maintained. He was the House Master of Winchester which was then the dorm in which the new Admissions to the Lower 4th of Gurutalawa were

accommodated. He accompanied the under 17 and under 15 Hockey Teams which toured South India from December, 1959 to January 1960.

Mr. C.M. Chinniah was another tough and exacting House Master in charge of Reid House. While he spent his evenings on the Hockey field, he too accompanied the first ever Squad of Sportsmen from Gurutalawa to leave the shores of Sri Lanka when the Senior and Junior Hockey Teams did a 2 week tour in South India. He took some Tamil Language Classes.

That was a time when all sports were played with gusto and in many fields Gurutalawa excelled. In Tennis we carried away the " Laing Tennis Shield and the Perera Cup " for best outstation school at the Public Schools Meet. In Swimming the Gurutalawa Team carried away the Public Schools under 16 4 x 100 meters free style relay record in 1963. In Hockey, Mr. Sunil Watawala together with Mr. Sarath Suraweera two of the Vice Presidents of the current Ex-Co of the OBA were part of the Uva Province Hockey Team which played in the Nationals whilst Sunil Watawala captained the Uva Team. Sunil was and still is a great organizer and is supposed to have been referred to by Dr. Hayman as his best Head Prefect. It is known that Dr. Hayman relied heavily on Sunil in various administrative matters during his tenure as Head Prefect. His organizing capabilities and commitments to a cause were well witnessed at the resounding success of the Dinner Dance organized by a Committee headed by him on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the School which prompted the OBA to organize the Diamond Jubilee Dinner Dance.

Mr. P.B.A. Abeykoon was a Sinhala Scholar. He lived with his family in the married quarters at the Keble end of the Campus, the only Master who wore National Dress at that time, was known for his book, "Maina Sandesaya" His son was in our Class.

Mr. A.K. de Alwis was a Master handling Arts subjects in general, took a few Sinhala Language Classes, was an Artist and had fine hand-writing. He was responsible for putting on the Boards a Sinhala Ballet by the name of "Bahirawa" which was staged outside College too. He was also responsible for the play "Handahana".

Mr. M. Thiagarajah. joined towards the latter stages of our life at Gurutalawa. He was Mr. Chinniah's brother and assisted a great deal in popularizing Basket Ball. I remember coming up to Colombo with him by train to participate in the Basket Ball Nationals, then played in the Echelon Barracks, (adjoining the then Parliament and the present Presidential Secretariat) presently where the Hotel Galadari stands.

Mr. N Ratnasingham was the Master in charge of cadetting. He was also in charge of Rifle Shooting. He took a few Maths Classes in Tamil. He also was the Master in charge of Basket Ball. He prompted students to create a jingle owing to his association with that game.

Mr. Daya Jayasuriya a Richmandite was in the Arts Stream, took Civics (or Government) a superb athletic figure, well known for his prowess in sports. He used to play soccer and cricket in a big way, was a feared fast bowler, chain smoker and was known to have a fondness for alcohol. We used to stay up to enjoy some fun when the Old boys finished their Fellowship and Dinner and were dispersing thereafter. Of course it could never be said that any student had any adverse effects by seeing any one of their Masters or Old Boys behaving in an inebriated manner on one day in the College Calendar. We looked forward to the event and truly loved them more for providing the entertainment.

Mr. George Pillai was a Master taking Maths and was also in charge of boxing. He took a few English Classes too. On one occasion he questioned Dr. Hayman with regard to certain matters in the management and the running of the Co-op Stores and a vote had to be taken at a meeting. It was found that the entire school naturally voted with Dr. Hayman whilst Mr. Pillai had the support of his brother Patrick, who was in the final year at College.

Mr. Nimal Bharetti who joined towards the latter stages of our stay at Gurutalawa was a mild and popular teacher who took Arts subjects mainly History. He was one of the few Masters of our vintage who are still alive. Presently he is a member of the Diocesan Council in the Anglican Church.

