

MEMORIES OF LIFE AT S. THOMAS' PREPARATORY SCHOOL, BANDARAWELA

1. I do not remember how it was that my father thought of admitting my brothers before me and myself later, to S. Thomas' Preparatory School, Bandarawela (as it was then known). Of course it was well known that the famous educationist Mr. W.T. Keble was at the head of the school and reported to be doing a fine job of work. He had started the School at Kollupitiya in 1938 and proceeded to embellish his record by starting the Bandarawela School in 1942. It is reported that both "**STPS & STC**" became "**Independent Schools**" from April 1951 within the National System of Education.
2. The School put out a combined Magazine together with its Branch at Kollupitiya. From 1957 Bandarawela had its own School Magazine.
3. The Kollupitiya Branch had their own OBA from about 1950 or so, whilst the Bandarawela OBA was inaugurated much later.
4. My eldest brother Sanath and my second brother Nimal were admitted to Prep School in or about 1947. Sanath went on to Gurutalawa after completing his 5th Standard at Bandarawela. Nimal was in the 4th standard in 1952 when I found admission to Prep School. He continued at Bandarawela in the year 1953 and left for Gurutalawa at the end of that year. I was at Bandarawela from 1952 to December 1957, when I too passed the entrance exam to Gurutalawa and found admission at Guru in January 1958.
5. I think there were about 105 Boarders and a few Day Scholars in the whole School in January 1952. There were only 08 Boys and 02 Girls in the Lower Kindergarten with me. Charmaine Jayawardena & Rosemary were the 02 Girls. Amongst the Boys were Sarath Nanayakkara, Upali Dalpadado, Haris Yapa, Shanmugam, Edward Gauder and myself. The Boarders were accommodated in 4 dormitories and in the Farm. The division was according to the ages/ classes. Prefects were issued with badges to wear on their shirts. The most junior students were housed in the "**Blanchard**" Dormitory which had about 20 boys, all of the age of 5 years or so. These boys had the services of two Ayahs because of their very young ages to help them with their baths etc. Some of the Ayahs whose names come to mind are Prema, Magilin, Agnes, Leelawathi, Somawathi & Gunawathie. On Sundays we were taken to the spout immediately outside the School. I remember the Ayahs applying soap and scrubbing us. The other dormitories were "**Corea, Wijewardene, and Peiris**". Some boys were housed in the "**Farm**" up on the hill and every morning they had to walk along the path downhill and then along the road to school for classes, meals and games etc.
6. Each boy prior to admission at the beginning of his School career received from Mr. Keble a list of clothes and other toiletries etc. which he was required to bring to school. Blue shorts and white shirts formed the school uniform. A raincoat, gum boots, tennis

shoes, dirty linen bag and small suitcase for school Books etc. were amongst the compulsory items. These were all packed in a "**Trunk**" and sent to school by the parents. The "**Trunks**" were stored under each bed. There were no Bunk Beds.

