

# FLOREAT

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Summer 2012



**Photo Gallery**

**AGM 2012**

**MEL. Vs SYD. Cricket**

**Tributes**

**Gajan Pathmanathan**

**Sports**

**Royal Rowing 1970-72**

**Rugby 7's in Melbourne**



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## Athula Ratnayake Elected as President of the RCOBAA

Athula Ratnayake was unanimously elected as President of the RCOBAA at the AGM held on Friday 21st September at the Mt Waverley Community Centre.

The outgoing President Lilith de Silva addressed the meeting and reported that in addition to the various events that were organized in the past, the committee also took the initiative to take on board several new projects. He thanked the outgoing committee for their valuable contribution during the past year.

The Secretary's Report was read by Tissa Galagedera who outlined the numerous successful events held during the year such as the Golden Oldies Lunch, Stag Night, Royal -Thomian Cricket Match, Blue n Gold Rhapsody and the Annual Dinner Dance. He reported that the Hostellers Project and the Loyalty Pledge, two projects that were launched by the previous committee, were both completed during the year. He also gave a brief account of two new initiatives, the Park Trent Seminar which was held with the view of raising funds and the Youth Forum which was to promote the Association and to provide a service to young Royalists.

The incoming President, Athula Ratnayake outlined his vision for the Association (see President's Message) and stated that he looked forward to working with the new committee.

The highlight of the evening was the appointment of the following members as Honorary Life Members of the Association in recognition of their contribution to the Association. They were introduced by Nihal de Run and each Honorary Life Member was presented with a memento. The Honorary Life Members are:

Dr Clarence Muthiah    Mr Fred Kreltshheim    Mr Aubrey Van Cuylenberg

Dr Channa Wijesinghe    Mr Jimmy Billimoria    Major Tony Anghie

We wish Athula and his Committee every success in the coming year.



The Honorary Life Members

## President's Message

Gentlemen of Royal,

I am humbled and privileged at being appointed as the President of this great organisation. I am aware of the immense responsibility this role entails and will do my utmost to carry on the high standards set by my predecessors. It is a great honour to be in the company of such distinguished and eminent gentlemen, some of whom have just been awarded honorary life membership of RCOBAA. I sincerely and gratefully acknowledge the Past President and committee for having the faith and trust in me to take the helm of RCOBAA. I am confident that with the assistance of the new committee we will take this association to new and greater heights and give more value back to its members, while upholding the values and traditions of our Alma mater. I feel that doing my bit for the Association is a way of "repaying the debt I owe."

By way of introduction, I belong to the '64 Group of Royal College (Cohort of boys who joined College from Primary in 1964) joining Royal in the secondary years in 1967 from another great educational institution in Sri Lanka, Trinity College. Undoubtedly the icing on my educational cake was at Royal where I enjoyed all the advantages that Royal had to offer. Having been a member of RCOBAA for over 10 years and having been an active member of the committee for the past 3 years, I have enjoyed great camaraderie and fellowship and eagerly look forward to working with the new committee, especially the new members.

During the past 2 years under the stewardship of Mr. Liliith De Silva we have achieved much as an Association. I hope with the assistance of the new committee we can continue to carry on with our core activities and forge ahead with some new initiatives. Among them I would like to see the recently inaugurated Youth Forum, which aims to provide a mentoring and guidance service to the younger members, given more impetus. The Annual Dinner Dance which is not only our biggest social event but also our main fund raiser will be the highlight of our calendar. We will be also be looking at getting involved in social service projects both locally in Australia and in Sri Lanka in a small scale initially. Subsidised events for retired senior members, family friendly and youth focused activities are also envisaged.

A revamped Web site with the links to the social media such as Twitter and Facebook is in the offing. This should help us to re-energise our membership drive mainly among the vast number of youthful Old Royalists who have moved to Australia recently and I hope all members use these avenues too as a tool of communication with RCOBAA.

I earnestly request all members to get behind the committee and support us, as we put in a lot of work

behind the scenes to make these events work. Your active participation and enjoyment is the only pay-back we seek. With your support and the help for the new committee I am confident RCOBAA will continue to foster fellowship and goodwill among Royalists in Melbourne.

### AGM PHOTOS



## THE EDWARD GRAY ORATION - 2012

Channa. P. Wijesinghe

Mr. President, Members of the Committee and Old Boys of Royal College, I thank you for bestowing me the honour of delivering the Eddie Gray Oration for the year 2012. At a more personal level, I am grateful for being called upon to perform this task because for reasons beyond my control I was unable to attend Eddie's funeral and pay my last respects to him. The day before his funeral I received an urgent telephone call from Sri Lanka to inform me that a member of my family, who was holidaying in Sri Lanka, had suddenly fallen seriously ill and would be operated on the following day. I promptly telephoned my travel agent and asked him to get me the next flight to Sri Lanka. He told me that the earliest flight was on the following morning and he would not only bring the ticket to my home but also drive me to the airport. On the way to the airport I told him that I was very sad to leave Melbourne on this day because I had planned to attend the funeral of one Mr. Eddie Gray. He then replied that after dropping me it was his intention to attend the funeral himself because he had an enormous respect for this gentleman. I did not, nor did I need to, inquire whether he was an Old Boy of the College because Eddie, like most Old Boys of the College of his generation, had a remarkable ease of relating to people of all walks of life and conveying his genuine concern and interest in them. I requested my travel agent to convey to Mrs. Gray my condolences and apologies for being unable to attend the funeral.

Which generation did Eddie belong to? A good landmark is the year 1937 when he left College having captained the Rugby Team in the same year and having been the Head Prefect for the years 1936-37. To put my generation in perspective I left College in 1952.

Apart from the love of his family Eddie had three abiding loves: 1) his love of sport, especially of boxing, 2) his love of the old school, and 3) his love of his mother country.

