

# Dr. R. L. Hayman – His Story Lives On

By George Pillai



These are my experiences and I am relating them as they come to my mind. I also think that I appreciate goodness in everybody. Yet, in fact, one of the things that comes uppermost to my mind is the indebtedness and gratitude owed to The First Headmaster of S. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa. He led a life that was both, successful and fulfilling, raising our standards, so much so, that, today, we are able to enjoy and give thanks for what we have achieved.

He was an excellent leader. We have to value him for how he touched our lives day by day. There has never been another like him and this compels me to relate some of the incidents that took place, making everyone feel loved and appreciated, during his tenure at S.T.C.G. He taught us to walk with honor and manifest character and integrity in everything we did.

Dr. Hayman came to Ceylon through the offices of 'Society for the propagation of the Gospel'. Warden K. C. McPherson (1926-1930) wrote of the recruitment of Dr. Hayman. "In the year 1928, I went to England on short leave and while I was there I met four men. Dr. R.L.Hayman, Rev. A.J.Foster, Rev.J.G. Elliot and W.T.Keble, who wanted to return with me to Ceylon". All of them, subsequently became members of the Staff.

One of them, Dr. Hayman, gave many years of devoted service and also made some generous gifts to the College, remarkably the Swimming Bath and Fives Courts. Imagine, Swimming Pools were unheard of in Ceylon and he had one built in a school. As the person -in-charge of swimming he had to take the students to the sea for practices. He thought this very dangerous and felt that he had to change. He did not confine himself to swimming alone and because of his love for all forms of sports, donated the Fives Courts, besides involving himself in other activities.

Dr. Hayman personally coached Allan Smith, the only representative from Ceylon, for the Olympic Diving event. He was also responsible for coaching the Ardnt brothers who excelled in the All-Ceylon two-mile swim. Imagine my surprise, when in Ethiopia, to receive a letter from Bournemouth. He wrote me that he had made it a point to be on the spot, in Dover, when V.S.C.Anandan successfully swam the English Channel. Anandan had already swum across the Palk Strait. An entry in the Guinness Book of Records credits Anandan for creating a record for Treading Water. Anandan began swimming in Gurutalawa. He was also a member of the Junior Scout troop.

1942 was a significant year for Ceylon. The war with Japan was at its height and was drawing dangerously close to our shores. On the 4th of April, a delegation from the armed services inspected the school buildings in Mt. Lavinia. On April 5th the Warden was asked to hand over the School to the Armed Services in five days. Dr. Hayman was the Sub-Warden then. He was sent to Gurutalawa to make provision for a Branch of the School. Fortunately, in February 1942, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie de Saram had offered to gift their 46 acre Gurutalawa Farm with its orchard, buildings, equipment, furniture and livestock, to the school.

This magnanimous offer was gratefully accepted and in the space of two months S. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa was born and began to thrive with Dr. R.L.Hayman, at the helm as the First Headmaster. The school began as a Boarding School. Day to day work was rigid. Bell Simon was always punctual.

The rising bell tolled at 5.45 am. And 'lights out' was at 9.30 pm. We worked in two sessions. There was 'prep' in the morning followed by breakfast and classes, a short break and a lunch interval. After the second session we had a tea-break. Games were compulsory and students, properly attired, moved on for swimming, tennis, badminton, basketball, horse riding with the rest making the long trek to the football, hockey or cricket fields. Games ended at 6.00 in the evening. Half an hour for showers and then we had 'prep' followed by dinner. Dr. Hayman, usually entertained us with a movie afterwards.

The war ended in 1945. There was intense speculation about the future of the Gurutalawa Branch. Would it be able to continue when the Military Authorities vacated Mt. Lavinia! Their fears were unfounded. Gurutalawa was a viable Institution. Dr. Hayman was much more than the first Headmaster. He, with his expertise and goodness, gave of his time, energy and most of all, his money, for the school. He gave Gurutalawa a Swimming Pool. Dr. Hayman wished to see that Gurutalawa became a school where boys of different races and religions mingled freely and harmoniously.

