



S.Thomas' College Gurutalawa

OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION - NEWSLETTER

Issue No: 6/03

COMMENT – Administration costs

Greetings to all our Members,

This is the first Newsletter of the New Committee elected at the Annual General Meeting on February 24th. Lakshman Jayatilaka, who compiled, produced and paid for the Newsletters of the previous Ex-Co is taking a well deserved rest. Not only that, he spearheaded the development activities of the past year and virtually set up camp at Guru many a time. No praise is too much for his efforts. In the previous Newsletter, the primary concern was to disseminate the maximum possible information of the year's activities with the object of unqualified transparency and accountability to our membership. Without losing sight of these cardinal principles, this and the succeeding Newsletters will necessarily be restricted in scope and size, because of the cost factor and of the constraints of time and logistical support available presently.

The cost factor raises the whole question of Funds. From the inception, we have relied on the capacity of past Secretaries, Treasurers and other office bearers of the Ex-Co to meet the burgeoning administration costs from and out of their own pockets and by raising 'donations' from other Members of the Ex-Co. The only income of the Association is from the MEMBERSHIP FEES of new Members which at Rs.500.00, is hopelessly inadequate. This fee was at the inception only Rs.10.00. It was increased to Rs.100.00 in July 1990, and formally made Rs.500.00 at the last Annual General Meeting (2003).

We have already sent out an Appeal for Donations to carry through a high priority undertaking for the first part of this year. As at the time of this Newsletter, we cannot say that the response was even barely discernible. Our thanks to those who responded. **Please consider the possibility of response even now to assist us to meet a crying need.** Two minutes to decide, two minutes to write and sign the cheque, one minute to stamp and post – **just five minutes and you have done your duty.** Without in anyway impinging on the generosity of the Members, we venture to suggest that as many Members as possible consider the payment of a **Voluntary Membership Renewal Fee of Rs.500.00** to relieve the pressure on the office bearers and committee members to carry through the affairs of the Association for the year and, hopefully, if the response is good, to build up a reserve for future years.

In this regard we should bring to your awareness that right throughout the year, Members of the Ex-Co turn out their pockets to meet the needs of the School for ad hoc but urgent requests of the Headmaster, and in relation to the projects in hand. **We really need your help and support too.**

REUNION CELEBRATIONS – February 23rd –24th, 2003

The indefatigable Lakshman Jayatilaka led a Sub-Committee to organize the celebrations. "A few of us were in Guru from Thursday (21st) morning attending to last minute details" he writes. "One of our guys is Sunda (T. Sundararaj) who was clearing drains and even busy with an ekel broom, sweeping the compound. He offered to come at least once in three months to repeat the performance. Hows Zat! [So Sunda repeated this work during April New Year holidays as well.] Various controls were in place not merely for the sake of good order but to serve a purpose. For instance a Note of Welcome was handed over to each old boy by security at the main gate which kept a tab on 'outsiders' and also to get a count of the numbers (140) for catering purposes, so as to eliminate wasteful and excessive preparations. Thereby hangs a tale. We had heard that for many years now, food leakages to the village, was the order of the day. Therefore the Dorms had notices indicating that tickets at Rs 500.00 were to be purchased to defray costs and that the A.G.M. was for "Members only", thus inducing the enrolment of 18 old boys half an hour before the A.G.M.

For all that, it takes "Two to Tango". And in lighter vein - celebrations were to take off with the cricket match. It had the makings of a farce. The present boys had been given an enforced mid term holiday. The school team was short of three, and the master in charge was away sitting an examination. The matting was still being laid at 9.30 a.m. by the students half an hour after the scheduled start of play. The bats and gear were not available at the pavilion and had to be called for item by item from the far corners of the grounds. The bats had no grips and placing new grips wasted more valuable playing time. There was no umpire from the school, and a young student who was dragooned to function, hardly knew the game. There were only 3 good wickets (stumps) and the remaining wickets had been cut from a tree. The original wickets had been lost after the sports meet the previous day. There were no bails and these were brought in after several overs had been bowled. As for swimming, there were no regular swimmers. Finally a ragtag collection of cricketers and

basketball players comprised the College Swimming Team Vs the Old boys. Everything seemed scripted for a film for the Marx Bros. but in the sixties, Boys were required to play in these matches to qualify for Colours.