He was an all-round sportsman but his achievements in boxing and his services to this sport both at a national and an international level have been exceptional. A unique achievement in boxing while at school, was in the centenary year of the College, when Basil Henricus (Junior level) and Eddie (Senior level) brought home the two main trophies of the Stubbs Shield; the first time that two boxers from the same school had won these two coveted trophies.

Sometime in 1975 or 1976 Eddie informed me that a mutual friend of ours, Dr Bede Muller, was visiting from Sydney and suggested that both of us should take him out to dinner. On the appointed night we met at Bede's residence where we were offered a drink. The conversation then drifted on to the recent fight

between Mohamed Ali and a very able challenger (I believe it was Joe Frazier). Eddie was so carried away by his enthusiasm for this sport and his admiration of Mohamed Ali that he gave us a blow by blow account of the fight in order to enlighten us of the strategy employed by the champion boxer. Eddie had come to round six when we realized that it was past 9pm. We then went in search of a restaurant and by the time we found one, it was on the verge of closing. We tried another one with the same result. You must remember this was in 1976 and most people in the suburbs those days would retire to bed early and remain there till morning. So we scouted around and discovered a Pizza take-away shop where we sat at the only table and consumed our dinner, and of course Eddie resumed from the sixth round and completed his commentary, giving us the benefit of his knowledge and wisdom.

Now for his second and third loves. You must be aware that Eddie was the prime mover in founding this association and that he was the seventh President of it. In fact I would say that he was the de facto President in the first seven years of its existence, working indefatigably behind the scenes.

This association is certainly not the first association of Old Boys of the College outside Colombo. The first such association was established in Panadura in 1919. They organized an annual reunion to which the entire staff and the cricket team of the school were invited. A cricket match was played and a garden party was held in the evening. This association wound up in 1949.

The Tangalle Old Boys started their association in 1924 followed by the Matara Old Boys in 1926. Both these associations did not last as long as the Panadura Association but their objectives were the same: fellowship and playing cricket.

Eddie's objectives were entirely different. His predominant objective was to send as much money as he could collect to help the College, especially in support of its sporting activities. He fixed as his target a minimum of A\$1000 per month but, of course, special collections were made for boxing equipment.

I have often wondered why and how people become dedicated, or even fanatic, to a cause such as a political party, a religion or their country. An important factor in relation to our school must be our sense of gratitude, as embodied in our College song: "they have repaid the debt they owed". The curious thing is that people like Eddie had already paid their debt several times over and yet they are the same persons who keep on contributing.

A second reason was that commitment to the school and country was an integral part of the College tradition. Mr. L. H. Simpson in his Centennial speech referred to it as "...a great inheritance; of honest work,

of self-discipline, of good sportsmanship and love for our school and country". He went on to say, "Royal College will supply men who will carry into the life of the Island the lessons they have learnt at their school, of thorough and careful scholarship and honesty of character and work"

A third reason has been the lack of divisive factors, such as religion, social class, race and income, among staff and students. The College was strictly secular. Our first Principal Marsh and his son-in-law Boake were both men of the cloth but their religion had no bearing on how the school was run.

Two other examples from my era may also be quoted. We had a student in my class, by the name of Balra, who used to carry a wad of ten rupee notes in his wallet. One day a new policeman on the beat came and arrested our Kadala Achchi (gram seller) who had been selling gram and vadai to the students for generations but did not have a licence to do so. The call went out for Balra who came running to the scene, pulled out his wallet and discreetly handed two or three big notes to the policeman who promptly released the Kadala Achchi and was never seen again. By this act Balra did not become an instant hero. He was seen to have done his duty and was not judged for his money.

The other example was a boy who had won a scholarship from an outstation school and joined us in Form III. Though he was an obviously clever boy his command of English was clearly deficient. He would "cut" school on many days to read and improve his English. By the end of Form IV, his English was as good as anyone of us and by Form VI he was streets ahead. He obtained a first class degree from the University, entered the Civil Service and became a Permanent Secretary. At no stage was this student ridiculed or discriminated in any way for his poor English.

This egalitarian attitude extended to the manner in which the students also dealt with the non-teaching staff of the College. They were treated with respect and affection by the students, present and past. As proof of this you can find their names mentioned in the History of the College (1835-1985) and the photographs of Banda (peon) and Charles (laboratory assistant) appear alongside those of some popular teachers of the school. It is very unlikely that any other school would pay as much respect to members of their minor staff.

I kept in touch with the Registrar, Mr. Fernando, for many years after I had left school and when he retired I obtained employment for him as the Secretary of the Ceylon College of Physicians, which post he served with great distinction until his health failed him shortly before his death.

A fourth reason for the close relationship between the College and the Old Boys was that the survival of

the College has depended upon the efforts made by influential Old Boys and the Old Boys Union (OBU) to counter the destructive forces waged against the College by our opponents to either totally abolish the College or cut it down to size. The first such attempt at disruption came in 1843 when a sub committee appointed by the Government reported that the course of instruction given by the school was "... perhaps too profound in relation to the standard of intelligence among the people". Further attempts at abolition came in 1851, 1907, 1911 and 1916. With the introduction of Free Education in 1947 there was a move to downgrade the College to the level of the new Central Colleges. Having failed that, in 1970, an attempt was made to change the name of Royal College. The OBU intervened and was successful in obtaining a categorical assurance by the Prime Minister that no such change was contemplated.

Finally, our teachers, many of whom were old Royalists, were excellent role-models for the students. They made many personal sacrifices for the College. For instance when I spent three of my secondary school years (from Form 11 to Form 1V) at the Bandarawela Branch (Glendale), our Maths Teacher, Mr. Rajaratnam would give us extra classes in the weekends. He also doubled up as the cricket coach and when we rushed to the playground at 4 pm there was always Mr. Rajaratnam waiting at the cricket nets for us. He probably had not gone home after school-break to even have a cup of tea. There were also teachers who coached athletics and boxing and teachers who supervised scouting. All these extracurricular activities were done without any remuneration.

