

# The OLD BOYS



THE S. THOMAS' COLLEGE, MT. LAVINIA OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION (FOUNDED 1886). Edition - 31.12.2008  
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## A Character Certificate

Earliest memories of schooldays are supposed to be of dinky toys marbles comics and other paraphernalia of boyhood. Mine are of nicknames. It has to say something about the special character of the College of S. Thomas' the Apostle (Thora) as an educational institution. *Maspang, masrotta, battery-hoona, masjidda, paang, ala bada, maduruwa, chai-baba, vandura, lansiya, gobbaya, mynah* - these are among the assortment that immediately comes to mind even though some were bestowed upon the recipients during the latter part of my career at STC that spanned a full twelve years. The nicknames form a patchwork quilt of memories that culminate in the 80's decade, which was the interregnum between the days of long hair and tight pants and the wired cyber-eccentric era of now.

Not for us the sanitised version - Past Pupil's Association. We prefer the Old Boys Association, because we are old boys. Some of these old boys are now just happy to be called boys - old or otherwise. The 'past pupils' tag wouldn't give that same throwback to boyhood...

If anybody says that character was imbibed in the classrooms, he might as well send his sons to international schools. At STC character was imbibed outside the classroom, be it in a fight for two marbles and a rubber band or an argument in mock parliament. I can remember the late Chanaka Amaratunge announcing in mock parliament - the resurrection of which was probably his bright idea - that he would soon be leaving for Oxford. I was junior to him by about five years, and couldn't help but quip impishly for all to hear "the first thing he would do there is campaign for President of the Oxford Union." This comment wasn't treated kindly by many of his friends such as Rohan Edirisinghe and Nigel Hatch who thought it dripped with unwarranted sarcasm. Chanaka was known for his ambition. He did become either the President or the Secretary of the Oxford Union, and then came back to the old school one day to do some catching up. Seeing me, he beamed and said "I can remember what you said just before I left." Then he laughed his big belly laugh.

Thomians are an amenable lot. We dug up the quadrangle when the late Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike was invited as Chief Guest for the Prize Giving during the height of the "*grow more food*" campaign. We grew *bathala* and *rata kadju* on it, which puzzled us youngsters, because the punishment for trampling one blade of grass underfoot on the quadrangle was to measure its whole length with a half-inch ruler. Anybody who had not got the measurement right was sent back to redo it.

I'd say character was built because STC offered a microcosm of society as it would be seen today in the echelons of decision making, management, and the creation of high culture. It's the truth that Thomians are moving away from the arena of politics, which is now the fairground of marauders and the social dregs. But there are Thomians in real decision-making. To take my classmates, there is Indrajith Fernando in accounting, Jeevan Thiagarajah in social empowerment and Harpo Gunaratne in the hospitality industry to name a few in fields as diverse as you can imagine. But STC parlayed them into these decision-making positions, in part due to the fact that good English was spoken on and off the classroom space at S Thomas'.

The 80's era was one in which English as a language of learning and communication was back in vogue after a long period of demonisation and neglect under the semi-socialist regime of the Bandaranaiques. The best symbolism for this was also offered in our days in the form of L. M. V. de Silva, former Markfed Chairman and right-hand man of the Bandaranaiques who joined the staff after the ignominious fall the SLFP. LMV wore a long shining national dress that would have had a place in the Markfed boardroom but was a tad too striking, seen closer to the big club grounds or the rifle range. The thing was that LMV was eagerly snatched up by the college administration, knowing that he would be rearing to put his English skills back to good use at College, after hanging them out to dry during the Bandaranaiques' time...

We were also long on traditions. Though *bakka* (M. L. C. Illangakoon) was our Warden, Buck House was treated with the same reverence accorded to de Saram House, and this was significant in those eighties when J. R. Jayewardene's economic liberalisation policy was spawning a zero-tradition international school on every twenty perch land on which had stood a *daham pasela*.

The next character issue was the fact that at S. Thomas' there was irreverence. Mahinda Halangoda was irreverent of hubris when he scored that memorable innings that deprived Royal of a victory in the Centenary encounter, which the Royalists thought was assured. I met Halangoda a.k.a *mynah* the next day at the Royal-Thomian Joint Fair, and he said "machang some things I shall not forget about that inning. There was so much to consume at the tea break, but I couldn't eat anything. But then, I saw you cheering at the boundary line with a flag in hand as if there was no tomorrow." I suppose my batch made its mark at the Centenary encounter. I did my humble bit - there is an article by me

in the Centenary encounter souvenir, and I remember being asked by old boys from Australia and England who had descended here in droves in Colombo, to autograph it! This after furiously complaining to Mr. G. K. Mandawela the Master-in-Charge that the Editor had allowed the article to go with some typographical errors, albeit some relatively minor ones! The Thomian irreverence is always compared to the purported straightjacket conformity of the Royalists, our polar opposites in many ways. This may be true. J. R. Jayewardene and Ranil Wickremesinghe are known for their long plodding innings in politics, whereas Dudley Senanayake for instance, had to be coaxed to take up the Prime Minister's mantle and then implored to hold onto it.

The next thing about us Thomians is that our old boy network goes deep. More recent old boys are sons of still older boys, and I am reminded of the chat my father had with Duleep Amarasuriya father of Ravin Amarasuriya, my classmate for twelve years, about their own schooldays at STC, when we in our embarrassing baby suits were taken for the first interview with the then Warden.

Nothing was taken too seriously at S Thomas' and I suppose that this inculcated the good trait of treating failure and success - both imposters said the Buddha - with equal measure of indifference. I remember Warden Illangakoon stopping his Volkswagen on College Avenue, on seeing about seven of us 'college-formers' doing a casual stroll and heading toward Galle Road at around 11 in the morning one day. It would have been hard for anybody to think that we were doing anything other than scooting off and taking a holiday. Warden Illangakoon got out of his car, looked at us with a frown, and then saw me who was then in charge of the College Science Quiz Team. Then he said, "ah, you are there?", and waved us off to our amazement. I vouch for the fact that my early departure that day had nothing to do with the science quiz. Illangakoon was probably too embarrassed himself to apprehend seven full-grown college-formers caught casually strolling off almost under his nose. He probably knew we were taking an informed decision to adjourn early that day...

Incidentally, Illangakoon later courted controversy when he was quoted in some sort of school publication saying "Thomians don't attend school to study." I think it was perhaps said in an unguarded moment, and that he didn't have that particular thought in mind when he waved us off that particular morning. I wager no old boy or parent would agree with what he said, but having said that, I think to be fair by the late Warden, what he meant was that Thomians learnt more at S. Thomas' away from the classroom than they did in it. As was alluded to earlier in this piece, it was and is all about building of character, and truancy, getting caught, fierce competition, failure - all of this played great a part in it. It's probably why my father an old Thomian of the Hayman vintage used to often reminisce about the late E. L. Perera, a schoolmaster who had retired in our time and used to live quietly in a quaint old house at Old Quarry Road, Mount Lavinia. E. L. (*keyhole*) Perera, my father said, had an abiding interest the welfare of the underdog, and used to intone - bless his soul - for the whole class to hear "pillars are the failures of success." Obviously it was too late by the time he realised there was semantic failure in the way he laid down his morale boosting exhortation. Pillars are the failures of success? Maybe - I think just maybe - there is a reason for all those Greek columns to rise up and stand sentinel all around our old school campus - pillars that have failed, or failures that have been pilloried - or whatever?

There is also no social engineering required at this institution, which is healthy and which was healthy those days, particularly in the early 80's, when the nation was about to lapse into an elongated period of ethnic disharmony. We at S. Thomas' wouldn't have guessed it was coming, as ours was a milieu in which there was an obvious respect for all religions and ethnicities. Over fifty per cent were Buddhists in this Christian denomination school when we were in it, which is why it's rather obvious that there is an equilibrium of forces here in which a special kind of social engineering is made unnecessary. But also, ethnic bickering just could not be part of the school tradition. A glance at College magazines in our time would yield names such as Bartholameuz, Bartlett, John, Variah, Dodangoda, Bulathsinghala, Chu-Bi-Tei etc. The mix was too heady for boredom or unrest, or even an undercurrent of tension. Of course all of this had been said previously about the school at one time or another, by somebody or the other reminiscing about *those days fine and free spent at the school by the sea...*

So, to conclude, not the least of what this College of ours boasts of is what it possesses by way of symbols and insignia. There is the blue the black and blue, the motto *Esto Perpetua* and a College Song that can be sung very throatily and lustily at any time and in any state of mind.

Classmate Pulasti Jayasinghe's late father Rex, used to work with one of my late uncles the departed Arthur Subasinghe who was an old Royalist and a much respected onetime journalist among other things, of the Esmond Wickremesinghe era. His sons Dilanjan and Priyantha were two Royalists, but that did not deter me and my brother from encircling their house with blue black and blue flags on the first day of one Royal-Thomian cricket match. I can remember relating the story to Pulasti who laughed his head off. He knew old Mr Subasinghe would take it in good spirit, but then perhaps the Royalists - late Subasinghe and his two sons - had the last laugh... A few days later I represented the College General Knowledge Quiz Team, which was pitted against the Royalists at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute auditorium. The proceedings were broadcast over radio, and the Subasinghes were listening. Each contender was asked a question about the other school in the second round, and I was asked to name one school principal who was Royal's best known when Stone was Warden at S. Thomas'. I said Boake, and was told I could have another try. I asked for a clue, and the quizmaster said very lyrically "stone walls do not a prison make - nor do withered reeds a cage." He said the verse should contain the name of one Thomian Warden and one Royal Principal. I had never been standing before such a baying crowd in my life, as this was just one day before the Centenary encounter. Thanks to my nerves I blurted out "Cage" without thinking. There was much laughter, and the quizmaster ruled me wrong. It's something I never fail to remember these days, whenever I pass by Reid Avenue. But then I have occasion to think, stone walls did not a prison make - most certainly not in my schooldays. Neither did any Greek pillars...

*Esto Perpetua*

**Rajpal Abeynayake**



## OBA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 2008/2009 HONY. SECRETARY'S REPORT

2008 was a rewarding year for the Old Boy's Association of S. Thomas' College with two major projects being successfully completed. Despite the difficulties experienced with the corporate sector cutting down on their budgets due to a downturn in economic activity the OBA performed exceptionally well in obtaining a favourable response from its general membership. The STC OBA as oft quoted proved beyond a shadow of doubt to be a God given gift to S. Thomas', undertaking the huge responsibility of raising a colossal sum of money to fund a series of more urgent projects during the year.

### **Replacement Of The Chapel Roof [Chairman: Ravi Gooneratne]**

The Chapel of the Transfiguration urgently required a replacement of the existing roof. This by far was the biggest project undertaken and approximately 25 million Rupees was required in order to complete the project. Its ultimate success to begin with required the mobilisation of old boys in large numbers to accomplish the Herculean task. The mission, has been an overwhelming success thanks to the Thomian spirit that helped in no small way to even surpass our expectations.

### **Replacement Of The Windows In The College Hall [Chairman: Nayanta Pandita]**

Another project, which was successfully concluded, is the College Hall project which required the urgent replacement of all the windows on the ground as well as the upper floor. Even though the Thomians over the years have excelled in drama, speech and song, the College Hall does not measure up to meet the current demands of the arts, such as sound proofing, air conditioning, stage setting *etcetera*. In addition to these, with the acoustics not being perfect, one cannot expect the auditorium to be hired for use by outside sources, that would generate an income for the College. With most other schools in the city being new and well equipped they continue to be a valuable source of income to the schools. It is about time that the College hall is re-designed incorporating value added features that will create a demand for usage.

### **Renovation Of The Pavilion And Tuck Shop [Chairman: Chrishmal Warnasuriya]**

The Class of '90 organised the Cricket Sixes Tournament to raise funds for the renovation of the pavilion and tuck shop. Despite the inclement weather, attendance was unexpectedly large and the funds collected were sufficient to meet the first stage of the renovation plan.