Old boys who arrived on Friday (22nd) were entertained to a film show of Dr. Haymans old films. Some films had been of Reunion Celebrations (1959-1963). What a contrast of the changed times it brought out! Then the entire school of some 300 boys, were on the grounds cheering the cricket and hockey matches and participating in the evening refreshments. In recent times not a single student was there to witness/participate in the celebrations other than those playing in matches and that too, of teams rustled up presumably from boys who for one reason or the other could not go for the enforced holiday.

The pre-dinner "Fellowship Cocktails" was held in the quadrangle to the accompaniment of light music provided by a D.J. sponsored by L.J.!

The dinner itself attempted to recapture the dignity and decorum of better times. **Many responded to the request to maintain a fitting code of dress** and the whole company was at the tables in orderly fashion for the dinner to commence with Grace said by the Chaplain. A sound system was in place for the 'after dinner' speeches. Upali Gunaratne, a former M.P. responded from amongst the old boys and referred mainly to the present Headmaster (who had taught him) and his soft heartedness; on one occasion having had to cane a whole class, he had retreated to his quarters in tears.

The food, served for all meals from Friday dawn to Sunday lunch, was pre-planned by Mahen Ranasinghe. Ambul Thiyal was brought from Colombo, chicken and beef were served with almost all meals. Unlimited eggs were provided; as also string hoppers and milk rice which had not been served for over a decade. Every meal had Caramel Pudding or Watalappan or Ice Cream plus pineapples and plantains. The menus were given to the Food Matron on 7th February, two weeks before and several meetings were held with her to fine tune every aspect of quality and service. But the result was "the best laid schemes of mice and men, gang aft agley" *(Scottish - go awry) - Robert Burns. Our thanks to Mahen for the salvage operation - which saved the reputation.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - Sunday 24th FEBRUARY 2003

This year, the Annual General Meeting was shifted back to the Sunday morning instead of being sandwiched into the Saturday programme. The intention was to give the event its due importance, and the change made by the Ex-Co, emphasised the OBA's concern for the running of the School. The most important item on the Agenda was the adoption of the New Constitution, copies of which had been circulated to all Members with the Notice of the Annual General Meeting. A significant change was an addition in the Objects of the Constitution : "To co-operate with and assist the Headmaster of the College for better administration and management and to maintain traditions and proper standards". Also the introduction of clauses for the Control of Funds, the clearly laid out Responsibilities of Office Bearers, and the provision to change the constitution at any Special General Meeting, and not exclusively at the Annual General Meeting, and not least also was a clause to prevent any member of the Ex-Co from serving more than three consecutive years as an Office Bearer.

The Headmasters report was printed. He dealt extensively with the work that individual Old Boys had done for the school. Of those not on the Ex-Co, notably Messrs B.A. Mahipala, Lakshman Jayatilake, Chrishantha Weerawardena and Jayantha Hanthi were given special meritorious mention. Members of the Ex-Co were gratified though somewhat taken aback when he said, "my earnest request to the Old Boys Association is to keep the Ex-Co Members another year for them to continue the good work done so far. But certainly we need a few more new faces in the Team".

It was very significant that 101 new Members were enrolled in the year, the largest number since the inaugural meeting in 1959.

THE NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Senior Vice President - Mr P. S. Duleepkumar

Vice Presidents - Mr S Watawala Mr P.J. Fernando Mr C. De Silva

Hony Secretary - Mr M Ranasinghe Hony Treasurer - Mr B. Wanigasekera

Hony Asst Secretary - Mr Shervon Fernando Hony Asst Treasurer - Mr Gamini Fernando

Members: Mr C. Habaragoda Mr A.A.M. Zubair Mr S.K.Kulasingham Mr D. Gazara
Mr.K.Bandusena Mr N. Wanniarachchi Mr.S.Palihawadan Mr A. Pietersz
Mr R.Munasinghe Mr Sumedha Perera Mr D. Kulasekera Mr Lasantha Perera
Mr S. Godage Mr R. Jalill Mr K. Majeed Mr M. Dissanayake

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND PLANS:

Already three meetings have been held on March 1st, March 29th, and April 26th. The next meeting will be at Gurutalawa on Saturday 7th June.