The culture of Glendale was somewhat different from that of the parent school. This was mainly due to the influence of the Warden, Mr. Perimpanayagam, who ruled with an iron hand. It was soon after the end of World War II and food was rationed and scarce, but the Warden fed us well. He participated every morning, before breakfast, in physical exercises with the students and he made certain that everyone participated in sport and were involved in a variety of useful activities such as gardening. Despite that he was a strict disciplinarian and did not tolerate the high spiritedness of youth. Student life at Glendale reminds me of the Russian dog who was vacationing in New York when he met an American dog who asked him what a dog's life was in Russia. He said "I live in a centrally heated kennel lined with the best of woollen blankets, my meat is of the best cut and it is dipped in vodka and sprinkled with caviar". The American dog asked him "Why then did you come to this horrible place?" and he replied "I like to bark sometimes".

Discipline extended to sport as well. One of the Warden's favorite poems was Horatius on the Bridge and he would quote: "and even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbid a cheer", emphasizing the importance of cheering your opponent when he performs

a heroic deed. So we were instructed to cheer our opponents at cricket when they played a good stroke. We got accustomed to this behaviour even if it meant that it took the edge off our competitive spirit.

When I returned to Colombo in the Vth Form I recall attending my first interschool cricket match. I was seated with my school mates and the opposition was batting. When the batsman scored a four I spontaneously applauded and I was faced with the stern glare of those around me. Later my cousin came up to me and instructed me to stop cheering our opposition because it only encouraged them and that if we were to lose the match I would be held responsible. I realized I had to quickly change my sporting values and spectator behaviour.

Having been a teacher for a good part of my life I have often thought about the quality of education I had received at Royal College. In the early years of the College much criticism was leveled at it on grounds that its standard of education was way above the requirements of a secondary school. The reasoning behind the College's policy was that in the absence of a University our students had to be provided with a high standard of a broad based education so that they were adequately prepared to undertake leadership roles in their chosen fields. However with commencement of a University College and later of a University, Principal Samson in 1935 realized that it was no longer necessary to teach secondary school students to such an advanced level. In other words, an important task of a secondary school must be to prepare students for entrance to the University where they could complete their education. When the Principals changed from Samson to Bradby (in 1939) and then from Bradby to Corea (in 1945), this need to change our educational goals appear to have been overlooked. We continued to excel in Western Classics and Mathematics but not in the pure sciences. Bradby set a rule that no student was permitted to receive private tuition without the written consent of the principal which meant that students were unaware of the standards of other schools. Corea had a poor view of the pure sciences saying that pure sciences were "more popular on account of the present market value", probably implying that it had little intrinsic educational value.

In my last two years at College we had to pass in four compulsory science subjects to gain entrance to the medical course. However Mr.Corea in order to broaden our horizons introduced three more subjects viz. Sinhalese or Tamil, English Literature, and Appreciation of Art, the last of which was taught by Mr.Corea himself. Mr.Corea was an excellent teacher and he was always able to hold our attention. The same could be said of our Sinhalese teacher, a very erudite man, with an ability to make a hitherto dull subject interesting. Teachers in English Literature came and went and some of them were not familiar with the

faces and personalities of the Science students. One teacher in English was Mr.Weerasinghe (nicknamed Penda) whose favorite poet was Stephen Spender. One day he started the class by asking a student the name of the poet whose work we had discussed the day before. The student who was not known to Mr.Weerasinghe started to invent a stutter and replied, "Ssirrr Ssssteven Pppppenda". The whole class burst into laughter, but Mr.Weerasinghe did not take any action because the student had acted the part so well that the master was uncertain whether the speech impediment was real or contrived.

Though the study of these additional subjects was interesting and would become useful to us in later life, it was at the expense of the compulsory subjects where a high standard was required. About a year before the examination we were informed that the syllabus for chemistry had been enlarged to include organic chemistry but there was no teacher in school who was competent in this subject. A new teacher who had recently graduated in science but knew no organic chemistry, borrowed a set of notes from a colleague of his and read it to us (there were no photocopiers at the time). That was the sum total of our knowledge of organic chemistry.



Our results for medical entrance that year were quite poor. I was surprised to be called for the interview after having passed only two of the four subjects. I had a friend, from a different school, who lived down my road and he had passed all four subjects. We were both called for the interview on the same day. We knew that most successful candidates had in the past been asked the question "Why do you want to become a doctor?" and we were well prepared with the answer.

When I walked in to the Board Room I recognized two of the Members as well known Old Boys of the College. Later I came to know that two of the remaining three professors were also Old Boys of the College. To this day I do not know whether the fifth member of the Board was also an Old Royalist.

My interview went something like this;

Q: What sports do you play?

A: None.

Q: Surely you must be playing some kind of sport?

A: I play some tennis at a club but it is not competitive.

Q: What else do you do during your spare time?

A: I visit the cinema

Q: What is the last film you saw?

A: The five fingers.

Q: What was it about?

A: (I describe the plot)

Q: Have you heard of the Moving Finger?

A: Yes, It is a poem from Rubaiyat by Omar Khayyam

Q: Can you recite the poem?

A: (I recite the poem)

Q: Who is your favorite author?

A: D.H. Lawrence

Q: Why do you like his writings?

A: (I give reasons)

Q: What is the last book you read of this author?

A: The Kangaroo.

Q: From which country did Lawrence go to Australia?

A: Ceylon.

Chairman: I think that is enough. You can go.

I waited for my friend to finish his interview and we both cycled home. I inquired of him whether he was asked the vital question why he wished to become a doctor and he replied in the affirmative. So I thought my prognosis was poor because the questions asked of me bore little relevance to the practice of Medicine.

When the results were announced I was delighted that I had gained entrance whilst at the same time sad and embarrassed that my friend had failed. It seemed to me that I had sneaked an unfair advantage over him.