7. There was no school tie. Boys were not permitted to wear long trousers or denims or coloured clothing.
8. The entrance to the School was not as imposing as now. There was no Arch or Security or Name Board at the entrance. The Chapel was housed in the first room at the entrance of the School. The Head Master's Office was in the room immediately next to the Chapel. The Administrative Staff were also accommodated in a room just beyond. The Wijewardene dormitory was next, and thereafter the Corea Dormitory.
9. Classes were from Lower Kindergarten and Upper Kindergarten to Standard 5. Mrs. Gnanapragasam and Miss. Hettiarachchi taught us in the Kindergarten classes. In the Lower and Upper Kindergarten we had with us a few girls. One of them, Charmaine was the sister of two of our students, Roger and Philip Jayawardene. Charmaine is now married to the former Minister Mr. Lakshman Kiriella. We also had Kamini Gunasekera, (whose father owned the "Army and Navy Stores" at Diyatalawa) Zeena Close, and Linda Post. Damayanthi and Mallika Samaraweera, the nieces of former Minister Mr. Percy Samaraweera of Welimada were also in our Class at that time. Kanthika Edirisinghe, (the daughter of our Senior Master Mr. David Edirisinghe and the sister of Mithra and Panini, both of whom studied at Bandarawela) was also a student, but a few years younger to us.
10. The games available were Cricket, Football and Hockey. There was also Athletics, Pony Riding, Cubbing and Swimming. The grounds were divided in to two sections, the smaller grounds a few feet lower in level than the main grounds. Subsequently both grounds have now been levelled and made into one large area.
11. We had regular Inter-house matches in Cricket, Hockey, Soccer and even Athletics and Swimming. Serious note was taken of these Inter-house Matches. The houses were Red, White and Blue. Sometime later the Head Master explained that White was not a colour and hence changed it to Green. Thereafter, boys were divided into Hulugalla, De Saram and Keble Houses.
12. These Inter-house sports activities were conducted in a spirit of friendly rivalry. We cheered for our House till we were hoarse. Apart from Captains and Vice-captains of the School Teams, there were Captains and Vice-captains of the House Teams. Those students who mastered the finer points of these sporting activities in their early years

continued to do well and indeed excelled in such activities subsequently at Gurutalawa and later on even at Mt. Lavinia and also at National Level.

13. At Sports Meets and similar events very small wooden shields approximately 2 ½ - 3 inches wide and 4 inches in length taking the shape of the School Crest used to be given out as Awards & Trophies. These were taken home by the boys and displayed for parents and siblings with pride.
14. Inter-School Matches were also played against Uva College and St. Bedes' College of Badulla and also St. Joseph's College of Bandarawela. There was no interaction with Big Brother Guru as their Classes started at Year 06 or Lower 4th.
15. Other extracurricular activities that we had were a Cross Country Run in the form of a "**Paper Chase**" once a year. Two boys would be given a head start and they would leave the front gates of the school where we were all assembled with Mr. Keble at about 4.30 p.m., slung on their backs, two linen bags containing paper which had been torn in to small pieces for that purpose days before. They would throw the paper whilst they ran on a pre-determined circuitous route and found their way back to school later on in the evening. About 20 minutes after their departure from the front gates, the other students, would follow them by trying to locate the paper which had been thrown. This was in effect a cross country run.
16. Apart from this there were regular Cub Camps. Each Cub Pack would attend a Camp where they would be camping over night in some bungalow which had a large garden etc. I remember the camp we had in Mr. Divitotawela's bungalow in Ambagasdowa, Welimada. His sons, Mahendra and Palitha were also in School. There was a stream close by and we spent many happy hours exploring the area as young boys would. Cubbing was had on one day of the week. Students were divided into packs and I remember being a Pack Leader. Various skills were taught during Cubbing. The "Reef Knot" and "Sheet Bend" executed with strings were some of them. We had Camp Fires in the Big Grounds late in to the night when we sang the Perennial Favourites under the supervision of our masters.
17. Swimming was in a very basic swimming pool adjoining the Peiris dormitory. The Bandarawela Swimming Pool had been constructed in 1949. "**It was 66 ft. long, 20ft. Wide and 3ft. Deep**". I do not think there was a cleaning plant for this pool. My recollection is that the source of water for the pool was rainwater, and that which was collected from the roof and gutters of the Peiris Dormitory whose one wall was almost against the swimming pool. Later on water was pumped from a well. Mr. Premadasa, a chubby and very fair master was in charge of swimming (and art). Provision was made

to drain out water from the pool by two pipes immediately below the pool and boys would bathe from the spouts thus created.