### **Alumni Development [Chairman: Tissa de Alwis]**

This committee has undertaken the task of updating the constitution of the OBA and presenting it at the next Annual General Meeting with recommendations to incorporate new provisions. The Committee is also empowered to re-organise the OBA Secretariat with the addition of archives, a reference library, a photo gallery and a souvenir boutique. In addition, there is also a move to brighten up the visual impact of the reception area with wooden panels displaying the names of old boys who have served the OBA in an honorary capacity, holding key positions. The souvenir boutique is intended to offer high quality ties, t-shirts, caps, car stickers and umbrellas at reasonable prices.

### **Corporate Placements [Chairman: Shamindra de Silva]**

This committee is involved with collecting names, addresses and contact numbers of old boys who are in privileged positions for the purpose of preparing a database which will be a ready reckoner for the purpose of enlisting support as and when the College requires the same.

### **Thomian Nite 2008 [Chairman: Sri Sangabo Corea]**

The organising committee of Thomian Nite 2008 announced its decision to postpone the dinner dance due to be held on November 7, 2008 at the Cinnamon Grand. The committee, after months of hard work, arrived at this decision, acting on the obligation that in the current situation of the country such an event should be postponed for better times. The committee unanimously agreed that it should act with responsibility and civic mindedness in the general interest of all. Despite the fact that Thomian Nite 2008 was a fundraiser in aid of the Bishop Chapman Scholarships, the interest of the country took priority. The members of the committee were confident that all Thomians and well wishers who would have graced the occasion, will have the personal satisfaction that the true Thomian spirit has been upheld, having the interests of the country foremost in our minds.

### **Education And Faculty Development [Chairman: Ranel Wijesinha]**

Assigned the task of further developing educational standards in the College, the committee's objective was also to strengthen teacher-student relations by organising workshops for the tutorial staff and conducting lectures to A/Level students by eminent old boys.

### **Infrastructure Development [Chairman: Nayanta Pandita]**

Plans this year include (a) the repairing of tables in the computer lab at an estimated cost of Rs. 294,000 (b) repair the windows in the boarding house at an estimated cost of Rs. 523,000 and (c) air-condition the College Hall at an estimated cost of Rs. 2 million.

**Sports [Chairman: Amitha Abeynaike]**

In consultation with the Prefect of Games the committee's objective is to streamline the mechanics of developing the standard of sports in College by providing suitable sports gear and equipment. The committee has also taken meaningful steps to improve standards of accommodation and hospitality extended by the College to visiting teams

**Membership Development [Chairman: Bevin Mack]**

The principle objective is to add more numbers to the membership of the OBA. A procedure has been introduced by the committee to enrol school leavers to the membership of the OBA at the point of leaving College. The committee will also be working through 'class groups' to contact old boys who have not joined the OBA. This committee is also responsible for organising the annual OBA Fellowship Dinner to promote inter-personal relations amongst members of the OBA. The OBA Fellowship Dinner will be held on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2009 from 7.00 PM onwards (details could be obtained from the OBA Secretariat on 4944530 in due course).

**'The Old Boy' Newsletter [Co-Chairmen: Prajeeth Balasubramaniam / Dilshan Boteju]**

The newsletter is due to be released in the first week of December 2008, dispatched by courier. Generous sponsorships by Lake House Printers, Harpo Productions, Abdeen Jewellers, Photo Technica, Klevenbergs and Aramex made the publication of The Old Boy possible.

**Website [Chairman: Mangala Gunasekera]**

The committee continues to provide an update on STC events giving the website an attractive visual impact. The website can be accessed at <www.stcmloba.org>.

This, in a nutshell, is what the members of the STC OBA are engaged in doing in the current year.

*Esto Perpetua*

**Sri Sangabo Corea**

**Hony. Secretary – S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, Old Boy's Association 2008/2009**

**S. Thomas College Mount Lavinia**

**123rd Annual General Meeting & OBA Week Celebrations - 12th Feb - 15th Feb 2009**

All Old Boys wishing to participate in the following sports should contact the under mentioned coordinators.

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Contact Number</u>
Hockey	Feb 12 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	5.00 p.m.	Amitha Abeynayake	077-3876242
Basket Ball	Feb 12 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	6.00 p.m.	Sanjeewa Hewagamage	077-7587548
Water Polo	Feb 12 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	7.00 p.m.	Jeewaka Perera	077-3600710
Cricket	Feb 13 <sup>th</sup> /14 <sup>th</sup> Sat/Sun	9.00 a.m.	Nisal Fernando	077-7590617

The **AGM** will be held on the **13<sup>th</sup> of February (Friday)** at 6.30 pm in the College Hall. Members are advised to produce the OBA membership card to avoid inconvenience at the time of voting. Those who do not possess the OBA membership card should bring proof of identity, which will be checked against the membership list.

The traditional lunch will be held at the Dining Hall at 1.00 p.m. on Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> of February. On Sunday the 15<sup>th</sup> of February a special service for Old Boys' will be held at the Chapel of the Transfiguration at 7.30 a.m.

Your participation at these events will be greatly appreciated.

*Esto Perpetua*

**Sri Sangabo Corea**

**Hony. Secretary – S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, Old Boy's Association 2008/2009**

**Launch of the "Esto Perpetua Guest Lecture Series" by the OBA, Education and Faculty Development Committee**

The "Esto Perpetua Guest Lecture Series" commenced on Monday the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2008. This was in response to Warden's wish that the OBA encourages old Thomians to teach at College. However, identifying old Thomians to teach as permanent faculty was a formidable task. Hence, drawing from the experiences of international business schools, the Education and Faculty Development Committee proposed that in the first instance old Thomians could visit the Advanced Level classes and share with the class, real life application of concepts learned in the classroom.

The first in the series of lectures lecture was for the London A/L Economics Class (College Forms A and B) and was well received. Approximately 30 students attended the lecture which lasted over one hour. The lecture was delivered by Ranel T. Wijesinha (Chartered Accountant; International Management Consultant; Past President, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri-Lanka; and Past President, Confederation of Asian Pacific Accountants). Some of the topics covered in the lecture were - BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) and the European Union as large markets, which

generate potential for “Economies of Scale”; China and India as countries which were strong economies in the past (1820’s) and their decline and re-emergence; Economic policies and its decades of impact on countries; comparison of economies of countries within and outside the former Soviet Union and impact on their economies and people during the period 1960 -1985; the market economy and competition; regulation; product life cycles. After the lecture 5 informal groups were formed and a lively interactive session followed. **The participation of students was encouraging, conveying that many have considerable potential to perform above average anywhere in the world provided they are equipped and guided well.**

Chrismal Warnakulasuriya, Attorney-at-Law conducted the second lecture in the “Esto Perpetua Guest Lecture Series” on political science, which was also well received.

The Education and Faculty Development Committee, is now in the process of developing a panel of lecturers for this purpose and shall be pleased to receive offers from old boys to join the panel. Ranel T. Wijesinha the Chairman of the Education and Faculty Development Committee can be contacted via email at <ranel.wijesinha@yahoo.co.uk>. The Committee is hopeful that guest lectures of this nature, will complement and supplement the work of the traditional or ‘academic faculty’ and enhance the level of interest of students in the subject matter resulting in higher marks/better results, increase their chances of gaining entry to better universities and preparing them for a more interactive/participative tertiary level education or entry into professional institutions/places of training. It is the Committee’s intention to carefully screen offers of guest lectures and to build a panel of lecturers.

The Education and Faculty Development Committee has proposed that we share this concept of teaching (through a limited number of regular and well sequenced guest lectures) in the first instance with our sister school Bishops College under the theme “Goodwill Guest Lectures.” Pursuant to a decision taken at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the OBA, the Sub Warden has written to the Principal of Bishops College in this regard and a response is awaited.

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## A Tribute to Dr. David Ponniah

I first came in contact with David when he joined S. Thomas’ College in 1956 in year 1. He was a classmate of one of my brother’s and they were in school together till they left. Quite naturally David used to come to our house from his young days to visit my brother and consequently I also used to join in the conversations at times.

David had an excellent school record, shining in both studies and sports. He exemplified the Latin maxim “*mens sana corpore sano*” which means *a healthy mind in a healthy body*. This was what all Thomians were expected to be, unfortunately today due to the long time spent on private tuition and professionalism in sports most students tend to concentrate only on one aspect. David was an outstanding cricketer and as it is well known, set a record which cannot be broken, in that he was the first fresher to score a century in the Royal-Thomian. It must be borne in mind that in those days it was a two-day match and there were no minimum number of overs bowled in a day. He entered the Engineering Faculty in his very first attempt and as a result was unable to play in the cricket team in the next 2 years. After graduating from the University he worked a short time in Sri Lanka and then like most youngsters sought greener pastures abroad. David became an academic and was on the tutorial staff of the prestigious Edinborough University where he made his mark and was well settled. At the turn of the century when S. Thomas’ College was looking for a Warden, at the request of his schoolmates and fellow cricketers, he decided to answer the call of his *alma mater* and relinquish his appointment in Edinborough and returned to Sri Lanka. There are very few people who would have done this .

During his two terms as Warden, David did much for the school especially in improving the infrastructure, IT facilities and methods of teaching. He was like a breath of fresh air and introduced novel methods and modern concepts to the school curriculum, whilst always ensuring the Education department requirements were fulfilled. In my opinion David Ponniah’s greatest contribution was the restoration of the Chapel roof. This was a gigantic task, which had to be handled carefully since the mural by David Paynter was in danger of being damaged. As Rev. Bowyer Yin stated in the sermon he preached at the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school, “The Chapel is the pivot on which the whole school revolves” and is very dear to all Thomians, whatever their religious beliefs may be. David raised the necessary funds without having to obtain a loan or increase school fees and all those who worship in the Chapel of the Transfiguration will remember him for this.

David had a vision for the school and was conscious of its rich heritage and its legacy bequeathed to him by his hallowed predecessors, especially Bishop Chapman and Wardens Stone, Buck, and de Saram. There is no doubt that today S. Thomas’ College is the most sought after school for admission and as he hands over the baton to his successor he can rest assured that he has played his part well.

All of us wish him, Nira and his family God’s Choicest Blessings in all his future endeavors.

*Ad Multos Annos*

**Rajan Asirwatham**

## The Chapel Of The Transfiguration To Be Preserved For Posterity After Successful Restoration Fundraising Project

The Chapel of the Transfiguration occupies a central position both within the physical campus and the spiritual focus of S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia. It stands at the highest point of the premises of the school, and has generations of old Thomians testifying to the profound positive impact it has had on their lives. One can only begin to fully appreciate the total value, significance and importance of this building today, in the light of its rich history, and the architectural and artistic traditions and influences that have caused the Chapel of the Transfiguration to become part of the architectural/artistic treasures of Asia and the world.

The re-opening of the renovated Chapel at a service on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2008 is beyond doubt, an important milestone in the history of the College, achieved after a successful and unprecedented drive to raise the urgently needed funds to restore this 'world treasure' that is Thomian, to its glory.

The Special Events Team, headed by a very committed Bertal Pinto-Jayawardena designed, executed and overlooked a series of diverse projects, over a period of ten months. Ernst & Young were appointed as auditors for the project. The events undertaken in a nutshell were as follows:

- 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2007 - Thanksgiving Service and Launch of the Chapel Renovation Fund
- 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2007 - Media Launch of the Chapel Renovation Fund
- 1st of July 2007 - REVELATIONS In Concert
- 11th of August 2007 - Grand Sing-A-Long
- 30th of September 2007 - Combined Schools Choir Performance
- 19th & 20th of October 2007 - "CANTO PERPETUA"
- 2nd, 3rd & 4th of November 2007 - "Tons of Money"
- 11th of March 2008 - Gala Fundraiser Dinner

Upon the success of this project, the Chapel stands renewed for generations to come, with the security of a Fund to which donations and contributions can continue to flow, from grateful old boys and well wishers, that would ensure regular and timely maintenance of the Chapel, to ensure its continuity into perpetuity! More information can be obtained at <[www.stcChapel.org](http://www.stcChapel.org)>



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### Appreciation: K. G. Leo de Silva



Leo de Silva was born on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1924 in Seeduwa. He had his primary education at Seeduwa Methodist School and his secondary education at St. Mary's College, Negombo. On completion of his secondary education he was enrolled at the Teachers Training College in Peradeniya, and after successfully completing the three and a half year course he joined a Boys' High School in Alutgama (presently known as Alutgama Vidyalaya) where he served for 18 months and then moved to Christ Church School in Dehiwela where he served as a teacher for about eight years. During this time his reputation as a great Teacher and an effective disciplinarian spread to other schools in the area, and for our good fortune the Warden at S. Thomas' College at the time was Rev. Canon R. S. de Saram who was always head hunting for good teachers and was quick to send an invitation to Mr. de Silva to join S. Thomas' which the latter accepted.