In regard to development work in progress, namely the rehabilitation of two staff quarters, of Mr Ekanayake – Rs 66,840,00 – and of Mr Dikkumbura – Rs.16,530,00, the said sums were approved out of the funds collected by the outgoing Ex-Co, as well as Security Grills for 35 Nos. window panes in the Headmaster's Office complex - Rs.30,625.00 and partitioning of HM's Secy's office & Main Hall at Rs.60,548.00. The work was being personally supervised by the Secretary, Mr Mahen Ranasinghe.

The principal questions were "what next" ? and "what to do for money" ?

After mulling over the many possibilities it was finally decided to –

- (1) **Develop the Farm** as the first priority, and for which the OBA had committed half the salary of the Manager at Rs 6000/- a month, for six months. **Please see our special appeal for which we hope more will respond favourably and soonest.** It was also decided to finance the Farm Development project by a direct appeal for Funds from Members.
- (2) Defer the improvement and stabilization of the School's water supply for want of immediate funds and,
- (3) The refurbishment of the balance staff quarters till funds were raised by way of another **Dinner Dance which was fixed for Saturday the 29th November 2003.**
- (4) The other significant matter which received the attention of the Ex-Co was the urgent implementation of the recommendations of the "Operations Report" of the school, commissioned by the Ex-Co and prepared by SJMS Associates, Chartered Accountants and Consultants, last year

One of the key recommendations, the appointment of a qualified **Farm Manager** was already in place and it was recognized that the various other recommendations had to await the appointment of an **Administrative Officer** (also strongly recommended in the Report and approved by the Board). Applications were sifted by the Headmaster and those short-listed were interviewed on April 26th, with a view to taking up duties with effect from 1st June. Lt Col. Manamperi from Badulla has been selected and this was approved by the Board.

The College farm had been running at a loss of hundreds of thousands of Rupees over the last few years and it was on the verge of being closed down. The Ex-Co found out the malpractices, inefficiencies and the other areas of grave concern, in the management of the farm and the Headmaster appointed Mr.K Wimalarajah, an Old Boy of the Dr.Hayman era as the Farm Manager in February 2003, at the recommendation of the Ex-Co.

With a small infusion of funds initially from the OBA and addressing of the areas of concern as well as improved methods for the growth of chicks, **the farm has shown profits in the first forty days of operation**, from only 500 broiler chicks. Now the farm produces 200 broilers every week, giving a regular supply of chicken to the kitchen and making reasonable profits to maintain a smooth cash flow. **Arrangements are under way to buy 500 layer chicks** and to grow vegetables wherever possible along with some banana and papaya trees. It is hoped that the **Members will give lavishly to the recent appeal for donations** to develop the farm to it's maximum potential, to help the College recover from the present financial crisis. Every Rs.1000 adds up.

Also of significance was the British 'Teachers' taking up residence at Gurutalawa. Their quarters were made ready hastily and furnished. Various Old Boys committed themselves to assist in this regard. Mr.Gamini Fernando was the key performer in using his contacts with the British Council and three of the teachers arrived on the 17th. May. Unfortunately, one of them had to return to Colombo due to health reasons. It is an eight week short term assignment and they will assist the English Teachers of the College as well as in Sports. Their interaction with the students will be useful and if successful, this will be a regular feature.

The spade work is being done to establish the **Hayman Museum** which is a key undertaking in this year's activities. **All Members please note and help out with any memorabilia in their possession – letters, photographs, school reports and the like.** We shall take copies and return all originals which you may wish to keep; otherwise, if you wish to donate outright, the museum will be the best place to preserve them for posterity. Any and all ideas in this connection from Old Boys will be most welcome.

The practice of encouraging and welcoming any Old Boy to be in attendance at Ex-Co Meetings continues. The next meeting of the Ex-Co as indicated will be on Saturday 7th June at 10 am in Gurutalawa itself. Any Member may request from the Hony Secretary to be present at any meeting.

WONDERFUL NEWS:

The new Ex-Co has one Old Boy who left College in the last decade, for the first time in the recent past. It is a most heartening sign and augurs well for the future of the OBA.