18. Those competent to swim a length or more were referred to as "**lengthers**". Those who could swim only a breadth were referred to as "**breadthers**".
19. We also had "**Kandyan Dancing**" for those who wished to join. A Master visited School in the evenings to conduct Classes.
20. I was at one time in the Peiris Dormitory which really was two or three rooms in the bungalow on the left side of the hill at the entrance to the school. This Dormitory I believe was named after Sir James Peiris. The House Master was Mr. Obeysekera who was also in charge of Cricket. He was a stern, slim, tall gentleman who lived with his wife. Both were prolific smokers and Mr. Obeysekera was in the habit of breaking his cigarette into two halves and shouting for his wife "*Kupatee*, come here, will you". He would then pass over the lit half of the cigarette to his wife and they would both sit on the verandah chairs and smoke to their hearts' content whilst we boys prepared ourselves to go to bed for the night.
21. The abandoned golf links where Golf was played no more were the happy hunting grounds of the boys. Walking around along the water ways and ponds used to be a common pastime on Saturdays & Sundays.
22. The Golf Links adjoining the school had close to the Peiris dormitory several ponds along which fresh water flowed from one feeding the other. These ponds were home to mega leaches the size of one's thumb. We used to peer into the water and watch those creatures. I remember once Mr. Keble arranged a "**strong stuntman**" who was able to allow a heavy vehicle to run over his torso, to give a display of his capability in the Golf Links through which a road ran to adjoining villages. The Golf Links however, was totally bare, apart from a few trees and the grass, bereft of buildings whatsoever and vehicles that passed that way were few and far between. All of us students crowded round this heavy vehicle. The "**strong stuntman**" lay himself down with some planks across his chest and the vehicle drove over him. Another stunt performed by him was to jump with bare feet from the Cross Bar on the Goal Post in the Grounds on to a board which had previously been strewn with pieces of broken glass and thereafter display the soles of his feet which did not have any evidence of bleeding or injury. These stunts were sufficient to amaze us boys between the ages of 5 and 10. I also remember going along the Golf Links with a large number of students to watch a part of that famous movie "*Rekhawa*", done by Sir Lester James Peiris being filmed in a village, on "*Aislaby Estate*" very close to the school.

23. I have no recollection of their being fences around the Campus and a strict rule being enforced that we were not to go out. However there happened to be an unwritten rule that nobody should leave the Campus during the weekdays and school hours.
24. During a particular term hordes of butterflies used to fly across the Campus grounds and we were made to believe that they were on their way on an Annual Pilgrimage to Adams Peak, where they would "**bang**" against the rock and die. It used to be a wonderful sight to see millions of these creatures wending their way across the Campus.
25. The few Christians who were in school, had to walk on Sundays to a Church in the Bandarawela town for service. They were required to be kitted in the school blazer, shoes and grey stockings. Non-Christians who had pocket money and wished to go to town and do any shopping were permitted to accompany the Christians, under the supervision of the Prefects. These boys brought back loads of Jujubes and "Black Magic Marshmallows" from town for their friends. They also took this opportunity to purchase Dinky Toys from Messrs. Sivaraj and Co. and Messrs. Millers in town. Sunday Lunch was the best lunch of the week and all the boys looked forward to the Yellow Rice with Plums etc.
26. In 1957 the School organized a Trip to "**Pidurutalagala**" the highest Mountain in Sri Lanka. The Senior Boys were taken by bus to Nuwara- Eliya from where we set off to climb the Mountain. It was a most enjoyable and exhilarating expedition.
27. Those Boys who came from Buddhist Homes and were bent on being more partial to practice their religious beliefs in some way would in certain areas of the school which were not frequented often build with earth/mud miniature "**Dagobas**" and in the same way that kids would play "**House**" go through the rituals of Buddhist worship and practice.
28. The Sick Room was adjoining the Dining Hall. Boys who had brought from home various vitamins, syrups etc. were required to keep them in the Sick Room and take their daily dosage at a regular time each day, generally after Break-fast. Some of the bottles were "**Feradol**" and "**Radiamalt**". My father insisted that we take "**Seven Seas -Cod Liver Oil**", and he further made it more unpleasant by providing the liquid variety, which had a somewhat offensive smell. These bottles were kept in the far side of the Sick Room, segregated and not to come in to contact with the more pleasant varieties. Obviously we were not "**popular**" in the Sick Room owing to this. Mrs. Ranasinghe, Mrs. Jansz and later Mrs. Claasz were the Matrons-in-Charge of the Sick Room.