In 1956 he joined the lower school at which time Rev. Barnabas was the Head Master, it is important to place on record that Rev. de Saram and Rev. Barnabas had no hesitation in getting the best teachers for College, their ultimate goal was to provide the students with a quality education.

Leo De Silva was an exceptional teacher moulding young children into true Thomians by giving them a solid foundation. He taught forms two, three, four, five and six. He taught me in Lower III<sup>rd</sup>, and of course we were too small to remember stories or anecdotes of his teachings, but even today, we all feel the impact he has made on our lives. He was someone who really understood the importance of primary education and it was on this foundation which he laid, that true 'Thomianism' was built. Mr. de Silva sowed the seeds of the true Thomian spirit by creating traditions, which are to this day unique to the College. The spirit of Thomians was primarily about utmost love and respect for the School. However, Mr. de Silva wove kindness, compassion and care into that spirit and gave birth to an unparalleled spirit.

His contribution to our *alma mater* is therefore immense. I can still picture him - stocky in build. My vision of him from my childhood is that of a fearful person, he wore white trousers and long-sleeved white shirts, occasionally with a tie. He carried a big black brief case in one hand and a long black umbrella on the other. We never knew what he carried in that big bag, but I am sure that it was knowledge that filled the mysterious brief case. At the same time he was a strict as well as an effective disciplinarian, indeed we all feared him, good deeds were rewarded but wrong deeds never went unpunished. I can still recall how he would hold our trousers by the waistband right above the naval with one hand and lift us effortlessly. That 'lift' was punishment enough for us to correct ourselves. We had no opportunity to complain about this, our parents would not hear of it, and even if our parents came to school on a punishment issue, he spoke to them with courtesy and kindness that parents went back without carrying any ill thoughts of Mr. de Silva. His actions in punishing us were purely on disciplinary grounds and I can vouch that he never had any sadistic pleasure in punishing anyone. That is where he differs from today's teachers. Unlike the present day teachers, teachers of yesterday, such as Mr. de Silva had neither domestic nor social pressures which frustrated them, so it was not such external pressures that led to his punishing us, perhaps that is why his efforts to discipline us had very positive impacts on our lives. That is the reason that today the fear we had for him as children has turned into awe.

Something very few of my fellow Thomians know is the fact that in 1961 he contested at the local government elections for Katunayake-Seeduwa Town Council. Recently when I asked him the reason for wanting to contest, snap came the answer "I hate politicians and I hate politics." He elaborated by adding that even at that time there was thuggery and intimidation of voters, bribery, corruption and social vices such as people brewing illicit liquor. Leo de Silva being service minded knew that none of the recognised political parties could give solutions to the problems, which people had. So he decided to run for office as an independent candidate under the symbol 'the umbrella' (of course). But how did he win? During those years, schoolteachers were held in high regard, and the people held him being a teacher at S. Thomas' College in higher regard, but I think he won because he sincerely wanted to serve the people. How he found the time to serve the people while being a teacher is the million Dollar question? According to Mr. de Silva, the Warden did not like his election to the Town Council, but he was tolerant, and Mr. de Silva never forgot or faltered in his duties as a teacher. During his three years at the Council he balanced both professions remarkably well. School hours during this time were 8.05am to 3.05pm with a 40 minute lunch break. He performed his duties in the council in the evenings on weekdays but on Wednesdays when the school closed at 12.41 pm he would wrap up his school work by 1pm and would go and attend to the work at the Council. He was granted leave to attend Council meetings and other important meetings. The Warden was compelled to do so, as Mr. de Silva did not neglect his duties. Out of his 49 years as a teacher, he served STC for over 38 years. He served Under Wardens Rev. Canon R. S. de Saram, C. H. Davidson, S. J. Anandanayagam in the primary school and about six years prior to his retirement in 1994 became the Head Master of middle school.

I always had his good wishes at many points in my political career. But what impressed me most was when I went to his house during the last local government elections the manner he recognised me, I was wondering as I chatted with him whether he would even know me, for he was 82 years of age, but he turned to his wife and said "Do you know who this is? This is D. S. Gunasekera's brother's son" - and he was absolutely right. It was amazing how well he remembered not only who I am, but those to whom I was related to as well. It showed me that not only did he have a great memory but also that he cared to remember, and of course for someone as committed as he was to service, caring was the crux of everything he delivered.

Mr. Leo de Silva was a pillar of S. Thomas College. His contribution was not confined to the primary school It did not matter whether he taught us or not, his presence was felt throughout the College. He has influenced our lives so much that we can keep our heads up and speak without any fear in any context. I think of him as someone with charisma who has given us character and courage to face the world, and that is why after even 21 years of leaving the College we still speak of him with love and respect.

**Kesralal Gunasekera**

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## Appreciation: Wijemuni Douglas Alexander De Zoysa

**Remember!** GOD has blessed his soul....

I was truly privileged when I was called upon to write a tribute in remembrance of our great classics and chess teacher and friend to many generations of Thomians, Mr. Wijemuni Douglas Alexander de Zoysa, who graced the corridors and classrooms of our *alma mater* in Mount Lavinia from 1985 to 2007.

He was my Uncle Leonard's classmate and a friend to my paternal family, from whom my youngest son Adrian and I had the privilege to learn about 'life and values.'

I fondly remember the fun and laughter we had with Mr. de Zoysa, a noble son and teacher of our great institution S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia. If one was to go into detail, it would probably take more than the entire space in The Old Boy for me to write this tribute. However an anecdote **Remember!** sums up the time we spent under the tutelage of our great teacher;

- We remember times when he would happily let the mosquitoes suck his blood with no repulse from him, as he believed 'life is not worth harming even an ant,'
- We remember times he chased us from class-to-class, whilst 'Molly' jumped out of the windows to escape him, for he knew an hour long lecture was ritual, if he was caught giving the class a miss,
- We remember times we would physically carry him up the flight of stairs of the Old Science Block, when he would shyly suffer from chest pain,
- We remember times he would write our notes in our absence from class, to make sure we did not miss the lessons, although we 'skipped' the class,
- We remember times he would 'gently' force us to be present in class for 'classics,' so as to make sure we would one day leave our *alma mater* and enter the world as young Spartans,
- We remember times he would shriek at us and feel profusely sorry of his **"right doing,"**
- We remember times we disturbed him with the sounding of a 'Carthaginian Halifax of a Discriminating Psychopathic Dungeon...' while old Socrates tried to 'visualise it...'
- We remember him affectionately as *Kane Mail* and I'm sure if we had known of his first name Douglas (then), he probably would have been singing *Dougiyage Buriya* as he walked into class...

Our '87 classics class was filled by a few flowery personalities to mention - Marlon Ferreira (Molly), Nishan David, Rajiv Gunawardena (RY Kerr), Hans Van der Wert, Surath Pieris, Avindra Foneseka, Viraj Dayaratne (Pervy the Judge), Gayan Hordagoda, the late Oan Tyabally, Stephan Bartholomew, and yours truly... For us studying classics was as if we were being taken through the very ages of Greeks and the Romans, as Mr. Douglas de Zoysa had the ability to paint such a vibrant and 'live' picture of these two great cultures, their arts and feats, their stories of conquest, tragedy, rise and their ultimate downfall.

As students, there are certain lessons we learn from our teachers that are instilled in us; lessons we carry out of school and into our adult life, which become part and parcel of our individual attitudes and become values as we journey through life. In Mr. Douglas de Zoysa's case it was not the lessons of the Greeks or the Romans, the Parthenon or the Colosseum or the lives of *Alexander* the Great, Hannibal, Ameli-anus or Julius Caesar that we learnt. The greatest lesson he thought us was not even one of the many lessons in life and classics he tried to instill in us. To us young school boys what awed us most at the time was the **"Passion"** with which he went about his work, the **"Dedication"** to complete a task, and most important being **"Humble"** to all men no matter how much knowledge and skill you possessed (both of which he had in abundance). He lived to preach the "Greek and Roman civilisation" and practiced the life and teachings of Socrates! We were 'cruel' with many pranks under our sleeves, and to many people's amazement we were groomed by him to be distinguished with substance, which has made us realise the 'real value' of life.

Mr. Douglas de Zoysa was a source of inspiration to the entire teaching fraternity, a great friend, a father and a teacher to all of us who were privileged to have known him and learnt from him. He was a 'great human being' of honesty and integrity, passion and humility, and an inspiration to all 'Col Arts' students. We were the fortunate ones to have shared and experienced his life during our tenure at school.

We know our mentor has made it to the High Heavens!  
May his legacy live on!  
May his Soul Rest in Peace and hope we meet again!

Mr. Wijemuni Douglas Alexander de Zoysa was laid to rest on Thursday the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2007. He was a true son and teacher of S. Thomas'. He is survived by his wife and family who reside at No. 3, Simon Abeywickrama Avenue, Mount Lavinia.

**Ravi Gunawardene**  
Class of '87

## LAID TO REST

Ian Jayasinghe  
Randunna Corea  
P. R. Warusawithana  
P. D. Dayananda  
Oliver Perera  
Ajith Fonseka

S. D. P. de Silva  
Richard de Silva  
Lyn Smith  
Aubrey Ebert  
Nalaka Bamunusingha  
J. C. Duraisingham  
Mrs. Morrel (Sick Room Matron)

S. Sooriyakumar  
Singham Pararajasingham  
Jayasena Ellawala  
Lucky Galabada  
K. Sooriyabandara  
Sri Ragunathan



## Cricket in the 80's

The peak of my cricketering career for S. Thomas' was between the years 80 – 82 when I played in the 'Big Match.' Unfortunately I am unable to boast of a 'Thomian victory' in any one of those years, although the match in '82 went down to the wire.

All I remember of the match in '80 was running to the boundary. That was the year Charlie Warnakulasuriya and Ajit Devasurendra batted for nearly one and a half days in a record-breaking partnership. Charlie was dropped on 174 and went on to make 197 while Ajit missed out on a hundred. All in all I would call it a bit of a boring match. The match in '81 under Halangoda's captaincy was also a bit of a boring match with the match ending in an inevitable draw. The Royal-Thomian of '82 was by far was the most interesting match I played in. We had one of the most balanced sides, of the teams I had played in. We had a strong batting line up and two spinners "who took wickets." One of them, *Ucchi Wijesinghe* bowled off spin but the ball went the other way. I now think that he bowled the *doosra* long before it was invented. Ken de Alwis was the Captain and much was expected of him, but unfortunately he failed in both innings. I top scored with 70 runs. It was a low scoring match on the whole and Royal were set a competitive target to chase. Mid way there Chulaka Amerasinghe was going great guns but our spinners Ranil Pieris and Ritchie de Silva put the shackles and the Royalists (in true fashion) bottled up. The match stopped a few overs before scheduled stoppage with Royal needing 20 runs with 3 wickets in hand. My counterparts from Royal still remind me of how I walked off without waiting for the umpire to rule me out, despite being close to a century. That same year, after three years of losses we thrashed the Royalists in the 50 over match while setting a series record in the process.