The following 29 Old Boys have become Members of the OBA since the publication of Newsletter - Issue 5 of last year :

Messrs C.S.B Herath, H.S.L Gunasekera, A. Kirthi De Silva, D.L.H Vithanage, K.M.T Pushpakumara, P.M.M Karunathilaka, S.R Panditharatne, P.R Selvaraj, M.K.M Zameel, R Maiyappan, T Thangavel, S.P.P Weerasekara, K Thangamani, K Kumaravel, K Kathiravel, R Karthigesu, S Krishnasamy, H.S Perera, S.K M Ameer Khan,

Rizvan Jalill, B Sasimahendran, S.H.P Silva, M.R.M Haniffa, M.A M Haniffa, C.U.B Alawathugoda, R.K Katugaha, Dineshkumar Sivasubramaniam, R. Shanmugam, M. Thirumurugamoorthi.

Issue No.2 of the **Member's Directory** was printed in February this year (more upto date) and several copies are still available with the Secretary priced at Rs.200. Keeps you in touch with colleagues.

NEWS OF OLD BOYS:

OBITUARY:

It is with deep regret that we have to record the recent deaths of the following Old Boys, all from the early batches of the '40s. Philips Arasakumar, Irwin Dassanaik, S.S.Weerawardena, Mano Madawela, Rupert Illangantilleke and Gamini Divitotawela.

(Members are kindly requested to inform the Secretary of any obituaries of Member-friends, so as to offer the sympathies of the OBA, timely and in a satisfactory manner.)

APPOINTMENTS:

Mr Nanda Mathew, former Minister and M.P. has been appointed Governor of the Uva Province. Our best wishes are with him. He has been a loyal Old Boy with a regular attendance at OBA meetings and functions.

NEWS FROM OVERSEAS:

Vivian L. Blaze, one of the best athletes STC produced in the post war years of the 20th century, has established contact after more than 50 years. "I am pleased to be associated with STCG" he writes to Lakshman Jayatilaka. And then, Ivor Kelaart, "A million thanks for sending me the History Book 'STC GURUTALAWA – The First Fifty Years' through my daughter Jenny. I can hardly put it down since she gave it to me last morning after my arrival from Bali...it brought back memories of a time sixty years ago."

So also John De Vos – at Guru in the 50's – and M.N.V.Murugappa, a Guru stalwart, former Member of Ex-Co, and regular opening batsman for the Old Boys in those early years, also visited Sri Lanka recently. All from Down Under.

Dr.P.A.Saram (Guru '48-'52) Prof.Emeritus, Dept. of Sociology, University of Alberta, Calgary writes to Treasurer: "Hope you received my donation to OBA Funds ...Thank you for the membership directory. I was able to locate some old timers... Thalakada (SABR) is at St.Catherines,Ontario. STC OBA in Toronto should be able to locate him. Ananda, Nalanda, Visaka, St.Bridgets have websites...Overseas Members will find this convenient." (At the moment, Mr.Muditha Dissanayake is working on this – await launching news).

Mrs.Betty Chapman, wife of Mr.A.K.Chapman who served College with distinction & was on the Guru staff from the forties till 1965, was in Sri Lanka in April & has indicated that she & their son will sponsor a scholarship or give a donation in his memory. They are in contact with the Treasurer.

We request Members to assist us by writing in their views and of news of Old Boys.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS: DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

A group of Old Boys, have arranged a **Fellowship Dinner** on the **19th July, Saturday**, at the Mount Lavinia Hotel, a date removed as far as possible from the **OBA Dinner Dance** on the **29th November, Saturday**, for the convenience of Members who would like to attend both functions. There will be the traditional Good Fellowship at both occasions, while the Dinner Dance will be the main fund-raising event of the OBA. The tickets for the Dinner in July, will be priced **at Rs.1000** and for which **contact Mr.Upali Abeywickrema at 072.250900.**

The College Prize Giving will be on the 9th August, Saturday and the Chief Guest will be Mr.B.A.Mahipala.

ESTO PERPETUA – till the next issue.

HELP BY CONTRIBUTING FOR A WORTHY CAUSE

GIVE GENEROUSLY TO THE STC(G) FARM DEVELOPMENT FUND

Cheques in favour of STC Gurutalawa OBA