29. I think it was Dr. Blaze from Bandarawela who was the Medical Practitioner who visited school on one day of the week in order to see the sick. He would be got down to administer the various immunizations that became due around that age for the boys. He would also be summoned in various emergencies. If any student caught an infectious disease like Chicken Pox, Mumps or Measles, it would mean more than half the school would be down with it. I remember on one occasion having got Chicken Pox and being made to stay back in school in the Farm, even when holidays had been declared.
30. Boys had to queue up before entering the Dining Hall for meals. There were 2 or 3 entrances, which were manned by two Duty Prefects. All students had to show their hands / fingers palm up and down, for inspection. The Prefects would see whether the fingers were clean and if they were not, send the students back to the dormitory to wash and come back. This was despite the fact that cutlery was provided in the Dining Hall. We were not permitted whilst eating to rest our elbows on the Dining Table. Any offender would find the Prefect banging the hand/ elbow on the table. If not the neighbour was permitted to do the correction. We were also not permitted to break the slice of bread in the centre. These were considered as bad table manners. The fork and spoon, on completion of the meal had to be placed on the plate in the proper way. Grace was said before and after the meal. The support staff would go round serving extra portions to the more hungry students. There was a radio in one corner of the Dining Hall and on Sundays it used to blare forth Sinhala Songs. I remember the tall senior most guy on the support staff, Chandare, whose huge Adam's Apple wobbling up and down used to fascinate us smaller boys.
31. Half boiled eggs were served for breakfast to all boys who ordered "*extra eggs.*" Some boys did not consume these eggs. They were surreptitiously pocketed by them, removed from the Dining Hall and buried in a pre-arranged area of the School, where they remained till the end of term to be taken out when they were quite rotten, and used as "bombs" flung on to innocent passers by on the rail track when these boys were going home by train for their holidays. The boys took the day train "*Udarata Menike*" from Bandarawela to the Fort Station in Colombo. The parents would pick the boys up at that point. Those whose homes were close to Nanu-oya, Hatton, Talawakelle, Gampola, Peradeniya and Polgahawela were picked up from the respective Stations. Those whose homes were further South of Colombo i.e. Moratuwa, Panadura, Galle, Deniyaya, Akuressa, Matara took the connecting Matara train at around 4.00 p.m. from the Fort Railway Station.
32. The Dining Hall also served as the Main Hall of the School for Concerts and Plays and even Prize Givings. Prize Givings were always preceded by a Concert of short duration. Once the Play "*Saradiel*" was performed. David Perera took the part of the notorious Highwayman/ Robber. Jabir Junaid and Sarath Suraweera acted as the "*Police Officers*". Incidentally, Sarath having completed his schooling, joined the "*Police*" Department as a young Sub Inspector and retired recently as a Senior Superintendent of Police. It is also

worth mentioning here that he has now also retired from the Guru OBA having dragged me in to its activities when I was leading a very peaceful life!! Sarath Nanayakkara and D C Kannangara (presently Don Gazara) took the part of Saradiel's chief accomplices. Mr. Lekamge was the Master-in-Charge.