In later years I have been on Boards and Committees where the selection process has been discussed and I have always vehemently opposed, often unsuccessfully, to giving the interview any significant weightage in selection.

We had to wait over six months before admission to the University during which time most of us sought temporary employment. I obtained work as a temporary clerk at the Registrar General's Office. One day I observed our Sinhalese teacher at the reception of the office and I rushed to meet him. He told me that

he urgently needed a copy of his birth certificate. I promised him that it would be written and posted the same day. I immediately made a copy of his birth certificate and, as the protocol required, got it verified by another clerk, a classmate of mine (known as Malu), had it signed by the Registrar General and posted it to my teacher the same afternoon. A few days later the teacher appeared at the reception and sought to speak with me. When I met him he very gently pointed out to me that that I had not sent him a birth certificate but a death certificate, which unfortunately had the same format as the birth certificate, including the number of rows. I apologized profusely, told him that he could go back to school and that I would personally deliver the birth certificate to him at school the next day. He then showed me the new application he had prepared with the stamps affixed and said that he did this because he knew that I would insist on paying for the stamps. I got the birth certificate done properly this time and placed it in an envelope. The next day Malu and I drove to College. While driving I asked Malu whether our teacher would open the envelope in our presence to verify whether it was a birth certificate. We both were confident that he would willingly suffer a further loss than insult us. We met the teacher in the staff room, handed the envelope and exchanged some pleasantries for a few minutes. He made no attempt to open the envelope. We had been forgiven and there was no slur on our characters.

In conclusion I must say that Eddie Gray has been a great inspiration to all of us. Throughout his life he has held high the traditions of the College and led the way for us to follow. He had worked with unstinting effort for the welfare of the College in order that (in the words of the Late Mr. R.L Pereira KC) "the good old college would last as long as civilization itself"



Honorary Life Member memento

## TOAST TO THE TEACHERS

**Sujith Satkunam**

***A Teacher is like a candle – it consumes itself to light the way for others.***

Distinguished old Royalists, gentlemen

It is my pleasure this evening to propose the toast to teachers of Royal College

I feel extremely privileged & honoured to accept this invitation to say a few words this evening.

***One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and the soul of the child.***

I began my schooling at Royal Junior School in 1969 in grade 1, during which time Mr **Sugathapala** was Principal & **Mrs Nanayakkara** was his deputy. I continued at Royal until I completed my GCE a/levels in 1982, when the Principal was **Mr L D H Peiris**

In any toast to the teachers of Royal, regardless of which era of its history that you fit into, there is always going to be teachers well before our time, whose reputation has been passed down from generation to generation and will remain immortal in the school's history.

In speaking from my years at college, whilst it was unlike the old days where they had teachers who taught for years and years, there were a great many teachers who had some influence in one way or another in our development.

My class was one of those unique classes of Royal that was never mixed every year and there were 40 of us that started in grade 1 and were together till grade 12 as the same class.

Our grade 1 class teacher was **Mrs Somasundram**, who happened to be an aunt of my dear classmate Aynkaran Sivaratnam & sister-in-law of the late Rotti Sivaratnam. We always accused Aynkaran of getting special treatment. To this day we are all thankful to her for her caring & nurturing qualities in settling us into the beginnings of school life. Mrs Somasundram now lives in Sydney and I had the pleasure of meeting her last year and her memories were astounding after 40 plus years.

***A teacher takes a hand, opens a mind and touches a heart.***

In Grade 2 our class teacher was **Mrs Sathasivam**, a pious, Christian teacher with great values.

**Mr Mohamed** took over as our grade 3 class teacher and he had a different meaning to discipline. I recollect one day when 2 of my classmates were misbehaving, he ended up locking them in the wooden stationery cupboard for the entire period!!

One of my favourite teachers and I am pleased to say I was one of her favourite students was my grade 5 teacher **Mrs Mylvaganam**. She also currently lives in Sydney. I was invited to a Royal college get together last year where she was guest of honour and I walked up to her after 40 years and she recognised me instantly and said "Sujith so nice to see you" and even remembered the names of my parents. I spent hours with her as she related all the gossip of our days in Royal Junior school.

Two other teachers I would like to make a mention of, are **Ms Wimal Ekanayake** who was always dressed in a Kandyan saree & **Mr Rasiah** one of the schools most amazing artists of my time who were instrumental in discovering my artistic capabilities.

***The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind.***

A teacher who would always remain as the corner stone of my time at Royal has to be the **late Mr E C Gunasekera**, better known to all of us as "Kataya", which of course evolved from his favourite disciplinarian words "cut your hair".

His methods were extremely forceful that I strongly believe that my current sparse growth up top may have well been a product of his draconian ways! Looking around the room tonight of old Royalists who could be my vintage, my theory could be proved right.

My year 11 class had the pleasure or shall I say Trauma at that time, of having our class room right next door to Kataya's room on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. This meant we had visits from next door almost twice a day.

From his long and narrow office, overlooking the porch, he spotted and took action to punish many a misdemeanour. I think the prefects used to occupy his room prior to 1975. As prefects we had a lot to do with his room, as it was Kataya's practice to summon us for 7.00 am briefings. Here he would in his clipped tones bark out sundry admonitions and instructions. It was his way of instilling the ethic that self-discipline and responsibility must accompany the exercise of power.

Despite his strict disciplinarian traits, E C Gunasekera had a great sense of humour.

I recollect a funny moment that year, where there was an intake of a new student and Kataya asked him –so what were your results in the O'levels. To



which he replied I got distinctions in English and western music. Kataya's response was – by golly I didn't know they awarded distinctions for pop music!