I was to have the great privilege of captaining the Thomian 1<sup>st</sup> XI in '83 but as fate would have it there was an overhaul of the structure of schools cricket and the tournament was changed from an Under 20 tournament to an Under 19 one. As a result of this six other coloursmen and I missed out on playing the Big Match. If not for this sudden depletion in the side I still believe that the final result, which went in favour of Royal would have been much more different – and I don't mean a draw. From '83 onwards the rest of my association with cricket at College in the 80's was as a keen spectator. I was at the Oval in '88 when S. Thomas' led by Anura Bulankulame won the Big Match after a lapse of nearly 23 years. By the time most people got to the grounds the match was over. This was our first victory in the 'three-day' format and it was a proud moment for me. Anura's brother Dhammika was a reserve in '82. In fact his paternal uncle 'Patchy' Bulankulame a great Thomian cricketer of the past was very active with the junior cricket teams when I was a junior cricketer.

The Coaching staff in the 80's comprised a mix of gentlemen with a keen cricketering knowledge and a strong sense of discipline. F.C. de Saram had vast experience playing cricket in both Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom and his input to the team was immense. He gave us daily run downs of our strengths and weaknesses. However, we were from different eras and he basically wanted to discipline a bunch of boys whose sole purpose in life was to be free. In fact my brother and 'FC' had a running battle. I would venture to say that most present day coaches would find it hard to match up to the standards that he set. On a different note, away from the pitch most of us learnt to drive in his 'mini-moke.' He used to give us lifts to Bambalapitiya in this vehicle, but the speed at which he used to drive at was so slow that all of us boys would get out and walk, leaving 'FC' to talk to himself blissfully unaware of the departure of his passengers. In 1982, Gerry Gooneratne took over as Coach. He was a very structured prim and proper gentleman. He was like a bowling machine and had the unique ability to pitch the ball on the same spot time and time again. Unlike a bowling machine each ball would be accompanied by the words "drive boy drive." Lankatilake was the Master-in-Charge. He was not the most well versed person in cricket, but he was very supportive of us. In fact I believe he did save us boys from quite a few scrapes. Quentin Israel was the Master-in-Charge of the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI. While a legend on the rugby field his cricketering prowess had much to be desired. His famous words of encouragement just before a match were, "you know what to do so go and do it." No article on cricket in the 80's would be complete without mention of *Karupaiyah* the ground boy, a colourful character who was faithful to the core.

Although the cricketers of the 80's boast of having the last Thomian to make it to the ranks of the national team none of us really took cricket up professionally. Kapila Wijegunawardane, the STC Captain in '83 was the player who made it to the national side. Halangoda, (I think) played for Sri Lanka 'A'. Ken and Ranil were selected to represent the Sri Lanka schools team. I played about 5 or 6 years with the Sinhalese Sports Club, during which time I was selected to tour Pakistan with the Sri Lanka 'B' team. Thereafter, I gave up cricket for good. I think a few of us cricketers of the 80's are still involved with the administration of the game, but it is a pity that none of us took to the game professionally. Quite a few of the cricketers in my era took to medicine or law while the others entered the various business establishments in the private sector. It is sad to note that there has been no Thomian player in the national team in recent times, especially since cricket went professional domestically with our World Cup win in '96.

One other significant fact about us cricketers from the 80's was that many of us hailed from S. Thomas' Preparatory School in Kollupitiya. I know for certain that Kapila, Ken, Maxim and Ranil were all from Prep where the infamous Dixon Arsaratnam coached us. His famous saying was "you can't go to heaven in an old ford car cause an old ford car don't pull fast."

There are many a memorable moment associated with my cricketering days at College in the 80's, but very few which can be printed. On one occasion as Secretary of the 1<sup>st</sup> XI. I was carrying out my duty of obtaining leave from the then Sub Warden Rajiva Wijesinha. He duly approved it and in his typical Shakespearean style said, "perambulate." Not knowing what it meant I stood rooted to the ground and nodded my head and said "Yes, Sir." He later told me that it meant 'put

off.' On another occasion when the cricket team took up residence at College prior to the Big Match some people who I believe were boarders lit crackers in the middle of the night near the Winchester Dorms where we were sleeping. In our groggy state we were unable to apprehend the culprits who disturbed our peaceful sleep.

I think most of us would have at one time or another noticed the stately boards in the tuck-shop, which bear the names of the Stephen Memorial Prize Winners and includes amongst its ranks eminent cricketing names such as Anura Tennekoon, Michael Tissera and Duleep Medis. Once a newcomer to the school had happened to ask *tucky* what the boards were for – without missing a beat *tucky* replied that the boards bear the names of the rascals who didn't settle their tuck-shop bills.

This is my recollection of cricket at College in the 80's. The cricketers were filled with passion and dedication and the spectators were a different lot. At maximum one or two revellers would spend a few hours in the Police station. Although we played the three day game, even three days did not seem enough to get a side out twice. It was strange because during the season we would beat other teams inside of two days. All in all they were happy times filled with many pleasant memories.

*Esto Perpetua*

**Stephan Anthonisz**

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## Boxing - The Lost Art At STC

It is with great pleasure that I contribute to The Old Boy. Taking a stroll down memory lane of the 80's I can state without any doubt that the 80's was the last decade in which less popular and commercialised sports had an opportunity to be recognised in schools. Also with the advent of the lingo of Tuition, parents had a deterring or a strong antipathy towards less recognised sports with no prospective commercial or employment value.



In my schooldays in the 80's I was told that the martial art of boxing was at its best at College in the 60's and was a great success in that golden year of 1964. I would like to recap how boxing was revived at STC in the 80's after many years. It all started in 1982 when a bunch of novices took to the ring and took up gloves at the invitation of the then Master-in Charge of Cadets, Gothabaya Piyatunge who was also on the tutorial staff at College. With a few sessions of basic training by the inspirational Coach Keith Martinsteyn, a champion boxer at STC in the 60's, an enthusiastic following was quickly found. This great combination of two old boys as Coach and Master-in-Charge made a big difference in harnessing the raw talent we had. After an Inter-house Boxing Meet a squad was picked. The Sri Lanka schools boxing calendar starts from the Novices Meet for the L. V. Jayaweera Memorial Cup to the Intermediate T. B. Jayah Challenge Cup and finally to the much coveted Stubbs Shield, which is still considered the public schools championship in boxing. Winning a Stubbs Shield weight category was the aspiration and goal of any schoolboy boxer.

In 1982 Anil Kulasuriya, the only boxer to have ring experience prior to that year captained the College boxing team. The novices consisted of E. P. Seneviratne, Roshan Kulasuriya, T. M. Pieris, Y. C. Bocks, Doorasamay, J. P. Henatigala, Gopi Selveratnam, E.C. Gunathilake and Roshan Perera amongst others. These were days when St. Sylvester's College, Royal College, Trinity College, St. John's College, Vidyaratha College and Peradeniya MV produced some fine scientific and power packed boxers in the likes of the Odayar and Kiridena brothers from Trinity, the Osman brothers from Royal and the Guneratne brothers from St. Sylvester's. These teams consisted of many past winners in their ranks. Not to be outdone by names and reputations, Coach Martinsteyn molded the team to produce a bunch of fearless and power packed boxers. He instilled in us skill and the scientific art of boxing and moreover the heart to win. I should say it was a great experience to be coached by an old boy who knew the feeling of being a Champion and being the best. Despite his daily duties in the private sector in the course of his employment, he coached the team with sheer dedication and commitment. Many winners and runners-up emerged from the Thomian ranks at the L. V. Jayaweera and T. B. Jayah meets and this experience led to the formation of a group of boxers who were bubbling with confidence and power displays to conquer their respective weight class, even though they lacked experience.

S. Thomas' hosted the Stubbs Shield in 1982 and the College Hall was turned into a boxing arena complete with a ring. It was a keenly contested meet over a period of 3 days with the participation of many schoolboy boxers. With just one boxer of previous Stubbs Shield experience we ended up as 2<sup>nd</sup> Runners-up, producing four winners and a best loser. Some keen bouts were witnessed with the Thomian team having a few great wins in the likes of Anil Kulasuriya beating Odayar and Osman in two great fights. J. P. Henatigala, Y.C. Bocks, and T. M. Peiris were Champions in their respective

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weight categories and E. P. Seneviratne was adjudicated the best loser. This team produced some power packed displays and dislodged many a reputed contender from their mantles.

After a very successful year of boxing at STC, Keith Martinsteyn was unable to coach us in 1983 due to his work related commitments and Mr. Piyathunga left College to serve the Sri Lanka Army. Thereafter, past Thomian champion boxer and former DIG (Legal Range) of the Sri Lanka Police, J. Thangavelu took over as Coach. He was assisted by another ex-Thomian boxer Jeffery de Zilwa. It was always great to be coached by old boys of their caliber, because it was more than skill and technique that was imparted. They were living examples of the famed Thomian grit and courage, which can only be handed down by a fellow Thomian who understands the pride of winning College Colours.

In my last year at College I still recollect the fight between Hisham Osman of Royal and myself at the Stubbs Shiled final in the heavy weight class. Hisham won the fight on points, but it was a fight in which no punch was spared till the last bell rang. A few years after leaving college Captain Hisham Osman was killed in action while serving the Sri Lanka Army. From a photo published in a local newspaper I was able to get a picture of him, which still hangs in my room and brings back memories of the boxing days and sportsmanship, which today is the lesson I treasure most of all.

Special mention must be made about the support we received from the late Warden Neville de Alwis who always encouraged us. I recall during the period 1982 to 1987 we were able to organise Inter-house Boxing Meets annually and there was much enthusiasm generated for the sport. I sincerely hope that boxing could be revived at College realising that boxing is a martial art and a sport, which can develop and harness self-belief and self-defense to withstand the challenges of life. Sports enables one to take victory and defeat in true spirit, provided one has done his best and highest commitment has been applied.

**Yohann Bocks**  
Dhahran - Saudi Arabia  
Class of 87

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## A Chat with Hans Wijayasuriya - Sri Lankan Of The Year (2008)



In this issue of The Old Boy that covers 'College life' in the 80's the Editorial Committee decided to have a chat with a Head Prefect and 'high flyer' of the era and at present CEO of the undisputed leading business establishment in Sri Lanka which has introduced many innovative telecommunication services in the South Asian region – Dr. Hans Wijayasuriya. While it would take more space than the interview itself to summarise (yes, summarise) the achievements of the Group Chief Executive Officer of Dialog Telekom they can be (with due apologies for not recording each accomplishment) be summarised in one statement – on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2008 he was appointed the Group Chief Operating Officer of Telecom Malaysia. In a day and age when Sri Lanka is looking to foreign expertise for advise the fact that Dr. Wijayasuriya was singled out by a leading multinational company in the fastest growing sector at

present to take charge of their overall operations speaks volumes of his accomplishments. In a brief interview Dr. Hans Wijayasuriya shared with us his memories of the 80's, his views on education and his hopes for his beloved *alma mater*...

### **Why did your parents choose a 'Thomian' education for you?**

I did not have a direct link as such with S. Thomas'. I believe my parents considered all the options available to them and made a conscious choice as to where they thought I would receive a 'well-rounded' education. I did live about half a kilometre away from Royal College, so that was also an option at the time I believe, and my parents made a clear and conscious decision in favour of S.Thomas'.

### **You were in College during the 80's. What are your memories of S. Thomas' in the 80's?**

The 80's at S. Thomas' was a period of change in every sphere be it education, facilities or performance. If I were to describe the period in summary, it was one which was 'progressive and developmental.' There was also a lot of effort placed on discipline at the time. Furthermore, there were tangible results leading from the changes taking pace at College during this period. I recall that when I left College in '86, S. Thomas' was clearly the most sought after School in Sri Lanka, while this was not necessarily the case at the onset of the 80's.

