

Mrs Mary Hayman—An Appreciation

Mrs Mary Hayman widow of the late Dr R.L. Hayman, legendary Sub Warden and Headmaster of S. Thomas' College Mount Lavinia and Gurutalawa, passed away peacefully in a private Nursing Home on Saturday the 17th November 2007. She was accorded a simple funeral at the Crematorium Atwood Road Worcester, on Tuesday the 27th November. In her life she recoiled from being the cause of any Fuss and so it was that she ensured that it would be so as she left it.

Writing of her funeral old boy expatriates Kamal Gammanpila together with Kamal Nilaweera wrote evocatively of the pervasive Gurutalawa ambience of that morning – of the overnight mist lifting to a thin crispy hue so familiar as one looked across the paddyfields from the Head-masters bungalow, as the hearse bearing her rolled its way gently through the wooded Landscape reminiscent of the Farm's windbreak, and of the autumn leaves gentle fall: in nostalgic contrast to the rainbow hues of the summer flowers of Gurutalawa. :as if to comply with her request., No flowers Please!

Mrs Hayman was the last but not the least of that great triumvirate which moulded the Lives of the many boys at Gurutalawa in their formative years. While it is inevitable to associate her as the wife of Dr Hayman, she emerged from the shadows of his towering presence albeit in her characteristic self effacing manner to establish herself in her own right as the Sickroom Matron complementing the Headmaster and the Chaplain Canon A. J. Foster.

Together they established the ethos of a public school in the illustrious tradition of such schools which were bywords for Gentle manliness, leadership, learning, fair play and manners: in the English paradigm of such schools at their height.

She was born Mary Rudd in Sutton Surrey and her family settled down in Worcestershire. Trained as a nurse she joined the Army and in the line of service was posted to the military base hospital in Bombay. The Divine hand which passes as fortuity in the Secular view, in its benevolence, brought her to Ceylon and to the military hospital established at S. Thomas' College Mount Lavinia.

Her contact with the College therefore predated her meeting with Dr. Hayman who was sent in charge of a part of the College relocated in a showpiece farm of thirty five acres at Gurutalawa in April 1942. But Diyatalawa across the hills was (and is) n Army camp and so it was that there was a 'fortuity' in their meeting. Hikes were exchanged since Dr. Hayman made use of the Army personnel to help out with Physical Training, Boxing, the establishment of a battle course and other sporting activities.

They married in 1945 when Dr Hayman took his home leave after the war was over. Their return was Initially to the College at Mount which had been derequisitioned. Warden de Saram needed the old and well tried firm to rehabilitate the School with Canon Foster an integral part of it (1931 –1942)also returned from his Leave.

The triumvirate was back in harness at Gurutalawa from the first term of 1948. As a nurse Mrs Hayman epitomized the highest standards of the profession. As Sickroom Matron she established her own particular Regency over the Thomian Community.

She made the sickroom a haven of care and love and adhered to the maxim that prevention was better than cure, particularly with the Junior boys with their predilection to colds and coughs as temperatures plummeted in the “winter” months and again as the seasonal winds savaged through the campus in all their fury. Apart from ministering to the College boys and Staff of every category she opened the doors of the sick room to the surrounding Villages. It was characteristic of her that those needing hospital attention was sent in the School Vehicle - invariably Dr. Hayman’s car - to Badulla 25 miles away with firm instructions to the accompanying attendant from the school to take good care of the patient and she would follow up with telephone calls to the hospital, monitoring progress. She made it a point to train two members of the College Domestic staff to be Locums in her absence.

Her Regency extended beyond her primary writ of caring for the Sick. It included the House keeping of the built premises as well as the vast campus, redolent with gum and Fir Trees, fruits of every kind and flowers of every hue. Under Her unrelenting eye, grass was mowed, hedges trimmed, roofs and gutters cleared of debris, and flowers blossomed in their chosen locations. A stickler for cleanliness, every morning unflinching she was in the dining hall, supervising the cleaning of its floors and tables. She persisted and succeeded in opening out the kitchen to air and light and making it easy to move around in for the staff by increasing its size. She was adamant that food should be served hot to the boys and ensured that through a Queue system each boy would be served straight from the particular cooking utensil. Her ubiquity kept every one on their toes .

She was a committed environmentalist and conservationist . She found bird watching an exciting Hobby and a wonderful therapy and initiated the boys to its delights. Her compassion extended to all forms of life. On one occasion she had the nerve to upbraid a burly retired Rugger playing English planter for snipe shooting in the paddy fields bordering the campus. Madam he had said to her ‘You must be a vegetarian’. He had his day then, but that was the last occasion he was seen around. Once she received a turkey for Christmas, but the bird found in her, a benign new owner and lived to die of old age. On another occasion some villagers brought her a python they had captured, but she discreetly had it released by the very same sisal plant where it was caught. She had a Siamese cat as a pet which she managed to take to England when she left. She adopted a deer and a peacock which actually followed her around. She empathized with them as St. Francis would have done’ presiding ‘as the Patron saint of the College Chapel.