Mr. John Marasinghe was Dr. Hayman's trusted aide running the office and helping him with the administration of the school, another old boy who had returned to serve his alma Mater, now retired from school and living with his family at Ratmalana, still very much interested in College and the OBA. His two daughters belong to the unique select band of old girls of Gurutalawa who have had, almost their whole school career in a boys school. Mr. Marasinghe with Dr. Hayman was very much involved with Scouting and also Swimming; the two main activities Dr. Hayman undertook.

Mr. L.M. Fernando another old boy who returned to teach was another Master in the Arts Stream taking Geography. He was a good Tennis Player and coached the College Team to great heights to perform well. He has now retired but is still engaged in coaching Tennis at Panadura.

Mr. B.J.H. Bahar a Master who spent a short while at Gurutalawa was in charge of the English Literary and Debating Society. He took English Language. He was instrumental in getting his nephew Ishan Bahar to give a performance to the entertainment starved students of Gurutalawa. He was also responsible for an operetta "A lad in and out" which was also staged at N'Elia.

Mr. J M P Bandara was a Sinhala Master whose home town was close to College. He was a chain smoker and a strong supporter of the UNP Leadership and did not make a secret of it. We had the sad duty of attending his funeral whilst students when he died of a heart attack. He was very proud of his up-country heritage, and his temper would rise if any reference was made to same, in any disparaging manner.

Mr. D.U.V Samaranayake a Trinitian a Master in the Arts Stream was a fine orator. He took some English Language Classes too. He was in charge of the Senior Debating and Literary Society. He eventually left to study law and subsequently was working with the Tourist Board. He was in charge of Badminton. .

Mr. Ambrose a Master who had his ties with South India was the Curator of the Gardens of Gurutalawa. He lovingly tended the plants and foliage. He handled the teachers of Tamil Language. He was also a good artist.

Mr. R.T Kularatne the cigar smoking woodwork Master made carpentry very interesting. Many were the useful items we took home at the end of the term turned out in the Carpentry Shed during the classes. He was also in charge of the Co-op stores at one time. He was perhaps the only Master who lived outside the College Campus as his residence was a mile or so away. He was naturally nicknamed "kulta".

Mr. Shelton Kottahachchi was a Master in the Arts Stream, who took both Civics and Geography. He was an Old Boy, had been Head Prefect in his time and a favourite of Dr. Hayman as he had been captain of Swimming too.

Mr. Oswin Wright a Trinitian took our Latin. His emphasis of the Latin pronunciation still rings out in my mind. His classes were conducted in the Old Dining Hall. He was a chain smoker and his fingers which held the cigarette were heavily stained. It was very difficult to do well in Latin. Most students did not take the subject seriously and any way the subject was taught only in the Lower 4th and Upper 4th. A poem that was made up and recited went thus.

" Latin is a dead language
As dead as dead could be
First it killed the Romans
And now its killing me "

Mr.T.G. Peiris was another young Master who taught for a short while and left to take up employment under the State.

Mr. Selwyn Gunawardene a burly figure was the Master in charge of Junior Hockey. He took Latin and Sinhala Language Classes. He could not accompany his students on the Indian Tour.

Mr. R. Wijesinghe a giant of a man but very gentle in his character, was a Musician specializing on the Keyboard. Very often we used to see him with the Piano accordion hung across his torso playing to his hearts' content. He would also be found in the Chapel playing the organ beautifully. He took Chemistry classes.

Mr. S.K. Gnanamuttu a teacher of English Language had previously been at Dharmaduta College in Badulla. He was a quiet and simple man. Every Friday he left for Badulla where he resided and returned on Monday morning. From Monday to Friday he resided in College. He was very fond particularly of the East Coast of Sri Lanka and encouraged us to visit that area and learn to admire what nature had to offer.

Mr. G.T. Chellapah was the Bursar. He had a small car which the stud bull of the farm once rocked around. After his departure Mr. Benjamin Fernando took over his duties.