### **What are your memories of the '83 Riots?'**

It's actually hard to describe - I think it's something everyone wants to forget. To many of us it was an exposure to a dark and inexplicable side of humanity. It was also a paradox of sorts, because while within the secure surroundings of



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College there was amity, friendship and a peaceful environment notwithstanding rich diversity, outside the gates was mayhem which bewildered the minds of children with respect to the behaviour of the 'adult world.' I also recall very clearly several instances of Thomian unity prevailing over the divisive sentiments of the world outside – with batch-mates and members of the staff helping each other out during this challenging time.

### **And your memories of the 'de Alwis' era?**

Much of the progress and development I alluded to and which took place at S. Thomas' in the 80's should be attributed to Warden De Alwis. He made it his mission to ensure that S. Thomas' reached the pedestal of being a respected institution along multiple dimensions, and I believe he more than achieved it.

### **Who were the teachers who made an impact on you during your days at S. Thomas'?**

I am indebted to a large number of teachers at College with respect to their contribution towards whatever I have achieved - so it's challenging to single out a few. Mrs. Wijeratne, my first class teacher at S. Thomas' at the time I moved to College from Prep in Lower IV, I recall with much gratitude since she made my 'entry' in to College life not only painless but also enjoyable. The late Mr. Leo de Silva, my Headmaster during the same period, was a strict disciplinarian but a guardian figure who created an excellent environment for learning on a backdrop of sound values and discipline. Mrs. Rani Perera was an institution in herself and a guiding light to many Thomians including myself - from those early days in the Lower IVth all the way in to the College Forms. I also drew much guidance and learning from the Late Rev. A. S. P. Goonetilleke, Mrs Indra de Silva and of course Warden de Alwis. I've obviously made many omissions – the list of teachers who shaped my career would indeed be very long.

### **Your 'happiest' and 'saddest' day at S. Thomas'?**

I can't remember any sad days during my years at S. Thomas'. Though I can't recall the exact emotions at the time, I'm sure my appointment as Head-Prefect was a very happy day for me.

### **And your relationship with the 'Royal-Thomian'?**

I've always been a great fan of the Royal-Thomian, and other than for the period when I was overseas, I've attended every match. I am glad Dialog Telekom had the opportunity to partner in this great event in Sri Lanka's Sporting Calendar over the past several years.

### **In your school days you were the recipient of the Book Trust Gold Medal For Best Literary Entry at the Shankars International Literary Competition.**

My academic interests were centred on Maths and Science - but I had a passion for creative writing both in English and Sinhala and kept in touch with it as a hobby. I had entered the Shankars International Literary Competition on a few previous occasions and had moderate success with some merit prizes and medals. The gold medal for the best literary entry came when I was in the Lower IVth.

### **You opted for a career, which at the time you chose was not very popular, despite it being the fastest growing sector in the present day. Did your time at S. Thomas' help you with this decision?**

Actually I followed Arts subjects in school, and studied privately for the London Examinations, where I offered Maths and Physics. My first degree was in electronic engineering. It was a few years after graduation that I decided to pursue a PhD in Mobile Communications. As such my tenure at S. Thomas' did not have a very direct bearing on this decision – although I believe the courage to look beyond the obvious is an attribute imparted through Thomian education.

### **Some are of the opinion that there is no 'value addition' at S. Thomas'. In the sense that individuals who are anyway bound to be achievers will achieve something, whereas others will just leave the school. Would you say you received something from the school?**

Firstly, I don't subscribe to that statement at all, and yes, I do believe that my time at S.Thomas' did add immense value to my career. Every child or youth has potential and it is the environment in which he or she is educated that enables the realisation of that potential. I believe S. Thomas' provides that ideal and progressive environment. College extended a secure but challenging environment characterised by empowerment and individual autonomy where you learnt lessons of leadership, understood the value of pluralism and diversity, and experienced the power of teamwork among several other lessons of life.

### **In recent times you have been very involved with helping S. Thomas'. What is your philosophy in helping your *alma mater*?**

I wouldn't say I have contributed a great deal – at least I feel my contribution to date is deficit in relation to what S. Thomas' has done for me. To answer your question regarding being drawn to help your *alma mater* – I believe a Thomian never really ceases to be a Thomian. There are many phases to a 'Thomian' life cycle. The first stage is

studentship, at the culmination of which the College equips you to face the world. Upon leaving College one enters the second phase which is one of career building wherein you continue to draw on the lessons College has imparted but are challenged in terms of your ability and capacity to assist the school due to pressing demands in ones academic or early stage of working life. The next phase dawns once you have achieved a stage of career or vocational maturity and with it the capacity and opportunity to add value back to College by leveraging your own learning and experience. I believe it is imperative that all alumni of the S. Thomas' engage with the College in some way – active engagement and support from alumni will ensure that the school remains strongly aligned with the demands and expectations of the world outside as seen through Thomian eyes.

**You are personally involved with the 'IT Project.' Do you think this is a step in the right direction?**

Certainly, but we must remember IT education is not a fix all. It is only one element of a modern educational environment. There are several other basics – such as the adoption of modern teaching and learning methods and the expansion of the curriculum to encompass the imparting of value based principles capable of preparing youth for the challenges of the modern world. It is therefore imperative that a reasonable mix of effort, creativity and funds need to be focussed on a portfolio of developmental activities which would serve to create an environment which is conducive to providing that 'superlative and complete education,' S. Thomas' is synonymous with.

**There has been rapid development in terms of teaching methodology and facilities at other schools. In addition to this there is the growing phenomenon of 'International Schools,' which are seemingly attractive to many parents. Sometimes even Old Boys send their sons to other schools. How, in your opinion can S. Thomas' 'keep ahead of the pack' and maintain its position as "the best school of them all?"**

I believe S. Thomas' remains unmatched in many areas, and more often than not Thomians continue to hold positions of leadership in their chosen sphere. The focal point for S. Thomas', in its quest to remain the 'number one' choice must necessarily be, to adequately equip its students to face present day challenges and not only to succeed but also to excel. S. Thomas' needs to continue to provide an education whereby each and every Thomian walking out in to society is equipped with the potential of being among the best in whatever field he may choose. In order to remain at 'number one' and to provide the education that would facilitate such a position it is imperative that we continuously and dispassionately undertake a critical self review of the 'education' the College provides. By 'we' I mean all the stakeholders of S. Thomas' who without doubt would like to see S. Thomas' retain and fortify its position at the pinnacle of Sri Lankan education. Stakeholders would include the Board and management, the dioceses, parents, teachers, old boys and students. We must also remember that the accolade of being a premium educational institution is a relative one – measurement being relative to the needs and expectations of current day society, and also relative to other educational institutions in the country. Keeping up with the current needs and expectations of society at large is probably the most challenging aspect of providing excellent education, due in the main to the speed at which "change" takes place. The speed of change is a critical challenge for schools since adaptation becomes a critical factor of success. Schools, which face this challenge and do so, on an ongoing and timely basis will secure excellence in the long term. Alumni, in their capacity as the ambassadors, as well as the eyes and ears of the College within society at large, can effectively assist the College in maintaining currency with respect to the education it should provide emerging generations of Thomians. I am not ware of exact data with regard to the demand for admissions at present, however I would be quite concerned if as you say a substantial number of Thomians do select schools other than College for their off spring. This in itself would be symptomatic of the fact that S. Thomas' is not subjecting itself to a rigorous enough review of its own performance. If parents and in particular old boys are sending their sons to other schools we need ask them, WHY? - Why do they believe their sons will not stand a solid chance in life if they are educated at S. Thomas'? If you receive an articulate answer to this question, I believe the stakeholders needs to listen and put things right.

**Do you believe that a 'missionary' school like S. Thomas' is capable of adapting to suit the needs of modern life?**

I certainly believe that a school can adapt. Any human based centre or nuclei of society has the intrinsic ability to adapt and change. Furthermore 'adapting' is not an option it is a necessity. S. Thomas' has a strong record of not only adapting to change but also leading change and setting standards. S. Thomas' boasts of many 'firsts.' To name a few, we were the first school to have its own swimming pool, likewise the first turf wicket and in recent times the gymnasium and sports complex as well as the London A'Level programme which commenced as far back as in 1985 and the IT Infrastructure project which commenced in 2003. These initiatives and achievements are founded on a spirit of innovation and dynamism, which is intrinsic to the Thomian ethos. We need to be true to our values, but contemporary in outlook. In deed we owe it to the future generations of Thomians to continue this great tradition of continuous improvement and innovation, in to ensure that Thomian education continues to lead and sets standards for others to follow.

**If you had a son, would you send him to S. Thomas'?**

Certainly.

**The Editorial Committee wishes to thank Dr. Wijayasuriya for giving of his time and sharing his thoughts with us. We congratulate him on all he has achieved and hope he continues to bring honour to his *alma mater*...**

## REVELATIONS Haul In The Medals At The World Choir Games

**The all Thomian choir brings glory to country and College by becoming the only double world champions in South Asia at the World Choir Games**

S. Thomas' can boast of many achievements through its network of old boys in various fields who have scaled great heights, fueled by the grounding they received at the 'school by the sea.' Another feather was added to her multi-feathered hat, as Sri Lanka's impressive all male choir Revelations, consisting entirely of old Thomians, worked miracles against stiff competition from teams from around the world, at the World Choir Games in July 2008 in the Austrian town of Graz, known to be among one of the most significant choral capitals of the world. The champion group comprises Thomians of different vintages - spanning in age from the mid 20's to early 50's. Despite the age difference they are united by the fact that the early influence of the Thomian Chapel (with particular mention of the great choral influence of their legendary Choirmaster, Russel Bartholomeusz) provided an invaluable, solid foundation for the building of their success. It is no wonder that they have in recent times, been spontaneous in making their abilities freely available to efforts of the College to raise funds for the renovation and upkeep of the Chapel of the Transfiguration. This piece is written after a chat with the group and outlines the most recent chapter of an ongoing 'success story' on the world stage that Thomians can truly be proud of and should emulate.



Built on the slogan "singing together brings nations together," the World Choir Games, which is the choral equivalent to the Olympics, hosted no less than a formidable 441 choirs from 93 countries with 71 international jurors judging more than 600 performances comprising 20,000 singers in 28 categories.

A proper understanding of the structure of the World Choir Games is essential, to fully appreciate the true extent of the achievements of the Revelations. In each category, gold, silver and bronze medals are awarded, only to those contesting choirs that reach the required standard of excellence required by the judges for such recognition. Thus, in each category, a few choirs will receive 'gold', a few 'silver', and a few others 'bronze.' To receive even a bronze medal is itself a very high achievement, given the intensity of competition involved. However, the highest achievement possible in a given category is to be adjudged the 'best of the gold medallists' and to be made 'Champion' in the category. Put simply, a 'gold' medal is a certification of reaching the highest level expected in the relevant category, while becoming a 'category champion' makes that choir the winner (officially - 'best in the world') in that category. Furthermore, a 'world championship' in a given category is not awarded, unless the choir performing the best in the category meets the required standard of excellence. The number of choirs participating in a category has no effect on the final result. In some cases, only one choir participated and if they were not up to standard, they were not awarded any medal. Irrespective of the numbers the judges set benchmarks and these standards that have to be met. President of the Revelations, Ishan de Lanerolle, explains the structure of the World Choir Games, as follows, "the awards system in the Choir Games is not like the Olympics, whereby if you get a gold you are first, silver second and bronze third. Any choir obtaining over 80 marks in any category wins a gold medal. Certain categories sometimes had in excess of ten gold medallists. However, only the choir obtaining the highest marks from among the gold medallists is awarded 'champion' status. So a category could have even ten gold medallists but only one champion." He further adds that the national anthem, hoisting of the country flag and an invitation to perform at the 'Concert of the Champions' is awarded only to such 'world champions.'

Revelations not only hit 'gold,' but deploying what must surely be 'Thomian grit,' emerged against the odds with two 'world championships,' the first choir to have done so not just in Sri Lanka, but in the whole of South Asia. Presently ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among all-male choirs in the world and 47<sup>th</sup> among the top 1000 choirs in the world, Revelations also won two gold medals and a silver medal to their impressive haul of awards. The Revelations were honoured to be invited twice to sing at the Concert of the Champions and are to date the only Sri Lankan choir ever to achieve this. Some readers will remember that Revelations were invited to sing at the Concert of the Champions at the Asian Choir Games in Jakarta, which in hindsight seems like a precursor of what lay in store for the Revelations.