Dr. Hayman taught Physics and Mathematics. He also had a devoted Staff. The students were assigned to different Houses- Read, Garnier and De Saram. Those in Lower and Upper Fourth were in Winchester House. Mr. Pegler was the Farm Manager. We had our own supply of vegetables, milk, eggs and bread. Mr. Scott taught Woodwork. He carved the statue of S. Thomas The Apostle. Mrs. Scott played the Organ in the Chapel. Rev. A.J. Foster was the Chaplain. Every week, Dr. Hayman with Rev. Foster, by his side, doled out 50 cents to each student as Pocket Money. Unfortunately, Rev. Foster took twenty five cents from each student, for the Chapel.

Dr. Hayman met Mary Rudd, a Military Nurse, in Diyatalawa. They were married in England in 1945. Mrs. Hayman returned to Gurutalawa as Sick-room Matron. She was assisted by Bharathan and later by Ariyadasa. Ramiah was the School gardener. He worked under the supervision of Mrs. Hayman and tended our lawns, hill slopes and beds of flowering plants and shrubs, promoting beautiful blooms. Mrs. Hayman had her Persimom trees securely fenced and considered all trees as valuable living beings.

I had a lesson on the value of trees. The School Boxing Ring was sited in an open space in a wooded area. In order to provide more access, I got a few branches cut from the trees by the Boxing ring. Mrs. Hayman heard about this and I was at the receiving end of a long and merciless harangue. I apologized and moved away utterly saddened by this event. The next day, Dr. Hayman met me and to my surprise, he apologized on behalf of Mrs. Hayman and asked me to ignore the incident. The same morning, at Assembly, he praised me and also thanked me for my work and contributions to the school. I recall this event as a lasting memorial to this great educationist.

Dr. Hayman played a leading role in instilling discipline in the students by involving them in hiking, laying trails, bird watching and most importantly, Scouting. He also acted as a building supervisor. He taught the students to make mud-bricks. U.K.G. Dayananda and his assistants built the first Fives Court in the School with the bricks they made. As a servant of God, with his caring love and generosity, Dr. Hayman showed a special concern for the school domestic staff. Apparently, this concern made him study Sinhalese. Gunadasa, who works in the kitchen, fell ill and was away for some time, Dr. Hayman walked to his house in Boralanda. At the door he met Gunadasa's wife. He rubbed his hands together and softly asked: "Obe Samiya suwatha".

On 14th February, 1963 the Junior Scout Troop set out to camp in the Yala National Park. This was recorded as a farewell camp for Dr. Hayman. On the final morning, the Duty Patrol got up unusually early and prepared 'Egg hoppers' and 'Katta Sambol'. Dr. Hayman was pleasantly surprised and wrote in my Log Book. "I have enjoyed my camp with the Junior Troop and have been fed sumptuously". On 14th March, 1963, The Junior Troop assembled by the Chapel and formed a guard of Honor to the departing Haymans.

When Dr. Hayman returned to England he was appointed a MBE in the New Year Honor's List in 1964. The Investiture took place in Buckingham Palace. Dr. and Mrs. Hayman and his sister travelled by train to London and stayed overnight. The following day, they had breakfast, changed and left the hotel. They enjoyed directing the taxi-driver to Buckingham Palace. In one of his letters, he described in detail the entire proceedings. When they got there he was directed through a series of halls to the Green Room. Here the officials checked and separated the holders of the different awards. When they reached the Throne Room, they were lined up in order. The Lord Chancellor called his name and he took his place in front of the Duke. After hanging the medal the Duke asked him if he had retired, and who was his successor and how the school was now. The Duke had shown a great deal of interest in the answers made by Dr. Hayman and finally shook his hand as a dismissal. Dr. Hayman was surprised by the Duke's remarkable memory.

Piyasena was Dr. Hayman's driver. He drove his Lancaster and then the Holden. Piyasena had arranged to get married. Dr. Hayman drew the plans and instructed Cassim Bawa to build a house. This was built but Piyasena insisted on having a pit latrine built outside. The only site available was about 60 yards away from Mr. F.L. Amerasinghe's house. The siting of the pit latrine annoyed Mr. Amerasinghe and he complained to Rev. Foster, who had succeeded Dr. Hayman as Headmaster. The quarrel was bitter and the wrangling persisted. Besides, Piyasena was enamored with Dr. Hayman's Holden. He secretly wished that Dr. Hayman would gift it to him. This was not possible. Dr. Hayman had not drawn any of the funds due to him from the College. He told Piyasena that he would sell his car for Rs.10, 000. Piyasena had a brother doing business in Kurunegala. He went to him and came back with the funds. After the Haymans left, Piyasena intended to hire the vehicle to the Staff and thus try to re-imburse his brother. This did not work out. Piyasena took the car to Kurunegala and sold it and came back with a small vehicle. Rev. Foster wanted to payback the monies due from the College, to Dr. Hayman. He was successful. And I believe a substantial amount was repatriated.