On another occasion, we had a visit from Kataya and I happened to be class monitor and the chemistry teacher was absent and obviously the entire class took part in a duster throwing riotous competition. A very annoyed Kataya, who secretly observed the class, then took me to his room and yelled "attention" after which he proceeded to stare into my eyes for at



least 15 minutes without saying a word. Whist I had to keep staring back at him I could feel the pain of the canning that would normally follow. He then said, "Satkunam do you know what chinese torture is – you've just experienced it" and thankfully let me off.

Mr Gunasekera was one who upheld the highest traditions of the college and was a strict disciplinarian. When all around him floundered, faulted and fell, he stood there not as a reed shaken in the wind but as firm as an oak, deeply rooted in the Reid Avenue soil. May the earth lie softly on him.

I am sure we can relate stories of Kataya all night long, but sadly time is against us.

One of the other teachers that proved to be an institution by himself is none other than the late **Mr Viji Weerasinghe**, also an old Royalist and also known to many as "Ducky". Viji was very much the diplomat.

Viji was head master of middle school when his office was located near the Navarangahala. Once again, my grade 8 classroom was located right behind his office. And this time I was class monitor again and it was the maths class and the master **Mr Shanmugasundram** had decided to go walk about and the class room was a riot. We were so noisy that Mr Weerasinghe marched all 40 of us to his room and as we all stood at attention in 2 rows facing each other, I was sent on the mission of finding Mr Shanmugasundram who I must mention didn't quite have the command of the English language. I found him in the staff room and briefed him on what had happened. Mr Shanmugasundram all upset then stormed into Mr. Weerasinghe's office with the words, "Sir, I telling them no sout sout, op-pice coming near near and they sout shouting" The

entire class including Mr Weerasinghe controlled ourselves from bursting into laughter.

Many of us from my vintage would remember **Ms Kaluarachchi**, whose figure many a student felt was wasted in the English class and perhaps would have been better served in the Anatomy class!. But then again that was in the days before political correctness. She explained to the class one morning, that a number of sheep is called a flock and a number of quail is called a bevy. Now, she said pointing to one of the notorious smokers of the class, what is a number of camels called? The quick witty answer was "a carton Miss".

But to top it all was our chemistry teacher **Ms Sita Chelliah** who we nick named "black beauty". She was dark in complexion but the most beautiful lady of our time and we never missed a chemistry class and no doubt the entire class passed chemistry with flying colours.

I had the misfortune of having 2 older brothers who studied at Royal under most of the teachers of my era. So when it came to my time many of them would always compare them to me. One such teacher was our Physics master **Mr Sivapalasdram** also known as "Screw". Screw would walk into class and always addressed the first question to me for which I would never have a clue as I hated Physics. His standard daily comment to me was – "Satkunam your brother was a jewel of a boy. You're a bloody idiot"

Then there was the famous master in charge of transport **Mr D D R Nanayakkara**, better known to us as "Bus Nana". He tried his best, but was unable to control the cargo of boisterous schoolboys crammed into the many double and single decker buses belching diesel fumes all along Racecourse avenue, all of the time.

Zoology was one of my favourite subjects at College. My memories go back to the Zoo lab as we called it on the top floor the stench of formalin, and the dark wooden benches lined with jars containing specimens of snakes to skulls. Many a toad, cockroach and rats were dissected here by many of us over the years. **Mrs Peiris & Mr Tharmaligam** were our Zoology teachers.

One day our Zoo teacher was having one of his alternate teaching methods. He addressed the class by saying " on my right hand I have a toad. I now order the toad to jump over to my left hand. You see the Toad obeys. Now he continued, I amputate its legs and order it to jump back on to my right hand. You note it does not jump. Boys, we have scientific proof that a Toad whose legs are removed becomes deaf."

Whilst Kataya & Viji along with other distinguished

teachers before my time such as **Mr.Thambapillai**, it would be remiss of us not to remember those teachers who did not attain a high profile status but were committed to imparting the unique ingredients of leadership, initiative, responsibility, adaptability, loyalty and humility that makes up the qualities of a Royalist.

***When we stride or stroll across the frozen lake,  
We place our feet where they have never been.  
We walk upon the unwalked. But we are uneasy.  
Who is down there but our old teachers?  
Water that once could take no human weight-  
We were students then- holds up our feet,  
And goes on ahead of us for a mile.  
Beneath us the teachers, and around us the still-  
ness  
- Author Unknown***

Gentlemen, let us therefore be upstanding and raise our glasses to the teachers of Royal College.

To the Teachers.



### **RCOBAA 2012 / 2013**

#### **Committee**

**Athula Ratnayake** *President*

**Venura Welagedara** *Vice President*

**Riza Muthaliph** *Vice President*

**Piyal Gunaratne** *Secretary*

**Dharmika Perera** *Treasurer*

**Lilith De Silva** *Past President*

**Aynkaran Sivaratnam** *Mem. Secretary*

**Indrajith Wijegunaratne** *General Committee*

**Charith Jayathilake** *General Committee*

**Harsha Maligaspe** *General Committee*

**Chatura Liyangama** *General Committee*

**Mahinda Wickramasuriya** *General Committee*

**Nihal De Run** *General Committee*

**Sajith Mendis** *General Committee*

**Sunil De Silva** *General Committee*

**Dinesh Chelvathurai** *Editor Floreat*

**Dimi Kahaduwarachi** *Webmaster*

### **RCOBAA Links a Golden Cord to a Golden Cause**

RCOBAA contributes a sum of 8000 AUD towards the 'Loyalty Pledge Student Scholarship Program

The magnanimity of Royal College Union's members and its affiliates is spread all across the globe, in terms of 'repaying' a debt', to its beloved alma mater.

This time round Royal College Old Boys in Australia Association (RCOBAA) has stepped forward to gift students under the aegis of the Loyalty Pledge's Help a Needy Student Programme (HNS) a gift that will empower 04 young Royalists with financial need. Although aggrieved by lack of resources they are all academically bright and these scholarships will benefit them in their whole school life, and undoubtedly brighten their future.