Directed by master arranger Sanjeev Jayaratnam and managed by Priyan de Livera, the 10-member choir that left Sri Lanka armed with fantastic voices, an abundance of talent and lots of hope and passion for music, were jubilant with their achievements namely - World Champion in the Gospel and Spiritual (a'capella) Vocal Ensemble category and World Champion in the Male Vocal Ensemble category. This is in addition to winning a gold medal each in these two categories and a silver medal in the Popular Music Choral Ensemble category - a total of five awards in three categories. This article would be incomplete, unless the names of all ten Thomians are mentioned - Sanjeev Jayaratnam (Choral Director/Leader), Ishan de Lanerolle (President), Enaksha Fernando (Secretary/Treasurer), Srimantha Senanayake, Rohan de Lanerolle, Mahen Peiris, Christopher Godridge, Willie Godridge, Charith Peiris, Asanka Perera and Priyan de Livera (Manager).

According to Sanjeev Jayaratnam, while the songs sung by Revelations at the Games were primarily compositions and arrangements from the US, the three songs, which won awards were arranged by him. Two were gospel songs, while



the other, *Venvela Giyath* (sinhala song) was composed by Piyal Perera of the Gypsies, which, with permission, he had arranged for male voices.

The choir was unanimous in saying that the most memorable moment of the Games was the moment the Sri Lankan flag was hoisted followed by the national anthem, not once but twice over, upon the Revelations being crowned World Champions and seeing a stadium of 5,000 people rise to cheer them. Recalling some of the challenging moments during the Games, Jayaratnam remembers Ishan de Lanerolle losing his voice for a few days before the Male Vocal Ensemble category, but fortunately regaining about 80% of it in time to win the championship plus a gold in that category (the famed Thomian grit, I believe!). Jayaratnam says, “one of the main constraints was that there were only ten of us, so everyone had to be 100% accurate in tone, pitch and volume, otherwise it is very noticeable unlike in larger choirs. Also, the fact that Revelations sang a’capella (without accompaniment) made it that much more difficult.

Thomians young, Thomians old, Thomians staunch and true of every hue, no doubt join in congratulating this exceptional talented group of ‘Thomians young and Thomians old’ blessed with an abundance of singing ability on their outstanding international achievement, that has brought honour not only to Sri Lanka but to their *alma mater* as well. We expect more melodious stories of achievement by the Revelations will continue to ring in our ears in the days that lie ahead! We wish them all the very best, and have no doubt that the loyal old Thomian community will continue to support them in all their future endeavors.

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## TO SIR WITH LOVE – and a long overdue apology!



Do you often reminisce of your years at College and remember or talk of some fond memories with your family and friends? I guess those paths are further frequented when you meet up with your schoolmates who better identify with you. At times like that those characters and events come alive to us as we go right back to reliving those moments almost in the present, don’t we? How I sometimes wish that I could turn back the clock and have a second run at College – “for those were the days my friend, we thought will never end!”

Yet there was more to College than just the lovely times shared and the camaraderie, for this was our learning ground not only academically and in the field of sport, but also of values and principles, respect and sometimes correction for disrespect, second only to our home. It is in this backdrop of College that I decided to share with

you about “Sir” – a ‘man for all seasons’ and someone I will always hold in the highest respect for all my living years.

When I was asked if I would write an article about Sir to be published in *The Old Boy*, they probably had no clue that the journey he and I had trodden together was not an ordinary path and that there had been some thorns and pebbles that crossed our way. Further, I knew only too well that there were many others who knew Sir very well and had a closer walk with Sir than I had during my years at school. So my initial reaction was to decline this rare privilege. But then, I realised not many of them had the unusual experience that I had with him, one that seems worth sharing, for it changed me in more ways than I can imagine – as I now look back in retrospect. Besides, if I was ever going to write about anyone or anything to *The Old Boy*, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to write of this amazing gentleman – a man who has impacted my life much - a man who I am very proud to call “My Sir.”

Mr. Russell Bartholomeusz – “Sir”, was born in 1942 in the month of July and started his schooling career at S. Thomas’ College, Mount Lavinia. I could only presume that Sir was a good student with a passion for music and singing. With the talents he possessed naturally he was selected to join the College Choir and had the privilege to sing and train under the then Choirmaster – Rev. Fr. Bowyer Yin who is reputed as being the person who brought the standard of the now famous S. Thomas’ College Choir to what it is renowned to be today. Sir with Fr. Bowyer Yin’s guidance was later to become his successor in training the choir itself. This was Sir’s opportunity to exercise his God given talents in Music and Piano – (the instrument he loves most to this day). As Sir would put it, Fr. Bowyer Yin was his master and guru from whom he learned a lot of what he later imparted to his choristers. He was undoubtedly Sir’s role-model.

However, I think Sir pushed the bar to another level (although I doubt he would even consider himself greater than his Master – thus portraying his simplicity and humility). Just one of the reasons I say that is because Fr. Bowyer Yin whilst training the choir and even for services and the Carol Services would ‘conduct the choir from near the choir stalls.’ Something we see happening in almost all choral performances around the world today. But when Sir eventually took over the choir fully under his wing, he taught us to sing without depending on a conductor – as he obviously was unable to play the church piano/organ and conduct the choir at close proximity to the choristers. I really don’t know if it was this limitation or practical and logistical obstacles that led him to teach us dependence on each other, where the choir leader and the others in the choir doubled up to perform a most unusual feat with mere facial expressions and eye contact. Be it for expressing musical expressions and voice control or simply sitting and standing up together as one choir in sync.

Those of us who have had the privilege would agree that Sir was and still is I am sure a very disciplined perfectionist, who instilled in us the need for discipline as an essential prerequisite in achieving perfection in our singing and life in general. He was also one who paid absolute attention to detail. I remember how Sir would plan and prepare his Choristers for the worst possible situation. Be it a power failure, heavy rain and thunder or even someone happening to faint in the congregation... the hymn, carol and service – must go on. Thus it was not unusual for us to actually practice with the organ suddenly stopping half way through or a sudden bang of a hymnbook, and boy you dare not stop! If we did, we would hear him as only the choristers would – ‘loud and with a resounding echo.’

When I joined S. Thomas’ College in grade 4, from Trinity College (where I had also sung in the choir), I was selected to join the senior choir. Thus, I joined the S. Thomas’ College Senior Choir at the latter stages of Grade 5 and began my journey with our Choirmaster.

I was a soprano at the time and like any other young chorister I attended choir practices thrice a week, sang in the Sunday morning services at the Chapel of the Transfiguration, week in and week out and had a fair share of interaction with *Batho* – as he was referred to amongst all of us students. I remember so vividly the Sunday morning services, special services and the Carol services. These were all given equal importance when it came to practicing because I do believe Sir was one who strongly believed that ‘perfect practice makes perfect.’ I have come to believe that he was also teaching us lessons in life, like ‘whilst being independent - the need to still work as a team.’ One does not really imagine that the choir can be a place of learning for such valuable attributes in life – which has held us in good stead even in our careers and journey through life thus far, but with someone like Sir as our Choir Master – we had this rare privilege. Then there was the long distance of sound which we had to master – meaning the sound of the organ from way back in the Chapel to the choir-stall right in front of the Chapel. All these were situations we as choristers were trained and taught to overcome. So in a sense you’d probably say we did not only learn our music, but also co-ordination, team work and even some physics – where sound travel and distance was concerned.

However, amidst all of this, quite ironically one day there was to be an unexpected twist in my journey with Sir and the choir. I do recall that I had been blessed with quite a decent soprano voice (if I may say so myself - humbly) and was privileged to have sung a few solos in a few carol services at College as well. However, it seemed I was ‘cracking my voice’ and wanted to join the broken voices (for those who may not know – that is when you reach adolescence and begin to see your Adam’s apple more prominently). Yes, there hopefully is a change of depth to your voice just about that time as well. So I had told Sir that I would like to move to the broken voices and it seemed to fall on deaf ears I thought at the time. Weeks, in fact a few months had passed and my request remained denied. So one Thursday when sopranos were singing the descant on the popular hymn “Ye Holy Angels Bright,” yours truly decided he would sing it one octave lower, confident that he would not be found out... What was I thinking, *underestimating my Choirmaster’s keen ear for music...* Suddenly the organ stopped and a voice from the organ loft (that of Sir’s) yelled “blackguard get out!” Everyone was motionless and since no blackguard got out yet, the voice repeated this time in more specific detail which echoed “Arulampalam... *pause...* blackguard get out...” I will never forget that moment as I relive it now whilst writing this. Immediately I felt utter embarrassment – for this was the very first time I had been ever pulled up publicly by Sir; and then what was to follow was a cocktail from hell for I felt my pride bloat, my ego swell and my heart pound so hard that with every step I took and every heart beat that pounded it was getting as hard as stone. I remember walking out of my choir stall very slowly - all the way out of the Chapel and hearing Sir say “Go, cool down and come back.” Whilst walking out, my pride and ego started speaking to me in unison saying “let me teach Sir what he is losing out on,” and I decided that I would never come back again to the choir. I really thought at that moment that I was teaching Sir a lesson and walking out on Sir and the Choir I loved so much. But alas, today at the age of 40 it remains to be the single most regretful event or experience in my life – for I came to realise that the choir functioned quite well even without my voice. I was not teaching Sir a lesson instead there were many lessons I had to learn at a bitter price. I had not even walked out on Sir, but on the contrary had walked out on myself, my voice, my talent and everything I had held near and cherished in my heart for having belonging to a group of guys and their master who gave of himself tirelessly to bring out the best in each of them... each of us.

Today, as I look back, how I wish I cooled down and went back to take my seat in the choir stalls. Again how I wish there was a second chance not so much to improve on my voice alone, but more importantly to let ‘my Sir’ know just how much I respect and regard him for his sound judgment over me – who in his wisdom knew the time for me to sing with the broken voices had not yet come. You see, some lessons in life are learned at a heavy price – but, amidst the regret there will still be consolations, if not joy if these lessons are eventually learned. For me, the sheer disappointment of giving into my pride and arrogance at that moment of shame was a terrible price I paid, but as every cloud has a silver lining, I began to learn a sense of humility and respect through this experience. I also began to realise that these talents we have (whatever they may be) are meant to be used and used with a certain degree of gentleness and gratitude. Gratitude to the one who blesses them upon us in the first place and also to the one who helps harness the best out of your talents for you – your Master / Guru / Teacher.

I am so glad for the time I have been able to spend (albeit in brief spells) with Sir recently to know that I have been able to rekindle a lost relationship with a Man – whom I hold in the highest honor and regard as “My Choirmaster and friend!” Thank you Sir for keeping the door open to me to ask for your forgiveness and probably end up the richest of all your students who have had the privilege of knowing you!

**Sujeewan Arulampalam**

# NEWS FROM THE BATCHES

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## “All Shorts Day” - Class Of '75 (O/Level Group) Goes Back To School!!

Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the Class of '75 (O/L) Association, over 50 old boys of that group made their way to the hallowed precincts of their *alma mater* on 8th March 2008, all clad in blue shorts, white shirts, white socks and black shoes. This sight caused a visiting coach of another school to remark that he hadn't realised that STC had such a large rugby squad! But the event was more than just a trip down memory lane, as the Class of '75 had gathered to felicitate the teachers of their era (those whose contact details were available), who were responsible for moulding them in the true traditions of their *alma mater*.