33. Amongst the other plays that were put on the Boards I remember "***The Old Woman who lived in her shoe***". Another play was "***The Boy who cried Wolf***".
34. Once when there was a Solar Eclipse, Mr. Keble had the whole school assembled in the Dining Hall and with all the lights put off, he demonstrated with a model made to scale what really transpired at an eclipse between the planets, in order to educate the boys. Music was also had at one end of the Dining Hall where the Piano stood. Miss Blanchard was the Teacher-in- Charge. She gave piano lessons to students. Later when Mr. Hettiarachchi who had been the Head of Uva College came over to our School to teach English, his daughter Ms. Hettiarachchi continued with the piano lessons. We were all made to participate during the period set apart, in the Percussion Band which had various instruments. A performance by the Percussion Band at the end-of-term Concert was also a regular item.
35. There was a pig-sty immediately behind the Dining Hall. There were a few pigs who were amply fed with the remnants and leftovers of food served to 150 boys. Some of these pigs were slaughtered during Christmas each year.
36. Rainy days were unforgettable because right round the school and over the mountains we used to see, sometimes even 6 or 7 bright rainbows, simultaneously. It used to be a beautiful and fascinating sight. The air was clean, fresh and pure. Of course there were hardly any other buildings around and the hills were bare. I remember Mr. Lekamge of the Staff who was the Sinhala Master and who had his bungalow which was a solitary building on a hill across the back of the School. Mr. Lekamge was supposed to have previously been in the Buddhist Clergy. Long after I left school and was practicing my Profession as an Assistant in a Colombo Law Firm Mr. Lekamge sought our assistance in a professional matter. He was living somewhere around Kelaniya or Kadawatha at that time. I was happy to have helped him after so many years.
37. Mr. David Edirisinghe the Senior Master in whose memory a building has now been constructed adjoining the Peiris dormitory was also an unforgettable character. He taught us Arithmetic and we feared him during this particular subject. He had the habit of lifting us small boys totally off the ground by inserting his fingers and grabbing the loop at the waistline on the back of our shorts. Mr. Edirisinghe lived in a bungalow adjoining the Farm at that time. He had various fruit trees in his garden which he tended lovingly. On one occasion together with two other friends we raided his orchard on the assumption that he was not at home. Just as my friend put his hand on the guava

and was about to pluck it, a stentorian voice exclaimed "Stop Thief". My friend's hand froze. Did we not run for our lives. Of course we were apprehended later and punishment duly meted out. Mr. Edirisinghe also supervised the period for compulsory English Letter Writing by students to their parents every Saturday morning, acting as the one-man Censor Board, ensuring that no adverse comments about the School were included.

38. Around 1955 or 1956, an Open Air Theatre was built below the Dining Hall and the path to the rear of the Golf Links. I believe this was based on the model of the Roman Amphitheatres. This Open Air Theatre which still stands is supposed to be the only one of its kind in Sri Lanka. We did have certain performances in this theatre. Kandyan Dancing practice was regularly conducted at this venue. This Theatre was donated by the Grand-Parents of two students Shanmuganathan and Ganarajan.
39. Beyond the Corea dormitory was an open space on the left side of which was an embankment about 20 yards lengthwise. Students with their pen knives cut the soft earth and made roads for play with Dinky Toys. In those days we had only to send a letter to "Chands", the sports goods shop in Colombo and request them to send a "sample" of a Dinky Toy and we would duly receive a parcel of a Dinky Toy by return post. So students used to have a real model roadway with restaurants, petrol sheds, service stations etc. and all types of motor vehicles plying on this stretch of embankment.
40. Beyond this area was the Gym which had a Roof of zinc sheets and no ceiling. I remember ropes being hung on the steel trusses of the roof and boys being made to climb the ropes right up; tap the rafter and come down. Apart from these gymnastics, Assembly for the whole school on one day of the week was had in this Gym. All students had to stand whilst Mr. Keble addressed the Staff and Students on various matters. I remember feeling unsteady and fainting off on more than one occasion during Assembly, to be carried away by 02 or 03 Boys to the Sick Room where I would revive after a hot cup of chocolate.
41. During the Second Term strong winds used to blow across the Campus, boys use their pen knives, cut pieces of timber and bamboo and turned out hand held wind - mills with which considerable time was spent having fun, holding them against the wind.
42. Another popular past time was to turn out "*Catapults*" by cutting forks out of the Guava trees and using discarded bicycle tubes. These were aimed at various birds and animals by the boys.