Her Love of Gardening and plants once led her to an embarrassing contretemps. On one of many visits to the famous Hakgala gardens, as well known and distinguished visitors they were taken round by the Curator himself. Typical of the weather there was a sudden shower of rain which caused Mrs Hayman to open her parasol to protect herself, whereupon a shower of plant slips rained to the ground. The curator, a gentleman of the highest order did not merely look the other way but hastily helped Mrs Hayman to retrieve them and got them packed.

Most boys saw her as a latter day Forence Nightingale. But there was in her more than a little touch of Margaret Thatcher. Kind and compassionate she was also firm and resolute when the occasion warranted, often in counterpoint to the innate predisposition of both Dr Hayman and Canon Foster to be too accommodating of

human frailty. Important decisions no doubt carried some weight of her own views. She was Candid and Open and called a Spade a Spade .

Mrs Hayman was slightly built, always very simply dressed and had the minimum make up-perhaps a touch of lipstick. There was generally a suspicion of a smile in her eyes benevolent and not derisive as if she saw through people and things to what was spurious. Very much the country lass she was unspoilt by her exalted position as the Headmaster's wife and completely free of any desire to acquire the sophistication that ensnared lesser Mortals to veneer shallow personalities. She was soft spoken as one would have expected and in fact when she did speak it was in a whisper. She would venture the odd joke to a close friend sotto voce'and ensured it would not be a source of any embarrassment to whoever it was holding forth on the 'Thusness of Thus'often at dinners she was obliged to attend as the Headmaster's wife

She arrived in Colombo from Bombay on the very morning of April 2nd 1942 when Colombo harbour was being subject to an Air attack by the Japanese and watched proceedings perforce from outside Colombo harbour. One of the planes was brought down on the College Big Club Grounds. Prospects of danger left her unfazed. We had ample evidence of it during her stay at Gurutalawa whether it was climbing Up the sheer face of forbidding mountains, exploring underground caves or negotiating Forest short cuts where leopard had been sighted and restive wild buffalow were a clear and present danger.

The Hayman's left Gurutalawa on March 14th 1963. There were a series of valedictory gatherings and speeches leading upto the departure. But nothing could assuage the disillusionment of the Reality . They had planned to settle down within an hours hike from Gurutalawa in the vicinity of Erabadde. But took note of the message of political change and were eye witnesses to the early turbulence. They were most concerned with how the cross currents of events would affect the school. 'But the best laid schemes of mice and men gan aft aglay. 'and they absorbed the wrench with the typical unsentimentality of the English character.

Mrs Hayman settled down to run their Bournemout Establishment. But they never lost touch, looking forward to entertaining Old Boys who made their visits a kind of pilgrimage. She delighted in giving them the traditional, Thomian fare of Rice, dhal and Coconut Sambol, and getting first hand news of the school. She never failed to see that the visiting car was provided with sandwiches and a soft drink for the return journey.

But the Thomian connection was too compelling . She returned 5 times in all, 3 after Dr Hayman's death in 1983 . Appropriately her Final visit to Sri Lanka was in 1992 in connection with the Golden Jubilee Celebration of The College at Gurutalawa at which she was the Chief Guest. She found that Things had changed and maintained a discreet silence except in Sotto Voce' to close friends who shared her views. After Dr Hayman's death she was rightly appointed President of the OBA UK Association and made the journey from Bourne mouth for every meeting till she was physically unequal to the traveling.

More so after Dr Hayman's death, she was ever the ministering angel looking after the infirm and the bed ridden Sometimes her rounds, including caring for around 17

or 18 patients' daily. These included Miss Joan Foster, Canon Foster's sister, Mrs Mowena Hayman, Dr Hayman's sister and Mrs Blanchard (prep School) with Thomian associations. It involved attending to daily needs, shopping, collecting medicines, arranging Transport visiting Nursing homes and Hospitals and even caring for pets. 51, Boscombe Overcliff drive was a drop point for Grocers, Chemists and Laundries' which she would deliver by car for friends who were not mobile—the car a generous gift from a grateful Thomian Ward.

Laid back and simple Mrs Hayman had nerves of steel and a heart of gold. She will assuredly have a foremost place in the History of the School in her own right. In later years when she was unable to continue with her voluntary medical service and her faculties had dimmed she preferred the tranquility of solitude. She divested herself of mementos to be placed in the Hayman -Foster memorial museum at Gurutalawa. Her casket was draped in the College flag and the funeral Service was completed with the Thomian Song in the background.. She has gone beyond the ken of human consciousness but her twilight thoughts would typically have echoed Christiana Rosetti's Famous lines in keeping with her matter of fact approach to life. 'If thou wilt, Remember, If thou wilt Forget. ' She was completely free of Romantic Illusions. But We shall remember . We shall not forget. Her memory remains within our domain inspiring us to love all life and indeed life itself as a gift to be shared and given in the service of others. Mrs Hayman was not a religious person in the commonly misguided perception of the Religious. She lived the maxim 'laborare est Orare' To work is to pray.

She lived her life the epitome of a verse from J. Keble's familiar Hymn.

The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we need to ask,
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God.

And on that road, Mrs Mary Hayman walked the extra mile.

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