Mr. A.C.M. Lafir was the master who looked after the swimming pool and the farm. He would take the horses out riding. He was an all round sportsman and had won several college colours whilst a student and had come back to serve College. For a long time he was the last link Old Boys of an Old era had with College. He excelled in Soccer, Hockey, Squash, Badminton, Tennis etc. etc.

Mrs. Altendorf was the Matron in charge of food. We were never satisfied with what she offered us, and so she was most unpopular. She had a Dashund as a Pet who seemed well fed naturally.

The great thing about almost all these Masters was that all of them were resident on the Campus, did not confine themselves to teaching in Classrooms and were actively involved in so many activities after classes relating to Sports, Drama, Debating, Scouting etc.

5) The minor staff, consisted of a band of very loyal and long-standing men who were liked and respected by the students and the staff. All considered that they belonged to one family. Whilst this band of men held the staff, particularly Dr. and Mrs. Hayman and Father Foster in great respect, their love, concern and care of the Boarders knew no bounds.

6) The Boarders themselves held the staff with utmost respect and were very fond of the minor staff who were there to see to their needs.

7) Amongst those on the minor staff who were institutions are Bell Simon who rang the College bell for ages. Students were expected to be in the Dining Hall for Prep (i.e. preparation of studies and home-work for the next day as well as revision) before the last stroke of the bell was rung for that purpose. Prep was had for about 40 minutes before Breakfast and also for about 1 ½ hours after games and before Dinner. It was a common feature for the stragglers whilst sprinting from the Dorms to the Hall to signal Bell Simon to continue to ring the bell thus permitting the would-be offender to take his seat without punishment. Naturally Bell Simon would always oblige and he

was hugely popular. Perhaps he considered it a part of his mission in life. His son and grandson now serve College

8) Van Simon drove the College van for long years, the daily trip to Welimada for purchases, taking students in the van to the Wangiakumbura Government School which was the center for public exams, taking the students to Haputale or Nanu Oya to board the train for Colombo for various school matches or home for holidays.

9) Thatta Piya as he was fondly referred to was the chauffeur Dr. Hayman employed to drive his Lanchester Car. In or about 1959, Dr. Hayman purchased a new Holden Car Thatta Piya's importance grew in leaps and bounds. He would remove all 4 wheels whilst washing the under carriage of the car even after a short trip to Welimada not content with washing the mudguards in a show of his effervescent exuberance. He would navigate the vehicle in such a deft and smooth manner along the narrow winding up-country roads, that a passenger in the rear seat would not feel the change of transmission from one gear to the other. I was able to scrounge a few lifts home from Dr Hayman and can vouch for Thatta Piya's excellent driving skills. Thatta Piya also played the role of the College Electrician and was quick to run to Dr. Hayman and report that he found a One Cent coin placed in between the bulb and the holder by a mischievous boy in order to create some diversion. This would often result in a special announcement being made by Dr Hayman's sudden entry interrupting evening Prep or Dinner that there would be school on Saturday as a punishment. This would be greeted by a loud hum from the entire student population to show displeasure. In view of Thatta Piya's sneakish conduct he was naturally not very popular amongst the student population and all gave him a wide margin. He was very loyal to Dr.Hayman.

10) Ariyadasa assisted Mrs. Hayman in the sick room administering cough and cold mixtures and dressing cuts, bruises and wounds which were a regular occurrence, considering the sports activities students were engaged in. He also handed out the opening dose to be taken on holidays which used to be a form of punishment particularly when students were apprehended raiding the pantry or orchard. Ariyadasa was also the one man mopping up Brigade which followed Dr Hayman on his night visits to the Dorms.

11) Karunadasa, Ariyadasa's brother was the Ground Boy who efficiently managed the Sports Pavilion and Grounds situated almost one mile away from the main campus. He handed out all the sports equipment, was responsible for placing the matting wicket for cricket, the goal posts for hockey and ensuring that the long jump and high jump pits were in readiness for those events. Many were the occasions he would be engaged to massage the cramps on Athletes' legs with Wintogeno.