Dr. Frank Jayasinghe, Kalasuri Arisen Ahubudu, Messrs. Russel Bartholomeusz, S.C. Coperahewa, N. B. Arputharaj, Ananda Weerasekara, Daniel Edirisinghe, Jackson Karunarathne, M. S. Brodie, G. K. Mandawela, Siri Edirisnghe, G. J. Arulananthan, Mmes. M. L. Fernando, U. P. Kalupahana, Lorna Mendis, Rani Perera, R. Samuel, C. Ashubodha and Ila Mendis along with the two daughters of the late Mr. Leo de Silva (Ganga and Deepika) were warmly welcomed at the Main Block entrance opposite the Quadrangle by cheering old boys lined up in a guard-of-honour. While waiting for Mr. Russell Bartholomeusz to make his way towards the classrooms, having completed his solo tour of his former domain, the Chapel of the Transfiguration, the rest of the teachers spent the time with their former students reminiscing of old times in familiar surroundings.

The teachers and the old boys then packed themselves into class room Upper 4 A, with the teachers at the head table and the boys occupying the seats in the classroom. The former students paid tribute to their teachers for their immense contribution to the school during their tenure of teaching at STC saying “The teachers of our era went out of their way to discipline and educate us. They took it upon themselves to correct us, sometimes even sacrificing their own leisure time in detaining us after school hours, giving us slower ones extra hours of teaching attention. It's no surprise that even some of us O' Level drop outs too excel in our own spheres of life thanks to these wonderful people now in the evening of their lives.” The proceedings also had their lighter moments with the revelation of a few well kept secrets of events that took place over 30 years ago, some which will hopefully never be repeated! After reliving the atmosphere of the classroom, both teachers and old boys moved out for the traditional group photograph in front of the Chapel steps. Getting over 50 not so old boys and 20 teachers together proved no easy task for the hapless cameramen, but eventually after the clicking of many a camera, it was time to plant an indigenous tree to commemorate the occasion and where else but at the prominent location opposite the Book Cupboard where *Jackie* had his office! The planting was carried out by old friends *Ashu* and *Coperaya* as they were fondly referred to, before being lead into the Dining Hall passing the *lavos*.

Following a sumptuous meal, generous cash gifts were handed over to the teachers with a fitting laminated note of appreciation, which included a photograph of the Class of '75. The words inscribed therein said it all – “The lessons you taught us in the class room have never been forgotten and have stood the test of time in our lives. We sincerely owe a great debt of gratitude to you for what we are today.” The teachers responded with brief addresses to the audience of old boys who avidly listened to the teachers. Mr. Russel Bartholomeusz's memorable and well-articulated words drew keen attention from the gathering with pin drop silence (in contrast to typical school days). In keeping with tradition, the College Song was sung prior to the sad parting after digesting nostalgic memories for both teachers and pupils alike of days gone by of the much loved school – the school by the sea. It was a joy to see the happy faces of the teachers who were moved by this gesture by a group of a relatively few former students out of several thousands who walked along those corridors of learning! The parting farewells for some may perhaps well be their last. Since then already numerous appreciations and thank you notes from the teachers are pouring in. Mrs. M.L. Fernando's words says it all in a nutshell, “I thank my God for the opportunity given to me to teach in a prestigious school like S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia where I have met pupils who have been so thoughtful and kind to their teachers even after leaving school. It was a pleasure and privilege to be with you all on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2008. Please accept my sincere and heartfelt thanks.”

In sharp contrast to the events of the morning, that same evening the group in formal attire, met with their spouses at Hotel Taj Samudra for the Annual General Meeting which was followed by a gala dinner with a band in attendance to dance the night away. A fitting finale indeed for a day filled with unforgettable memories.

Photographs of the event are available at <[www.stcmloba.org/html/Batch75/25%20years](http://www.stcmloba.org/html/Batch75/25%20years)>

*Esto Perpetua*

**Class of '75**



## Inter-Collegiate Batch Sixes – Class of ‘90

It was yet another fantastic display of steely determination, coupled with meticulous organising and clinical execution that was witnessed at the ‘Big Club’ grounds on Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, 2008 at the inaugural “Inter-Collegiate Batch Sixes” cricket carnival. The Class of ‘90 organised this event to raise funds for renovating the Pavilion and Tuck Shop building.

Whilst cricket remained the focal point there was something for everyone to engage in - bouncers, pony rides and party trains for the kids; fairground games, trade stalls, vintage cars and a boat display; DJ music, a request stall, *papare* bands and petite cheer leaders to keep everyone in ‘the mood,’ and a free massage and foot-rub courtesy the principle sponsor TIGO. Even emission testing for vehicles and a free medical check-up were provided for at this one-of-a-kind, cricket carnival. A unique feature of this inaugural attempt was that 32 old boy ‘batch teams’ spanning four decades, ranging from the 70’s to the present, from all four affiliated schools were involved in playing 4 matches at any one time in this tournament which was worked off in a league format. Their gutsy will to defy the odds was unparalleled, albeit perhaps only to an equally bold set of umpires who braved the weather together and ensured that the ‘game went on’ and concluded successfully as scheduled. A relatively younger 2001 A/L batch emerged champions with the ‘not so old’ 1989 A/L following as runners up. Nuwan Peiris of the winning team was adjudged ‘Man of the Tournament.’

The organising Committee wishes to place on record its thanks to all the sponsors, the wider Thomian community and all well wishers for their support. Based on this success the organising committee planned to make this an annual event on the Thomian calendar. Pictures of the event can be viewed at the official website - <[www.stcmclassof1990.org](http://www.stcmclassof1990.org)> or the OBA website <[www.stcmloba.org](http://www.stcmloba.org)>.

*Esto Perpetua*

### Class of ‘90



## Basket Ball Court for the Lower School – Class of ‘91

The Class of ‘91 having left College 17 years ago was contemplating on driving a constructive project for our *alma mater* in order to show our gratitude to College and also as a memorial for our departed friends. Having identified the need for a second basketball court for the lower school students, this project was initiated. It is with great pleasure that we announce the successful completion of the project. The ceremonial opening was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2008 at 5.00 p.m. The Chief Guest at this occasion was his Lordship the Bishop of Colombo Rt. Revd. Duleep de Chikera. The basketball court was dedicated to College and to the memory of our departed colleagues Mikhail Cobban-Lea, Rajeev Weerasooriya, Roshan Fernando, Kulenteran Dishna Kumar, Jason Martenstyn, Asitha Liyanage, Hillard Aponso, Cresenta Fernando and Indrajith Sarvananthan.

*Esto Perpetua*

### Class of ‘91



## Donation of Computer Equipment – Batch of ‘87

During the year 2007/2008 the Batch of ‘87 donated equipment worth nearly Rupees One Million to College to upgrade the Computer Lab at the New Science Block. The donation was made in three instalments over the said period. The first was the donation of 16 personal computers (Rs. 664,000), the second donation was of a further 4 personal computers (Rs. 186,000) and the final donation for the period was a multi-media projector (Rs. 154,400). The Batch Committee wishes to acknowledge with gratitude and appreciation all those batch mates who contributed towards the ‘Hat Collection’ project and also participated in events other events, which were organised to generate funds to make this donation.

*Esto Perpetua*

### Batch of ‘87

# PRIZE GIVING

## Extracts from the Wardens Speech



“The College continues to strive towards providing an all round education, with the explicit objective of providing opportunities to all our boys to achieve their individual potential. The many achievements of the boys in academic, sports and other extra curricular activities are highlighted in the Report, which you have before you. I do not wish to go through it now in detail but leave it to you to read the Report later, and recognise and appreciate the efforts of the boys, who are ably guided by the Coaches and Teachers-in-Charge.

On academic matters, in December 2007, 166 students were presented for the G. C. E. Ordinary Level examination of whom 160 qualified for the Advanced Level classes. Thirteen of these students obtained more than 7 A's. Of the total number of subjects taken around

two-thirds were passed with grades better than a B grade. Around 230 students were presented for the G. C. E. Advanced Level Examination in the local Arts and Science, and the London Advanced Level Examination in August 2007. Over 60% passed all three subjects, which were taken in all three media (Sinhalese, Tamil and English). The highlight for this year is that after many years, seven boys gained admission to the Faculty of Engineering at Moratuwa. Special mention must be made of A. T. A. de Silva and K. Kandasamy, who were placed 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> respectively, in the Colombo District.

We now have over forty Clubs and Societies organising and staging a wide range of events, and the range of work and their efforts can only be appreciated by reading the Report. We also have over fifteen sports or similar activities being catered to in College. With such a level of extra-curricular activity it is often quoted that we are a school that never seems to sleep. The downside to these levels of activity is that our limited resources are stretched to the maximum and even to breaking point. We therefore, are forced to call on sponsors and other benefactors, mainly old boys, to help. I must gratefully acknowledge their support and add that that our excellence in these activities is because of them.

The refurbishment of the buildings is continuing and we have achieved maybe 90% of what we originally intended over seven years ago. As you would have noticed when you walked in today the renovation of the Chapel has begun. We are extremely pleased with this. The renovation involves replacing the sheeting on the entire roof, making good roof and window timbers, rewiring, repainting the internal walls, and repairing any damage to the outside façade. I am very grateful to a large number of people who recognised the importance of the Chapel to the College and have come forward to help. We have not quite reached our collection target but it was important that we should start the work.

It maybe another year but many of the problems of the past year still remain. For example, the proposed educational reforms are continuing to be implemented but due to a lack of consistency or even constancy in its implementation by the Ministry, considerable difficulties are being faced by the boys. As an observation it must be said changes in policy or in the curriculum for the reason of simple and short term political or other expediency, adds to the confusion and uncertainty to an education system, which is already in some turmoil.

It may be another year but the war continues. It is more than 25 years of conflict and we now have a generation of young adults who have not experienced anything other than the horrors of war, or at least the images of the war filling our newspapers and television screens. Most have not experienced the joys and happiness of a nation with the richness of its cultures, religions and languages, working, playing and living together in harmony. It is now time for those of us who lived in happier times, to use the opportunities within education, in its broadest sense, to build a Nation of Sri Lankans. It is not the Nation as a State but as a Nation of people with a shared identity. It is a Nation of people with a shared history, to be able to understand the present, and then best chart the future for ourselves. There is much written and talked about of the role of education in this process of Nation building. As the phrase goes, it is now time to walk the talk, and take on this urgent task of Nation building. It must have real substance and does not degenerate into another cliché, and at the basic level it must address as to what kind of ‘Nation’ we are seeking to build.

This re-education is not going to be easy because over this period of war years, the world around us has not stood still. The system of education is not what it was in the 1980s. The physical and intellectual infrastructure of education has been starved of resources diverted to the war effort, and has been run down so badly that just to restore the quality of twenty years ago would require sustained long-term investment, and more political will than we have experienced in the past. Simply ‘going back’ is not an option but of course we can move forward differently. We need a coherent long term vision for education which can match the needs of our very uncertain future, and a system that is politically sustainable.

In conclusion what I report on is the result of contributions made by large numbers of people who must now be recognised. I gratefully acknowledge the help and support afforded to me by the Board of Governors, who are of

course ultimately responsible for the good governance of the College. I must thank the Sub-Warden, Headmasters and all tutorial, administrative and support staff who have all unstintingly supported the College through these difficult periods. We are extremely fortunate to have such good and loyal staff. I must acknowledge the generosity and the hard work of the old boys, particularly in the context of providing the additional resources, which could not be purchased from the collection of school fees. I must also thank the Parents, and in particular the PTA, for assisting us in areas, which again add significant value to the basic education, being provided at College. The present boys continue to get involved in clubs and societies, sports with varying levels of achievement and success. The Thomian family continues “to work well and the synergy of these groups has to be recognised and appreciated.”

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## OLD BOYS AROUND THE WORLD

### News From

#### **The S. Thomas' College Old Boys Association Of New South Wales (Sydney, Australia)**

The STC OBA of New South Wales organised two main events this year.