RCOBAA was incorporated in Melbourne, Australia over 20 years ago and is a long established group of past students of Royal College, who have continuously supported development of their alma-mater. The Annual Dinner Dance organized by the RCOBAA is an annual fundraiser and profits made are always diverted towards supporting Royal.

The generous donation AUD 8,000/- has been received with gratitude as it not only empowers these disserving students but places faith in a sound system under the control of the RCU in terms of fund management for the benefit of the students.

At the first council meeting of Royal College Union (RCU) held recently, the Secretary of the RCU on behalf of the union, extended his sincere thanks to RCOBAA for this magnanimous gesture. He also noted with gratitude RCOBAA'S continued support towards the betterment of college.

The Chairman of the Loyalty Pledge, Mr. Nihal Seneviratne expressed his thanks to RCOBAA for their wonderful gesture in upholding the Loyalty Pledge's student scholarship programme, which has been assisting students of Royal College lead an all-round life.

This year the 138 students will benefit from donations such as this. It is heartening that many Old Boy groups overseas have come forward to champion the student scholarship programme, joining forces with those in Sri Lanka to ensure that all Royalists emerge as leaders in society and create a difference.

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## An Appreciation of Gajan Pathmanathan

The day the light went out on this stylish Royal cricketer, intellectual, gentle and decent human-being, was a truly sad one.

Our cricketing association may have started at Royal and in the Ceylon Schools Cricket Team in the early seventies, but I was fortunate enough that my life intersected with Gajan's again in England, in the early eighties, when he and his dear wife

Dhammy were at Cambridge University. We met up frequently, at my place in Harrow, at Gajan's in Cambridge, or at Fred Perera's in Leeds. I recall one particular lazy summer's afternoon that we had decided to go punting on the River Cam



and Gajan, being the gentleman he was, insisted on doing all the punting himself whilst we sat in the boat enjoying the picnic and the beautiful scenery. He was concentrating so hard and trying to keep everyone happy that he did not see a low-lying branch, ducked too late (very unlike his usual razor-sharp batting instincts), fell into the river and came up through some stinging nettles. Never wanting to make a fuss, he emerged from the water quietly with his customary big smile as if it was the most natural thing to have happened. That evening we went back to his flat, got him cleaned up, and then reminisced about our schooldays into the wee hours of the night. This was typical Gajan, despite having had a fairly serious mishap, always happy to entertain.

In addition to being gifted academically, Gajan had the unique distinction of playing for Oxford and Cambridge Universities at cricket, earning a Blue for both. He also played for Combined British Universities against the West Indies captained by Sir Garfield Sobers, and was one half of an opening stand of 87 runs with fellow Royalist Aziz Mubarak.

However, it was back in 1971 at the Royal Thomian that Gajan came to the attention of the Sri Lankan cricketing public with his effortless and wonderfully stylish batting, unfortunately just missing out on a debut century. As the then Thomian skipper Ravi Sathasivam recalled, 'Gajan as a fresher, carved his way with ease, stroking his cuts, drives and pulls with consum-

mate ease, no matter which bowler I brought in or how many fielders I moved to the boundary'.

In 1972 when the Australian Schoolboy cricketers toured Sri Lanka, Gajan scored a brilliant unbeaten 101 out of a total score of 184 in the opening game of the tour, for Colombo Schools. This included ten power-packed hits to the ropes. He stepped out and thrashed the Aussie skipper Robert Golding over long-on for his first six and later lifted pace bowler Michael Lang for another towering six over mid-wicket. Golding tried out 8 bowlers in his effort to curtail Gajan but to no avail.

In the Ceylon Schools first test against the Australian Schools at the Oval, Gajan stroked a fine 43 with 8 boundaries, coming in to open the innings in this unfamiliar position with Bandula Warnapura, weathered the menacing Aussie pace attack which was an object lesson in how pace bowling should be played.

During the two years Gajan played for Royal College, he consistently produced memorable batting performances that will live long in the memory of those of us lucky enough to play with or against him. His style and demeanour made him an exceptional batsman and a great team player. Above all however, he was a perfect gentleman. It was indeed a privilege to have known him. And whilst many will remember his cricketing prowess or his sharp intellect, I prefer to remember the man himself; warm, generous, good-natured, and someone I was fortunate enough to call a friend, a true Prince amongst Men.

- Asitha Jayaweera



## In appreciation of Gajan Pathmanathan

Gajan attended Royal College from 1966-1974 where he represented the first X1 cricket team in 1971 and 1972. He had the distinction of making the highest fresher's score in a Royal-Thomian match at that time when he most unfortunately was out just short of a well-deserved century for 97! I was fortunate enough to be able to watch and experience this classy knock at first hand from the other side of the wicket for the entire innings where we were associated in what was then a record breaking stand of 178 runs.

He left for England to complete the first phase of his higher studies where he graduated from Oxford University and represented them in cricket. He then proceeded to Harvard University in the US to do his Masters after which he returned to the Cambridge University UK to do his doctorate which he did not complete as he was recruited by the World Bank

for their Young Managers Program. He has the unique distinction of representing both Oxford and Cambridge at cricket. Upon completion of his undergraduate studies Gajan returned to Sri Lanka and represented the country in a Test match when we were still playing unofficial tests. He also played for Sri Lanka in the ODI team.

Gajan spent the rest of his working career with the World Bank and held such positions as Operations Manager, Sustainable Development Department, South Asia Region. He was married to Dhammi who too comes from a sporting family, her brother Thiruchithampalam being a well known rugby player at Royal in his day. He has two daughters. The older of the two Ishani is in the 2nd year of her Medical Residency and Anjali is doing a Degree in Law.