12) Marnis was responsible for all activities connected with the kitchen, pantry and dining hall. He would mobilize his assistants in the preparation and serving of food as well and the cleaning and washing up. He would of course feel sorry and accommodate the few hungrier versions of those who were never satisfied with what was served and always wanted more.

13) The Orchards were littered with rare fruit trees like loquats, persimmons, guavas, fairy balls etc. etc. The Students always enjoyed eating the forbidden fruits. The Orchard unfortunately had the best and biggest army of mega leeches. These bloodsuckers could get our scent yards away and they would reach out to get a hold. So, it meant very fast mobility and evasive action on our part to get to the trees before the Leeches got to us. Invariably the Leeches beat us because the Sprinter had to take cover in the event a Master or a prefect was on the move in the vicinity. The punishment on being apprehended was either to write some lines or to go to the Sick Room and take an Opening Dose of Epsom Salt on Saturday morning which meant one's Holiday would be spoilt and confined to the Dorm with frequent and hasty navigations to the Toilet.

14) The farm had a notorious stud bull the likes of which we do not see anywhere else in our country and a large flock of fresian cows seen those days only on Government farms. There were also sheep. Whilst moving from one area of classrooms to another, students would frequently have to make way for these cows or sheep traversing in the opposite direction.

15) A large percentage of the vegetables required to feed the Boarders came from the plot cultivated just below the Dining Hall and adjacent to the paddy fields, which were cultivated by the villagers. A regular feature was the sale of vegetables to parents who never failed to attend the Annual Prize Giving and the garden tea party hosted by Dr. and Mrs. Hayman. I was fortunate myself to participate in one of these events and I can vouch for the fact that in no 5 star Hotel even now are available the eats that were generously served then.

16) In 1962, when it was found that the minor staff who were performing duties in the dining room, had to be released earlier than usual due to some Labour Department intervention, at the request of Dr Hayman, the College Prefects under the Supervision of Sunil Watawala willingly swung into action laying the tables and serving food. The Prefects were allocated a cubicle in each Dormitory where 02 of them would occupy a bunk-bed, then a novel feature but now common place. Their cubicle was considered a sacred place and no one dared venture forth. The Prefects also were called upon to take a turn of duty during morning and evening prep until the master on duty arrived or the latter considered there was a sufficient infringement as to warrant an admonishment in the form of a caning, generally 4 to 6 cuts and would request the Prefect to take charge of the Hall and take the victim to Dr Hayman's office for procurement of the cane. As there was pin-drop silence in the dining hall where the students were doing their Prep and as the caning was administered in the passage just outside Dr. Hayman's office which was situated adjacent to the dining hall, the smack of the cane alighting on the buttocks would be loudly heard by the 300 boarders in the hall. Each cut would be accompanied by the usual hum which would grow in volume depending on the number of cuts received. On one occasion was heard distinctly the sounds of a struggle. The offender had turned on the Master. May be he felt enough was enough. The following morning saw him depart from College for good. Discipline was given absolute priority. Nobody escaped.

17) On another occasion, the Senior Class, i.e. school leavers, were on their way to the class rooms situated in the main block. The culvert immediately below the main class room block is at a sharp bend and the tall hedge/fence covers oncoming traffic, vehicular, the two legged or any other variety. There was a much respected Master who taught English and who insisted on the correct pronunciation. He was walking ahead of his class and he suddenly found himself confronted by the Stud-Bull, 7 feet long, tons of hard sinewy muscle. It was a wondrous sight to see the stud bull having suddenly come upon our Master stopping on his tracks and measuring up the English Master. The keeper of the stud-bull was too slow to react. The Master who always carried his black umbrella pointed it at the stud-bull to a point in between his horns, reminiscent of a gladiator in the Roman arena confronting the charging bull. The umbrella inches away from the dangerous horns of the stud bull made a few small circles. The stud bull in keeping with the charm of the moment kept turning his head to time with the umbrella. The English Master in spotless white, national costume, black umbrella in hand also reminded the students of Mandrake the Magician performing one of his feats. This was a sight to behold. Unfortunately, one or two of the students could not take it much more and let out a few cackles. The cackles increased in volume. The Master did an about turn and went back to where he came from. Perhaps the confrontation necessitated some refreshment. The students proceeded to the classrooms, the rare incident just witnessed having been concluded to everybody's mirth and laughter and forever etched in memory.