43. Boys used to turn out Bows and Arrows using the various plants available around the Campus and indulge in games of Red Indians and Cowboys etc. Boys also purchased toy guns from Millers in Bandarawela Town to which a role of caps was affixed. On pulling the trigger the gun used to explode with the gun powder packed caps.
44. Boys also used to, in their spare time play "**Hop Scotch**" by drawing the diagram on the ground. Another favourite pastime, was to play "**Book Cricket**". During the Third Term "**Marbles**" was a popular game. Two different sizes were used. Some had pretty colours. The Expert Players collected hundreds of Marbles as "**Booty**" to be taken home at the end of the Term.
45. We were also encouraged to grow vegetables which we did on the other side of the hill which now houses the main Administration block. We took pride in what we grew and regularly tended the plants and watered them. I distinctly remember having grown Chillies. On one occasion I foolishly wiped my eye after having touched the Chillies and had to run all the way to the Tap and wash my eyes for quite some time to ease the smarting. I never forgot that incident and the pain. Mr. Keble gave a prize of 50 Cents for the best plot.
46. The new building was to contain the School Hall. I remember carting Wheel Barrow loads of earth and participating in the construction process of the elevated area. Thereafter Prize Givings, Concerts etc. were conducted in this hall. The rooms at the extreme left of this building housed the Head Master's Office Room and those of the other Administrative Staff.
47. The Farm used to be the bungalow of Mr. and Mrs. Keble and their son Anthony who was also a student. Mr. Keble had a "Ford Popular" car in which he drove down to school each morning. Mrs. Keble used a "Fiat" car. The Farm had two Ponies. The boys who did riding used the Ponies for their activities.
48. On one occasion during games my brother Nimal and I visited the toilet in the Peiris dormitory. Finding the door of one toilet shut we were curious and engaged in the usual routine of checking out. The inquirer would ask on tapping at the door "**Who is in?**" The response would come from within, "**I**". The rejoinder would be "**Who is I?**". The answer would disclose the name / identity of the guy inside. On this occasion however having had absolutely no response from within, we got curious and bold and kicked the door open. Lo and behold it was the Head Master squatting astride the commode. Leaping down he berated "**Drat the Beast**". Naturally, we did not pause to explain or apologize and ran as if the Devil himself was giving chase. We did not stop until we got close to the Dining Hall. The episode ended there. Yet the memory is still fresh. Mr. Keble never referred to this thereafter.

49. Of the boys who joined school with me in the Lower Kindergarten in 1952, the only person who I remember went up with me to Gurutalawa and then on to Mt. Lavinia is Haris Yapa, the brother of Vijitha Yapa. Sarath Suraweera and Jabir Junaid joined later on. Haris was an all round sportsman playing Cricket, Soccer and Hockey and Captaining in Cricket. Sarath Suraweera was also a fine sportsman having excellent leadership qualities and was picked out as the Head Prefect of the school in 1957. Jabir Junaid was a fine athlete and ended up winning public school colours and retained the record for 100 meters for a number of years. Others to join us were, Timothy Bridge, Harish Nilaweera, Mahes Munasinghe, Neelendra Karunaratne, Indra Piyatissa, Sarath Jayasinghe, A M Nimal Gunaratne, Sarath Nanayakkara, D C Kannangara (now Don Gazara), S Shanmuganathan, G S V B Siripala, G Shanmugasundaram, R Shagundaran, M. Ranasinghe, R P Weerasinghe, K R Karupiah, R. Dalpadadu, Rienzie de Alwis, E R V Jayasinghe, R Madugalle, G Mahindapala, M D H A De Silva, A C Mather, R Bose, James Summerfield, David Perera and many others. Most of us entered Gurutalawa in January 1958 and we eventually left Guru in 1962. Hence the 62 Group of STC -Guru.
50. Our last year at Bandarawela was 1957. At that time there were about 110 Boarders and some Day Boys. Panini, our Senior Master Mr. David Edirisinghe's younger son, was in Standard 3; Sarath Kotagama was in Standard 2. Mohan Ellawala who has been a very active member in the Bandarawela OBA and in the affairs of the School was in Standard 2 and in the Corea Dormitory where I was the Monitor; Upali Panditharatne, a Vice-President of the Bandarawela OBA was in the Upper Kindergarten.
51. Other boys who were in School at that time and whose names come to mind are Ravi Kotalawala, Upali Jayasuriya, Ajith Sahabandu, Michael de Lay, Mahinda and Senaka Horadagoda, Wimalanath Wickramasooriya, Harsha Ratnasuriya, Faris Jiffry, Nimal Amukotuwa, Navin, Sathis and Asela Jinadasa, R Navamani, , Norman Balsam, , R Bartholomeusz, L R James, Asela and Sarath Weragama, Kamal Nilaweera, Jeevaka Horadagoda.
52. The Nilaweera's had several brothers attending school. I remember Harish who was in my class. He had brothers older than him Tilak & Nihal. Kamal was younger than him. Harish, even then, was a **Veritable Walking Phenomenal Encyclopedia** on Sports and more particularly Cricket.
53. Amongst the senior boys, who I still remember, are Mithra Edirisinghe, the elder brother of Panini, Ananda Gallearachchi, the elder brother of Mahindapala, Bennet Galaboda, Keerthi Wijewardene, Ganarajan, M Wijedoru, K Amarasinghe, K K Perera and R Rambukpotha.