The comments above are some of the key events and achievements in Gajan's relatively short life. However if I were to finish my appreciation by simply stressing his qualities as a gentleman, I will not be doing justice to him, his family or you the reader. I therefore wish to make a sincere effort to weave a tapestry by depicting the environment in which he grew up in ways which will, hopefully, provide a more complete picture of his life. In every society there are some families that are known and recognized by a family name and in this instance it was so of the Coomarasamy family (quite obviously from his mother's side ) of whom his Uncles Raju and Sathi stand out.

Raju was a loved, respected and well-known figure in the higher echelons of the UN Agency he worked for – the UNDP. Sathi was equally well known locally having represented Sri Lanka in cricket, been an active member of the Tamil Union Cricket Club and ending his professional career at what was the well-known firm, Shaw Wallace & Hedges Ltd.

Raju's children, Indrajit and Radhika, need no introduction, although both have spent much of their working lives overseas. Indrajit schooled in Harrow, UK where he played cricket and rugby for his school. He returned to Sri Lanka and captained both the CR & FCC and Sri Lanka at rugby and represented the Tamil Union at cricket. He completed his higher studies in Economics at Cambridge and Sussex University. At the time of his retirement, he held the position of Director Economic Affairs Commonwealth Secretariat. Radhika completed her studies in the UN school in NY and thereafter at Yale, Harvard and Cambridge. She then worked for sometime in Sri Lanka at the ICES before joining

the UN where she has served in many capacities, including Special Representative for the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict Areas. What pedigrees! Of Sathi's children probably the best known is his youngest daughter Anushya. We were colleagues at John Keells until she prematurely quit her job as the Group Finance Director.

Gajan's father ' Pat ' Pathmanathan was a Civil Servant (a very respected service in his day and time!). Little known about him is that he captained Jaffna Central College at cricket for two consecutive years ! He too, like his son Gajan, was a very soft spoken person. Gajan's first brother Viji is a double accountant and works for Ernst and Young London as an Executive Director Capital Markets. His second brother, Dai, is the Managing Director of George Steuart Teas who is himself an accomplished cricketer having played X1 cricket for Royal College. Dai's son Devin is an outstanding young cricketing prospect for Sri Lanka and will captain Royal College at cricket in the coming season. His sister Dharshi represented Ladies College at Hockey played cricket for the Colts CC and completed her Degree in the US.

From all that has been said above it is abundantly clear that this is a very versatile and talented family which can boast of many achievements both intellectually and in the arena of sports. But boasting is hardly their style!

To my mind this is what stands out most about this family which I have known from my very early days. They have shown all those qualities of decency, simplicity, humility, integrity and, above all, mutual respect for all human beings. They are a family of true class, people who have lived by their values in a world where these are increasingly only spoken words. They truly epitomize the simple, honest, hardworking kinsmen of Our North whose one ambition in life is to educate their children, earn a honest living and improve the lot of one's family. For these values they found themselves on the wrong side of the northern rebels who despised the cultured. On the other side of the divide they were sandwiched in a hostile majority environment that surely made their lives unpleasant many a time. It is no surprise then that many from this family, including Gajan, chose to work, live and educate their children outside the country.

Yet those who know them well know they consider Sri Lanka their home and dearly look forward to the day that ALL such decent and peace loving citizens

of this country of all ethnic origins can live together in equality, with mutual respect and in harmony.

This then will be the greatest testimony to the life that Gajan and his family have led for all the World to see!

May he Rest in Peace and May God Bless him and his family.

### Jagath Fernando

## Sydney Royalists Prevail against Melbourne Royalists

It was meant to be a weekend of thunderstorms and hailstones but the Melbourne Royalists invoked the weather gods to ensure that the rains stayed away so that a game was possible. It was meant to be a weekend where the Hawks won the AFL Grand Final but once again the Melbourne Royalists invoked the sporting gods to ensure that their Sydney counterparts were able to celebrate a unexpected victory by the Sydney Swans. To cap a perfect weekend for the visitors, Melbourne hospitality prevailed and being the perfect hosts, the Melbourne Royalists ensured that the Sydney Royalists emerged victorious in the annual cricket match between the two teams!

The weekend of camaraderie and fellowships between the Melbourne and Sydney Royalists began with a dinner on Saturday 29 September at Cha's Cabin in Hallam. It was a most enjoyable evening with the renewal of friendships amidst a sumptuous buffet spread. The evening ended in a karaoke sing-along with Ransi Fernando showcasing his musical talent and sharing the stage with Chabo.

Despite the late night finish on Saturday, the players were up early and ready to do battle on Sunday. The Melbourne Royalists got off to a shaky start losing openers Bala John and Devendra Weerasuriya to run outs. However, positive batting by Sajith Mendis and Alfie Lawton both of whom made 25 before having to retire in keeping with the rules of the game. The Melburnians continued to keep the scoreboard ticking despite injuries to both Lilith De Silva and Sarath Jayasekera and ended with a total of 144 runs in their allotted 30 overs.

The Sydney Royalists got off to a flyer with some aggressive batting by openers Radesha Rasaratnam and G. Kandakumar as well as Selva Selvarajah, all of whom made 25 before retiring. 72 year old Thilla showed that class is permanent and despite falling when attempting a quick single, also batted elegantly. At the drinks break after 15 overs, the Sydneysiders were cruising with 107 runs for the loss of the 3 batsmen who had retired. Dessert was served during the

drinks break and Ched Reza Muthaliph's fruit salad and ice cream seemed to work wonders for the home team and they returned to the fray revitalised. Tight bowling by skipper Dinesh Chelvathurai and Maliq Deane backed by some keen fielding and smart wicketkeeping by Hemant Cooray saw 5 wickets fall before sensible batting by the Sydney captain Janaka Subasinghe and Mahesan saw the Sydney Royalists clinch a close 2 wicket victory with 4 overs remaining. Sydney's Selva Selvarajah was adjudged best batsman while Melbourne's Dinesh Chelvathurai won the award for the best bowler.