The over fifties Royal-Thomian match was held on Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2008. This year the match in Sydney had a special flavour to it as it was played for the Mabel Morrell Challenge Trophy donated by Imitiaz Issadeen a noble son of S Thomas College and one of the most colourful personalities who graced the Thomian tent in the 60's. Mabel Olive Morrell who passed away in Sydney, at the tender age of 101 years and nine months, on January 11<sup>th</sup> 2008 in Sydney, was the College Sick Room matron who had served generations of Thomians from 1942 - 1967; a tenure of 25 years filled with understanding, kindness, compassion and care. So much so that Thomians, particularly boarders, often referred to Mrs. Morrell as a second mother. The Thomian team this year was captained by Ananda Amaranath and Royal was captained by Prasanna Kariyawasam. Our tireless organisers led by Ananda Amaranath (*AD* if you were in Miller House in the 60's) managed to book the picturesque oval at Cheltenham in NSW. Play commenced at 12.30 (AEST). Tradition, tradition, tradition - that is what this cricket match is all about. It has nothing to do with winning or losing. It is a day for merriment, sitting back, watching a bit of cricket, meeting old friends and swapping stories. The caterer provided a good mix of food that catered to the taste buds of the prim and proper while a traditional 'rice packet' came disguised in a Chinese fast food container and did a great job to re-energise tired bodies and cramping muscles. At the end of the match due protocol was adhered to in keeping with the best traditions of the sporting rivals - interesting speeches were delivered and the presentation went off smoothly. To the Thomian and Royalist organisers credit, the old boys in New South Wales as well as other attendees had a good time. The fact that it is played annually in Sydney, Melbourne, Colombo, Dubai, London, Toronto, New York and Los Angeles bears testimony to the passion that drives old Thomians and Royalists to relive their school days. However, nothing happens without a structure and due form. In this regard those old boys who elect to serve on the respective OBA committees around the world on a voluntary basis are to be saluted for their dedicated generosity.

The annual Thomian Dance in Sydney was held in autumn at the Pioneer Ballroom Castle Grand on Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2008. Thomians, their families and friends gathered to celebrate the event in customary style. Thomians enjoy 157 years of history and this annual event gives them an opportunity to celebrate their traditions, swap stories and catch up with old mates. The music was provided by the 'Breakaway Brand.' They kept the crowd on their feet despite the challenges posed by arthritic bones, beer-bellies and a range of heart conditions. It also afforded the young at heart an opportunity to flaunt their newly acquired skills from attendance at local dance classes (One, two, three - hang on - not right - lets start again!). It was a delight to see them eventually find their rhythm and dance the night away. Surprise guest star, Ashanthi, one of the most popular singer in Sri Lanka today, performed a number of English and Sinhala melodies to the delight of the audience. The table décor by Sudharshini Duraisamy was colourful, subtle and efficient, giving guests plenty of opportunity to converse with ease across the table. The round tables of ten made it more comfortable for the guests and enabled Rohan Gamage's youthful and energetic catering staff to serve the guests efficiently. The meal was well presented, flavoursome and wholesome. Thanks to the enthusiastic staff who served at the tables, it was warm and enjoyable. The highlight of the evening was the singing of the College Song. A large group of Thomians were led by Duke 'Ellington' Ramachandran in a lusty rendition of that famous melody. The Committee had put in a tremendous amount of work in the lead up to the event to ensure that the event went off well. One of the highlights was the re-emergence of a very readable Dance Souvenir with plenty of quality articles on Thomian history. It gave Thomians a chance to reminisce with gratitude and visitors a chance to learn about Thomian history. The Warden's message was interesting as it stressed the importance of the interest shown by the Thomian diaspora in their school. The President struck a chord when he alluded to the ability of old Thomians to still share in the great values and traditions of our youth. The man with two hats, Secretary and Souvenir Editor - Niranjan Duraisamy had done a remarkable job - and not for the first time or the last. In an era when global increases in the cost of goods and services are beginning to eat into family budgets, to the committee's credit they managed to package a good product and sell it at an affordable price. There was music, food and drink – the necessities, in plentiful supply throughout the evening.

The Committee of the STC OBA of New South Wales for 2008 - Kumar Rasiah (President), Richie de Silva (Vice President), Niroshan de Silva (Vice President), Niranjan (Daniel) Duraisamy (Secretary), Charles Gunasekara (Treasurer), Lal Wimalaratne, Derek Bolling, Dayantha Fernando, Kulasiri Jayasinghe and Niran Fernando (Members).



**S. THOMAS' COLLEGE, MOUNT LAVINIA  
OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE 123<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WILL BE HELD ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2009 AT 6.30 PM IN THE COLLEGE HALL – S. THOMAS' COLLEGE, MOUNT LAVINIA.

**AGENDA**

01. THE 123<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IS CALLED TO ORDER.
02. READ THE NOTICE CONVENING THE AGM IF NOT TAKEN AS READ.
03. OBITUARY.
04. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF THE 122<sup>ND</sup> AGM HELD ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2008.
05. BUSINESS ARISING
06. ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE OBA.
07. ADOPTION OF THE 2008/2009 ANNUAL REPORT.
08. ADOPTION OF THE 2008/2009 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS.
09. MOTIONS OF WHICH DUE NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN.
10. ANNOUNCEMENTS
11. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 2009/2010.
  - \* FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT : EX-OFFICIO – SUB-WARDEN.
  - ELECTION OF :
  - \* SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT
  - \* HONORARY SECRETARY
  - \* HONORARY ASSISTANT SECRETARY (NOMINATED BY THE WARDEN)
  - \* HONORARY TREASURER
  - \* HONORARY ASSISTANT TREASURER
  - \* HONORARY AUDITOR
  - \* FORTY (40) MEMBERS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE :
    - (a) TEN (10) MEMBERS UNDER 30 YEARS
    - (b) TEN (10) MEMBERS BETWEEN 30 AND 40 YEARS
    - (c) TEN (10) MEMBERS BETWEEN 40 AND 50 YEARS
    - (d) TEN (10) MEMBERS OVER 50 YEARS
12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
13. ADJOURNMENT

**NOTES ON ITEM 11 IN THE AGENDA :**

NOMINATIONS FOR ELECTION TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AS PRESCRIBED IN ITEM 11 ABOVE SHALL BE RECEIVED AT THE STC OBA SECRETARIAT, STC, DE SARAM ROAD, MOUNT LAVINIA NO LATER THAN 1700 HOURS, ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2009, GIVING FOURTEEN (14) DAYS CLEAR NOTICE BEFORE THE SCHEDULED ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. THE NOMINATION FORM MUST BE DULY PROPOSED AND SECONDED BY TWO SEPARATE MEMBERS OF THE OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION TOGETHER WITH THE WRITTEN CONSENT OF THE MEMBER SO NOMINATED. NO MEMBER WHO HAS SERVED IN THE STC MOUNT LAVINIA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR FIVE (5) CONSECUTIVE YEARS (UNINTERRUPTED) SHALL BE ELIGIBLE FOR RE-ELECTION UNTIL THERE IS A LAPSE OF TWO (2) CONSECUTIVE YEARS.

NOMINATION FORMS CAN BE SELF-PREPARED BY HAVING THE NAME, ADDRESS AND SIGNATURE OF PROPOSER AND SECONDER, THEIR RESPECTIVE MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS AND THE CONSENT OF THE NOMINEE WITH HIS ATTESTATION AND MEMBERSHIP NUMBER. IN THE ABSENCE OF THE REQUIREMENTS STATED ABOVE, THE NOMINATION CAN BE REJECTED. ONCE REJECTED, A NOMINATION WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

BY ORDER OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Sgd. Sri Sangabo Corea  
Honorary Secretary  
1.12.2008

OBA SECRETARIAT – S. THOMAS' COLLEGE MOUNT LAVINIA. TEL. 4955047 4944530

## EPILOGUE

The Newsletter Committee is pleased to bring you yet another edition of The Old Boy – the voice of the OBA. This year the theme of The Old Boy is “College in the 80’s” and the Newsletter Committee feels that it is appropriate to reflect on this period as the country is facing a similar, if not worse crisis today. On a personal note most members of the Newsletter Committee were at College at some point during the 80’s. This was a sad period for us as many of our friends left our classrooms, College and the Country overnight. To those of us who were younger it was hard to fathom why they left so suddenly without even stopping to say ‘good bye.’

Those of us who were in College in the 80’s will remember the apparent contradiction that existed between life within the College walls and life outside it. Life at Mount Lavinia was picture perfect. In the classrooms we were surrounded by ‘star class’ teachers who spared no pains in their quest to mould us into men. Rev. Duleep de Chickera, Russel Bartholomeusz, late Mr. Manoharan, late Mr. Leo de Silva, Mr. Densil de Silva, Mr. Sarath Wickramasinghe and Mrs. Olga Mendis are a few names that come to mind (with due apologies to many others whose names do not appear for no reason other than failing memories). It would not be out of place to recall the manner of His Lordship Duleep de Chickera the Bishop of Colombo who was then Chaplain and later appointed Sub Warden. Those of us, who had this rare privilege of being taught by the young Chaplain, bear testament to his mastery of the art of teaching adolescent boys. We would all wait impatiently for his class to begin with the assurance that every class would commence with a little story which we all looked forward to hearing and had an in-depth message for each and every one of us. As one member of the Newsletter Committee reminisces, at one such class, Bishop de Chickera had related the famous biblical story as to how it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a materialistic person to go to heaven. When this young student went home that day and saw his mother having some money in her purse, he asked her to get rid of the money to be able to go to Heaven! Such was the power of his teaching. We had our fair share of victories and losses, but most importantly fun on the sports field. However, this caring and nurturing environment was not prevalent outside the College gates. Beyond the walls forces were in play sowing the seed of hatred, which was antithetic to the ethos of life at College in the 80’s and even today. On that fateful day in July 1983 all hell broke loose. Those of us who were there will remember that College immediately decided to close and send the students home. On the way back home, we could see burning cars and buildings and simply could not understand what was causing all this havoc. It was after several weeks when College reopened that we learned how the then Warden, together with the various sectional heads and masters had helped families affected by the riots. We realised that most of our buddies and closest friends would not be returning to our classroom. It is unnecessary to state the impact of these horrendous incidents on the life of this Country or on the lives of those who were personally affected. In these dark times College protected us from the madness around us. She sheltered us from the horror and taught us the spirit of unity in which we did things inside College, was far superior to the forces that worked outside her gates.

Today, just 25 years down the road, the Country is again facing a test of time. As our country goes through these hard times we Thomians must remember that it is our duty to keep our heads above the water, to carry out our duty to College and country in keeping with the famed ‘Thomian values’ and not succumb to the madness that surrounds us.

As always the Executive Committee of the OBA is working hard with its various committees to look into the needs of College and in the recent past we have seen many old boys readily coming forward to assist. It is testament a of the old boys support that we are proud to record that the renovations to the Chapel which cost a mammoth sum has been successfully completed.

We have also noticed many Batches coming forward to felicitate the academic staff of their era or take on a project to meet a specific need of the College. Both objectives are worthy of praise and we have recorded some such activities with the pages of this issue of The Old Boy. This is true Thomian stewardship - to join hand in hand with anyone and everyone for a common objective. The Newsletter Committee invites all Thomians to join in the endeavours of the OBA or the various batch initiatives to improve the quality of the education provided to future Thomians. Let us not compartmentalise ourselves assuming that the Ex-Co or a Batch project is a project for the respective committee or batch but work as a group to uphold our beloved *alma mater*.

Whilst thanking all those who contributed by way of articles and also those who sent letters commending the previous issues, we request the membership to continue writing in. We place on record our appreciation of Lake House Printers, Aramex, Harpo Productions, Abdeen Jewellers, Photo Technica and Klevenberg for their assistance, without which this issue of The Old Boy could not have been published. Finally we thank the Warden, Sub warden, Secretary of the OBA and all who helped towards the publishing of this issue of The Old Boy.

*Esto Perpetua*

**Prajeeth Balasubramanian (Co-Chairman)**  
**Rukshan Perera**

**Dilshan Boteju (Co-Chairman)**  
**Hejaaz Omer Hizbullah**

**Mangala Gunasekera**  
**Rajindh Perera**