54. Most boys brought with them at the beginning of each term various delicacies and sweets from home. This perhaps helped in some way to assuage the sense of being deprived the comforts of home life and the warmth of parental love and affection. Boys also periodically received from home by post, sweets and other items to make life in the boarding easier and more pleasant and to tide over the deprivations. I remember receiving from my mother, home-made Seeni Sambol, Pineapple Jam and even parcels of devilled wild boar meat. The baker's man who brought bread to school would be waylaid by us at the entrance to the school. We bought 2 - 3 loaves of bread in order that we could polish off the Seeni Sambol or Pineapple Jam etc, seated on the nether side of the Big Grounds away from prying eyes.
55. Each table in the Dining Hall accommodated 8 or 10 boys. The Tables were divided according to age and also whether vegetarian or otherwise. At that time a vociferous section of the students were against meat eating and hence it was discouraged by them. The timid ones were thus subjected to psychological victimisation. Later I found those villains were the greatest carnivorous individuals.
56. "*Gandhapana*" fruits were plenty in and around the Campus. We, the ever hungry boys used to pluck these fruits and eat them to quell our hunger pangs.
57. Ms. Blanchard was in charge of the Tuck Shop. Sweets and cakes turned out by her in her Cottage were brought down to the school Dining Hall where these were distributed. I have no recollection of boys handling cash, though I remember tokens being surrendered in order to collect a quota of sweets or cakes.
58. I remember after Mr. Paul Raj became the Headmaster in 1957 he was in the habit of supervising the operation of the Tuck Shop personally. "*Wadais*" made at his bungalow used to take pride of place amongst the short eats made available.
59. Amongst the staff there was Mr. K Chelliah who had been a student in a well known Jaffna school. He was a fine athlete. Whilst the whole school was watching he would run a marathon of one mile in a little over 4 minutes round the college big grounds. This event was timed by other members of the staff whilst the entire student population applauded the fine performance. In May 1958 with the outbreak of communal disturbances Mr. Chelliah together with his father were unfortunately murdered by a hostile mob at Bibile, whilst they were visiting his intended father-in-law who was the PWD Overseer of that area. My father who lived close by promptly met the GA at Badulla and took him to task over that and another similar incident.
60. Mr. A K Pillai was the Master-in-Charge of Football. Mr. Maurice de Silva was also on the Staff and in-charge of some sport activities.