18) Whilst the students were seated in the class, a message was received that they had all been summoned by Dr. Hayman. On assembling outside his room, he uttered a few words "what you have done is bad and unforgivable. Do not repeat this. Now come into my room one at a time".

The Head Prefect of the College was called in first and received 6 of the best with the inflictor's energy at its maximum potential. He came out rubbing his buttocks. Being an Eurasian, no doubt there would have been several shades different where the cane would have alighted.

19) Next summoned were the College Prefects. All of them were in this class. In fact each of them, received 5 of the best. They came out rubbing the pain. Then were summoned in the others and administered 4 cuts. The consensus was that there was no difference in the pain inflicted by the first cut on the Head Prefect and even 150 cuts later on the last man. Everybody received the punishment like men and went back to the class room where of course the English Master had several pairs of eyes glaring at him during the class. The incident was soon forgotten. That was discipline and the manner in which Dr. Hayman administered it. The more important or authoritative the student he was made to feel humble and received the more severe punishment.

20) We were also fortunate to enjoy a little boating on the Gurutalawa lake. The boat was a make-shift contraption. The sport was however short-lived and unfortunately could not be pursued.

21) Hiking or trekking was one of the most pleasurable pastimes a student engaged in at Gurutalawa. As I recall it, those interested in going on a hike on a Saturday were required to obtain the respective House Master's permission the day before. Instructions had also to be given to the Food Matron who would have the picnic lunch etc. prepared and ready for collection in the pantry on Saturday morning. This namely consisted of a tin of Corned Beef or Salmon with Bread. And so, armed with the day's necessary paraphernalia, we would take off from College fairly early in the morning.

22) A hike to Horton Planes would mean taking the road to Ohiya from College, walking along the rail track from the station and commencing the climb from a certain point thereafter. Leopards were supposed to be around and this did give a sense of excitement and apprehension too.

23) Of course, as the last part of the climb took us into a fairly high altitude which would almost always be misty and drizzly and it became pretty cold, on the way we had taken care to purchase an adequate stock of cigarettes, perhaps the biggest vice the school boys of our age indulged in. The cigarettes helped us to ward-off the cold until we came down to Ohiya once more. Care was taken to get rid of all traces of smoking as we prepared to get back to College. Gauva leaves was the normal prescription. We were required to be back in College by 6 p.m., have our baths and be ready for Prep. One had to time this to perfection.

24) Another interesting feature of life at Guru was "Social Service" or Sramadana. During our era, this took 2 forms. The first was actual work in connection with construction of buildings etc. This was done during the games period i.e. between 4 to 6 p.m. A machine which could turn out bricks was available to the students engaged in social service.

25) The earth mixed with cement was fed into a chamber in the machine and the handles being turned with the necessary pressure being applied. Consequent to such turning, the bricks would pop out which would be laid in line along the ground to be used to build the walls of buildings to be constructed. The Co-op Stores below the Senior Dorms and the Squash Courts were two of such buildings. I also recall the tarring of the Basketball Court.

26) The other form of social service would be performed by all 300 students immediately before roll-call, in the morning when the class master would mark the attendance register. Each class would with the class master and Prefects supervising go into defined areas on the campus and pick up all the litter mostly sweet and chocolate wrapping papers etc., These would be collected and put into bins. Once that task which took about 20 minutes was completed, we would wash our fingers and proceed to the Class Rooms to start work on the first period.

27) Another interesting feature was the Time Table of Class Room work etc., performed during the day. Classes used to commence at about 8 a.m. with a lunch interval and then the afternoon session going on till about 3.30 p.m. There would be a period of physical training in mid morning. This would mean that we had finished 2 periods, changing into a pair of shorts and only in banian and bare footed, performing strenuous physical training exercises and marching. At one time this period was also utilized for swimming in place of physical training. The Physical Training period was also about 30 minutes duration. As soon as physical training was over we had another wash, got back into usual school clothes and then to class.