I was corresponding with Dr. Hayman. He had begun teaching in a school in Bournemouth. He also had visits from past students. I would write about incidents in the school and he would inform me about the students he met. D.C. Kannangara was working on a ship as an engineer. Dr. Hayman was puzzled when Kannangara changed his name to Gazara. Dr. Hayman felt that it was time to retire as he found that he was making too many blackboard mistakes.

I was in Nuwara Eliya when I heard about the death of Rev. Foster. Mr. A.K. Chapman succeeded him as Headmaster. Mr. Ratnasingham, the Cadet Master was in the field with the Cadet Troop. They

were being filmed. Mr. Chapman over-reacted. He went to the field and ordered the students back to their dormitories. This provoked the students and they rioted. The subsequent inquiry by the Board determined Mr. Chapman had acted hastily and was at fault. Mr. Ratnasingham resigned, on his own. I continued to have good relations with Gurutalawa, keeping Dr. Hayman informed. Mr. Chapman was removed and Mr. Frank Jayasinge was appointed Headmaster. Mr. Frank Jayasinghe visited me in the Hill School and he and his wife enjoyed a meal with us.

The Ministry of Education, Ethiopia was recruiting teachers. A team was sent to Sri Lanka and interviews were held. I was selected. Two planes were sent and over 200 teachers and families were air-lifted in November 1969. At first I was posted to Harer. Later I joined The General Wingate Senior Secondary School in Addis Ababa. I taught Mathematics in Grades Eleven and Twelve. Every year we get a long Summer Vacation. I continued my correspondence with Dr. Hayman. Tharmaratnam, a student from Gurutalawa was now a very successful business man. Dr. Hayman was very proud of him. Incidentally, when his parents passed away in Malaysia, Dr. Hayman handed a check to the school office and said, "Tharmaratnam's fees have arrived". It was later discovered that Dr. Hayman was paying the fees. Tharmaratnam was able to continue his education at Gurutalawa and Mt. Lavinia. He graduated as an Engineer in Sri Lanka, joined the firm of Walker & Sons and when a fire destroyed our school buildings, Thamaratnam drew the plans and supervised the construction of the new building He also renovated the existing electrical system using new concrete poles constructed in the school. In England, Tharmaratnam's business flourished. He had large and successful operations in Nigeria too. In 1982, he gifted a car to Mrs. Hayman.

In the summer of 1982 my wife and I went to England. We were met by Kamal Nilaweera. We went to Bournemouth by bus and were met by Mrs. Hayman and Rev. Foster's sister. We spent the night with the Haymans. We had curry and rice for dinner. The next morning, Mrs. Hayman brought us 'bed-tea'. Dr. Hayman took me for a long walk along the coast. Later Mrs. Hayman drove us to the shops. In the evening we travelled to London and were met by D.C. Kannagara. We stayed with Kannagara in Enfield. In the morning we went to his office where I met other old boys.

The buildings in Gurutalawa bear testimony to this dedicated man whose very nature was to mold us in his image. He was in Mt. Lavinia as a teacher, coach and Sub-Warden. He founded Gurutalawa. Today we have a portrait of him along with a commemorative tablet in the Dr. R.L. Hayman Science Laboratory. The words inscribed, "To spend and be spent in the service of others". Summarizes the purposeful life of this sincere, godly man, who did much while playing a leading role in our lives at S. Thomas; Gurutalawa.

### **About the Author**

*George Pillai was a Teacher, Scout Master, Coach and Master in Charge of Boxing, Cricket and Soccer (1954 – 1964) at St. Thomas' College Gurutalawa. He was very well liked by all the students. He still has many old pictures, logs and historical documents from STC- an invaluable resource that he used to write this article. He now lives with his family in Orange County, California and attends all of the TAC functions and activities.*