61. Mr. George Steven, who was assisting with the administration in the School Office, operated the projector at the regular film shows which were shown to all the boys of the Boarding in the Dining Hall on a weekday after tea. Blankets were borrowed from the boys to black out the day light from the windows. The Projector and other equipment were loaned by the USIS. A favourite film got down from the USIS and shown to the boys was "*Sponge Fishermen*". Apart from this, students were sometimes taken to the "*Royal Talkies*" Theatre in the Bandarawela Town for film shows under the supervision of the Prefects. A movie that was greatly appreciated by the boys was "*Scabengar*" a story about a killer leopard, that was shown at the Regal Cinema in Diyatalawa. As the Theatre could not accommodate the entire student population for one show, there were two shows. The Prefects had the benefit of watching the movie twice. These were benefit shows in aid of the School. New recruits to the Army were present in large numbers for the second show.
62. The further end of the big grounds had an embankment which was referred to by us students as "***down the bank***". There were some trees on the opposite side of the big grounds and on Sundays when we were free and footloose, we used to eat the bark off the trees which one enterprising student had discovered to have a pungent but good taste. That was good enough for us ever hungry boys. We later found the trees to be wild cinnamon trees. The big grounds, as at present, were at a lower elevation than the road and hence there was a terraced step down to the grounds. On one occasion whilst trying to get to the grounds by jumping from one elevation to the next I found that my spectacles which were in their case in my pocket had broken. I was terribly handicapped without the spectacles and when this was brought to the immediate notice of Mr. David Edirisinghe, he promptly took the night mail train from Bandarawela to Colombo and returned the following day with a new pair of spectacles obtained from the Optician in Colombo. Unfortunately this pair too perished in similar fashion within 24 hours and Mr. Edirisinghe did a second trip to Colombo to bring me a further pair. That was the commitment the Teachers at Bandarawela had towards us. They were in truth "in loco parentis" The cost was added to my monthly Invoice of School Fees etc sent home. Incidentally the Monthly School and Boarding Fees was approximately Rs. 85/-. My School Reports and Bills had been preserved by my father and are still with me.
63. I also remember after an election to the Bandarawela Urban Council a Mr. Nadarajah was elected Chairman. One of the boys, D C Kannangara organized a victory procession of school boys with green flags to parade around the grounds shouting slogans "*Kawda Rajah...Nada Rajah*". In those days everybody belonged to the United National Party, although the Revolution had negotiated the corner in 1956.
64. I think there were some "***Optional Subjects***" for students to choose from ie "***Special Tamil***" or "***Arabic***". I did neither. I do not remember the Third Option. I rather think it was "***Current Events***".

65. In or about 1957 Mr. Keble left Sri Lanka with his family for good. They settled down in Vancouver. Mr. V. D. Paulraj of Kingswood College came as Head Master. He had two young daughters. He and his wife used to man the "*Tuck-shop*" in the Dining Hall. Mr. Paulraj had two huge Alsatian dogs, who sometimes came down from the Farm and ran around the school. He commuted from the Farm in a "*Vauxhall*" car.
66. After having come from home, on the first day of school, in the dormitories, at night, one could distinctly hear several boys sobbing, through sheer home sickness. This feeling would of course pass off in two or three days, after having been with friends and got used to the usual school routine.
67. End of term used to mark the time for "*challenge fights*", when boys who had grievances with each other could settle their scores by having a "fight". Others would form a ring around the two contenders. The supporters of each would cheer their friend lustily until one of them would concede defeat. The authorities turned a blind eye to this practice.
68. Many of our friends and batch mates have now gone to that land beyond, never to return to our midst. Nevertheless, their memories and those of our days spent at S. Thomas' at Bandarawela, so long ago, are quite fresh and sometimes vivid in the minds of those of us who are yet left, from the batch that entered in and around 1952. We still talk and reminisce about those happy days spent at Bandarawela. It gives us great pride to note the immense progress made by this School and the generous support given to the School and its' indefatigable Head Master Mr. Chandrasekara by the strong and united OBA, which this School is so fortunate to be blessed with.
69. These memories of mine are of life and times spent almost 58 years ago. Thus, there are bound to be a few lapses and inaccuracies which hopefully will be forgiven and excused.

LJ

December 22, 2010
Colombo 05.