

COURTESY, MAYO



EDUCATION

# Made in Mayo

## Mayo College's stamp of quality endures

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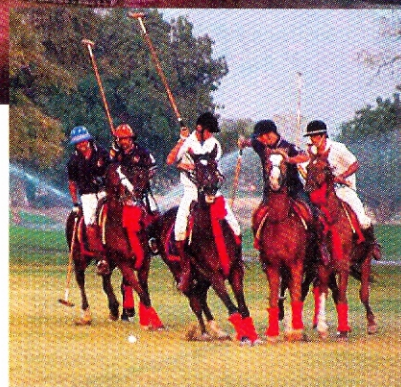
**T**he feeble consider history a burden. But for Mayoites, current and former, their school's heritage is a vast source of inspiration. Built for princes of British India, Mayo College, Ajmer, was a fallout of the revolt of 1857. As the British decided to stamp out the 'native streak' among princes, Lt Col F.K.M. Walter, political agent of Bharatpur agency, recommended the formation of the school on May 28, 1869.

In 1870, Lord Richard Southwell Bourke, viceroy from 1869 to 1872, visited Ajmer and approved of Walter's proposal. As Bourke was the sixth Earl of Mayo, the institution came to be named after him. The school opened in October 1875, with one student. Sir Oliver St. John was the first principal. Legend has it that the first student, Maharaja Mangal Singh of Alwar, came riding on an elephant with a retinue of 300 ser-

vants, tigers, camels and the like!

As Mayo celebrates its 135 years of educational excellence, Mayoites told THE WEEK that the debt that they owe their school cannot be repaid. Many shared fond memories of the legendary Jack Gibson, principal from 1954 to 1969. "Mayo taught us secularism, integrity and responsibility," said Vikram Singh Mehta of the 1969 batch. "Principal Gibson wanted his boys to be secular, upright and responsible, brave and generous. He wanted results, but allowed no compromise of ideals." Mehta resigned from the IAS to join Shell International and now heads the MNC in India.

Famous Mayo alumni include soldiers like J.K. Dutt, the chief of National Security Guard during 26/11, and bureaucrats like K.C. Verma, chairman of the National Technical Research Organisation. Former Union ministers K. Natwar



**Steeped in history:** The main building of the Mayo College; (inset) Mayoites playing polo

Singh and Jaswant Singh are two other old boys.

Many royals including Sa'id bin Taimur, the former sultan of Oman, have passed through Mayo's portals. Writer Vikram Chandra and journalists Vir Sanghvi, Siddharth Varadarajan and Ashok Mahadevan also were Mayoites.

What makes things different at Mayo? "No one is mediocre here," said Maj. Gen.(retd) Kanwar Vijay Singh Lalotra, the current principal. "Mayo makes them smarter, offering all avenues of exposure. The Mayo education goes much beyond the classrooms. Participation in sports and physical training is equally important as it improves the ability to learn and makes them more attentive in classrooms." With a 300-acre campus, Mayo encourages almost every sport, including polo. ■