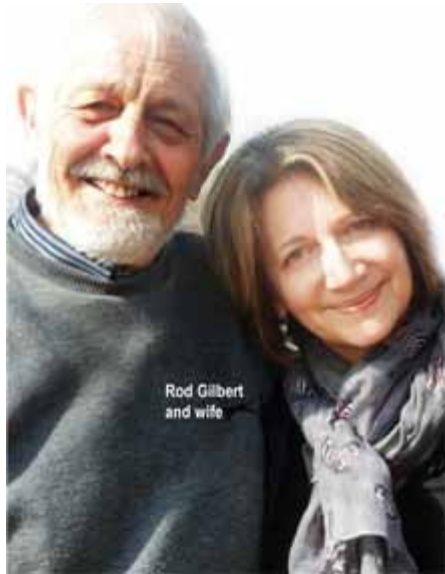


Former Trinity principal responds to Political Watch

October 12, 2013, 7:20 pm



The article "Scandal Rocks Trinity" in the Political Column of the Sunday Island of Oct 6, 2013 has referred to the time I was Principal Trinity College. Your correspondent has been given inaccurate information. This letter is purely to put the record straight and give your correspondent and the general public, among whom are my students and friends, the correct facts:

1. I am British, born in India to an English father and mother who were born in the UK. My father was a Medical Missionary in India from 1936 to 1969.
2. I know two Indian languages, Marathi and Hindi. My knowledge of Tamil is limited to a few basic phrases.
3. I have had absolutely no contact with anyone from the LTTE at any time. I abhor their violence and said so many times at School assemblies. I employed a young man (Suresh) as a teacher at Trinity who, I later came to know, had had some contact with the LTTE. I had no knowledge of these links when I employed him. As far as I am aware, he was never involved in any hostile activity. This matter was reported in full to the Board of Governors and was discussed by them.
4. My visits to the East were solely for Tsunami relief. The Government allocated the area on the East coast where Trinity's aid could help. We had no choice of where we could work. Trinity was a trusted organization for many Old Boys and others from the UK to use as a channel of funds for Tsunami relief. All funds went through the School Accounts office and were reported to the Board of Governors. Amongst many small projects, we were able to partially re-build a primary school (Al Baduria) in a Muslim village (Nintavur) which was allocated to us by the Government.
5. My personal visits were few, and in my free time and at my own expense. I was grateful for my driver who made great efforts to get me back to school in time for morning assembly on a Monday!
6. At the suggestion of the Teachers at Trinity, we used some funds for scholarships for children who lost parents in the tsunami. We appointed a team of Tamil and Sinhala social workers from Kandy, to interview candidates for these scholarships. They interviewed several hundreds from children nominated by the Principals of schools in the area on the East coast assigned to us. We calculated that there were enough funds to offer five full-time boarding scholarships at Trinity, and 30 small monthly scholarships to children in their homes. The choice of students to receive these funds was made by the committee of social workers from Kandy. The funds were disbursed to the children through the Banks in that area and countersigned by the Principal of the school from which the child came.

7. Trinity College teachers, both Tamil and Sinhala, formed a group to counsel and help child victims of the tsunami. They traveled to the area allocated to us and, together with the co-operation of the local Principals, organized social and educational events for the children. One of these was a visit to Nuwara Eliya for children who had never seen any other area of Sri Lanka.

8. An Old Boy of Trinity College from Australia, donated a large sum of money to rebuild the Trinity Scout Den. After much delay this was eventually built on the Junior School field. The Presidential Security rightly took objection to this, and on their request, the building was stopped and eventually dismantled. It was never occupied.

9. I was surprised at the idea expressed in the article that a person of such high standing as the Mahanayake of the Asgiriya Chapter had come to Trinity to seek my assistance for a child's admission. Nothing like that ever happened. I was privileged twice to visit the Mahanayake of the Malwatte chapter in his residence. Each time I was awed by his gentle disposition and had great respect for him.

10. During my tenure as Principal of Trinity College, I was questioned three times by different Government Security Agencies. They were very difficult times involving the security of the country, which I understood and I cooperated fully with the authorities. They were given access to all records they wished to see, including those involving tsunami funds.

I was sad to leave Trinity but hold no malice against anyone. My wife and I did our duty during my tenure as Principal but it was unfortunate that I could not complete the five year commitment I had agreed on when I accepted the post. I left seven months before fulfilling it. However, a major part of the plan for Trinity which I projected and presented to the Board of Governors when I applied for the post was realized during the four and a half years.

My students and my friends know that I left my post with my integrity intact.

Yours faithfully,

Rod Gilbert

Principal TCK (retired)

10th Oct 2013"