28) As there were 300 Boarders, the whole school partook of their meals at one and the same time together with the staff who had their meals in the staff dining room, with Dr Hayman and Fr. Foster.

29) Another incident which stands out in memory is the episode of Tumbler Talking which we performed whilst young students in De Saram Junior, perhaps in 1960. A certain incident kindled our curiosity and we desired to get to the bottom of the matter and find out who the culprits were. So, the stage was set. The individuals who participated in it are now in their mid - 50's. One is now a Neuro Surgeon in U K whose lower bunk was the scene of the event. I occupied the upper bunk. Once the decision was made, it was his lower bunk that was to be the venue. He was even then a maestro in Physics and Chemistry. Naturally, he had the adapter, screw driver, electric wires etc. The adaptor was connected to the night lamp which bell Simon switched on at 9.30 p.m. when he switched off the lights from the control switch outside the dorm. From the night lamp the wire came to the lower bunk from which a bulb was fixed to a holder. The lower bunk was enclosed with blankets so that no light would pass through to the rest of the dorm. About half an hour after the lights were put out, our Neuro Surgeon pal put the switch on and "Hey Presto !!" we had a 40 watts bulb burning bright within our make shift tent. On the bed, seated were firstly, one from Bandarawela who was to later become a Head Prefect and still later a Banker, who until a recent nasty accident, was a part-time stunt rider traversing the length and breadth of Sri Lanka on his iron horse, secondly, a lovable character from Panadura who came to the limelight by his impromptu Red Indian war dance at the De Saram Junior Annual Social/Dinner, thirdly, a Sinhala Scholar cum Poet whose whereabouts too we are trying to trace; fourthly, a quiet-dignified-respected Accountant and last yours truly. The Banker undertook to summon the spirit and the spirit happened to be the one of an IRC who had ravaged his home town and who had eventually met with a violent end.

30) A standard size suitcase with its cover cleaned and sprayed with face powder to make it smooth formed the table, on which one of the participants wrote out the letters of the alphabet in an oval shaped format. The Banker then kept the tumbler, a short lemonade glass to his mouth and did his "manthras" having taken care to previously "murder" a common house fly and have it ready at hand to be given to the "spirit" when he had fulfilled his task, lest the spirit would ask for a human sacrifice etc.as some reward which was difficult to obtain and which our Banker friend said was far too dangerous, in fact a matter of life and death. Having finished his manthram, the tumbler was kept on the suitcase with its face down and two of the participants kept their index fingers on the base of the upturned tumbler. We did not have to wait long. It was within a few minutes that we observed the tumbler making a few hesitant movements of its own volition. Another participant was ready with pencil and paper at hand to note down the letters of the alphabet to which the tumbler would lead us to or move. At first, the letters did not make sense. After having moved to 5 or 6 letters, the tumbler did in fact talk sense. Coherent words came out which formulated about 2 sentences. Thereafter all of a sudden, the tumbler turned over and fell off the suitcase. By this time, we were all completely overawed and somewhat frightened, to put it very mildly. As the episode ended we put away the articles used and had a round table conference. It took quite some time for our frightened and frayed nerves to regain some semblance of order and normalcy, that would permit a restful sleep. So ended our one and only escapade. This did filter to the Prefects in a fairly diluted form and so there was no inquiry etc. We were later made to understand that in certain Boarding Schools, students had been sent

home for good for having participated in this activity/ ritual and that it could have been pretty dangerous.

31) These are a few of the memories still fresh in the mind which we keep referring to when ever we meet old friends, sometimes to our children who know nothing of the life and times at Guru; the experiences they will never enjoy.

32) Every year the 3 main games, i.e. cricket, hockey and foot ball were played during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd terms respectively. Athletics used to be during the 2nd term. All other sports activities went on the year around. During the 2nd and 3rd terms, one event was the standard test. The senior boys each year had the habit of informing their juniors that it was necessary to take two batteries, a bulb and a piece of wire and a box of mathematical instruments to the grounds for this aptitude test when it was really a combination of track and field events in which all students were required to participate.

33) Pocket Money would be personally handed over to each student by Dr.Hayman at his office at the rate of -/50 cents per week after dinner. Fr.Foster would take up position at the door of Dr.Hayman's office with his hand out stretched to collect a donation for the Chapel. The regulars who collected pocket money weekly ran the risk of loosing -/25 cents each week. The wiser ones made the journey once in four weeks and lost if at all only 25 cents.

34) The Co-op stores used to be the happy hunting ground each day after games and immediately before going in for Prep. A chocolate slab by the name of Needler was available for Cts. -/50. Biryani which was a hot favourite and available on Sundays in the forenoon was available for Rs.1/50 per plate.

35) Cross country runs were possible and encouraged on any day that rains intervened the games period. The more enterprising boys used to deviate from the usual route to a familiar boutique in order to purchase cigarettes, hide in the woods whilst the rain drops from the over hanging branches and trees gave that degree of atmosphere necessary to enjoy the cigarette and thereafter proceed as if nothing had happened to get back in time for bath and prep. Chewing guava leaves was the usual remedy to remove traces of smoking.

36) The house socials were had at the end of every year and were a very much looked forward to event, whilst various items of drama, mostly humorous, used to be put on board. The main event used to be felicitating the House Master by making a very attractive gift. Other House Masters were invited as guests of honour. The menu was fantastic and perhaps the best meal of the year. Naturally nobody missed it and all went to bed very satisfied. Friends in other Dorms would wait for their share of food to be delivered through the wiremesh grill of the dorms.

37) A moral cup used to be awarded to the junior dorm which was the most tidy. It could be stated without any exaggeration that when boys left the dorm after breakfast for the usual classes of the morning session, all dorms had the appearance of a military camp dorm. Everything was spic and span and no coverlet, bed spread or bed sheet had any wrinkles or ruffles.

38).Cadetting was a popular activity until the 1971 youth insurgency. Members had rifles as part of their kit.

Sometimes an outbreak of chickenpox or measles or mumps which affected a few members of the platoon would mean that attending the annual cadet camp at Diyatalawa got cancelled.

37) Horse riding was also a daily event. The two horses in our time had the name "Snowwhite" and "Nasheeb" (Governor General). These horses were well looked after and cared for. They were

exercised regularly and given a good brush down. The stables used to be somewhere near the present college hall.

38) Another activity probably not available in any other school was bird watching which was started by Fr. Foster. He would take a band of about 15-25 students with him across the woods with his binoculars and inculcate this rare hobby in students at the time.

39) Boxing was also a sport which the entire school witnesses whether inter house or inter school. The boxing ring which was situated somewhere above the Head Master's bungalow, surrounded by tall trees was in a superb setting. The ring was well cared for and boxing was held as a sport right throughout the year.

40) Scouting was also popular. The Troop had one day camps staying over night. Dr.Hayman was very interested in scouting. Some times a scout was given a compass bearing to go to a previously located spot, come back and give a detailed report of surrounding areas, to prove you have been to the designated spot.

41) These are just a few of my memories of life at S.Thomas' College, Gurutalawa, which relate to a good part of my life between the ages of 11 and 15 spent in that unique boarding school.

42) It is perhaps appropriate to think back and wish that the present boarders too derive the immense benefits that this boarding school can offer them.

43) It is also appropriate that grateful Old Boys of the school from near and as far away as Canada, USA, UK and Australia have in such large numbers rallied round the School, it's energetic Headmaster Mr.Geethal Mendis and the Board of Governors led by the Bishop of Colombo Rev.Duleep de Chickera in this year when the school celebrates it's Diamond Jubilee with the objective of restoring the school to it's former glory by giving those responsible their unstinted support, assistance and co-operation.

L.J.

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