The game was played in excellent spirit and the Tally Ho Reserve clubhouse reverberated to the sounds of baila music provided by Rohan Wimalasuriya. The Sri Lankan High Commissioner, His Excellency Thisara Samarasinghe also graced the occasion and carried out duties as an umpire. Cricketing honours and bragging rights went to the Sydney Royalists but it was a most enjoyable weekend for all concerned and friendships and rivalries will be renewed next year in Sydney.

The teams were:

Melbourne Royalists: Dinesh Chelvathurai (Capt), Ransi Fernando, Y.Rajkumar, Sunil De Silva, Sajith Mendis, Lilith De Silva, Devendra Weerasuriya, Bala John, Alfie Lawton, Upula Jayasinghe, Sarath Jayasekera, Hemanth Cooray and Maliq Deane

Sydney Royalists: Janaka Subasinghe (Capt), Prasanna Kariyawasam, G.Kandakumar, Radesha Rasaratnam, Kingsley Rajasingham, Selva Selvarajah, Thilla Kirubathilakan, Sudarshan, Ranjit Gajendra, Mahesan, Mahen Selvarajah, Ramanan





## Toast to the “Game”

### Royal College Rugby Dinner 15th June 2012

#### Hiran Muthiah

The chairman of the rugby dinner committee, distinguished guests, team mates of my 1982 side, fellow past Royal Ruggerites – Good evening.

This is a real honour and a privilege. I am humbled by the opportunity to speak at this event. The game of rugby is what brings us together here today. I for one can not imagine taking up another sport with the passion and motivation that prevailed upon me through my formative years.

Yes, my late uncle Tyrell’s association with the game was a big influencing factor but what really inspired me was the Bradby shield games, the Capper cup played between the upcountry and low country teams and the big club game which at that time was between the CR & FC and the Havelocks and of course the ASIAD held in Colombo in 1974.

Many of you may have a similar journey that took you down the path of this great game, we also call the “the game they play in heaven”.

Nick Farr-Jones the former Wallabies & world cup winning captain says, going on a Rugby tour is like having Sex. When it’s good it’s fantastic; and when it is no so good, it is still alright. So given the brief time for me to speak about this wonderful game; recollections from rugby tours is a good place to start.

1980 was my first year in the college team which was led by scrum half Sujanthakumar. We had some experienced players but the team was largely made up of freshers.

We won the 1st leg 7:3 rather unconvincingly in Colombo. Although this was a domestic trip to Kandy, it was significant as there was the added weight and pressure of expectation with an opportunity for Royal making it 3 Bradby shield wins in a row for the first time in history. Under the guidance of master tactician and coach Malik Samarawickrema & assistant coach Dr. Fred Perera, a number of forward moves were developed - one of which was for the wing forward to break off the scrum, receive the ball from Suku the scrum half and charge at the Trinity fly half - who was in the traditional mould of Trinity fly halves - as a very delicate “touch me not” kind.

The move was coded with any word starting with “P” or “S”. A word starting with “S” meant Seevali the open side flanker would get the ball. A word with “P” meant DS Gunaratne the blindside flanker was to take the ball.

I think the letter “P” was associated with DS for his favourite pastime of chasing and hammering the “Jive bunnies” that used to hang around “Thummulla Hanthiya”. The jive bunnies used to be commonly called by a Sinhalese word that started with “P”.

Anyway, the team is all psyched up as we run onto Nittawella. Within 5 minutes of kick off Royal get a scrum about 25 meters out from the Trinity goal line with a good blindside. We get fast ball thanks to hooker Jawa and our two wing forwards break and bang they slam into each other and are sprawled on the turf. Suku’s quick thinking saw the ball flung out to stand-off “Gobi Kandiah” who side-stepped a couple of defenders and then worked the three quarter line who did the rest with a fine try by winger Sujeewa Cooray.

PG Martin Nimmalasiri’s bullet kick conversion from close to the sideline made it 6:0 and Royal was well on its way to creating history of triple Bradby.

Later we found out that the code word Suku called was “Psychology” which obviously confused the hell out of our two crack wing forwards who couldn’t work out if “Psychology” started with a P or a S!

In 1981, the team was packed with 13 coloursmen. Royal as league champions won the Gratien cup and represented SL school’s at the ASIAD schools championships in Thailand. For a 18 year old, Bangkok is an exciting place of opportunity. I guess this is true no matter the age!

The team’s on field performance was one we would rather forget. Off the field however, I heard that a lot of tries were made but only few conversions. This caused a lot of frustration. I remember as a three quarter being quite nervous with these developments. The forwards were feeling randy and given the strict house rules, even the crack of dawn was not safe. Such were their frustrations.

I remember in one game as I placed the ball for kick off, I could feel eyes all over me. When I looked up it was our number 7 Seevali Jayasinghe, who as open-side wing forwards do was hanging around in the three-quarter line. Seevali was looking me up & down – mostly down and then with a smile said “Muttiah, everything ok?” I guess there was a good reason his nick name was “Hiwala”.

During the games he could never remember the phrase “create a gap”, So just as he was binding in the scrum, he would look at us three-quarters and yell “make a hole”! This was even funnier as he said it in Sinhalese – “Hilluk Hadthapung!”

Seevali was one of the real characters of the team. Every team needs a few of these to keep morale and team spirit active. He was a champion team man.

The year of my captaincy in 1982, the Royal & Trinity sides were very closely matched. We lost the 1st leg in Colombo 9:6, thanks to a drop goal by Byron Fernando. However, we headed to Kandy, quietly confident of regaining the Bradby despite having lost the 1st leg.

Within minutes of kick-off, prop forward the late Sabry Marikar, received the ball and found himself in open field with a clear run to the line. Unaccustomed as he was to this situation, he ran hard and executed a beautiful dive.

He was still admiring the referees raised hand and enjoying the sweet sound of the long shrill whistle when the ball was grabbed by Trinity.

Unfortunately for him and Royal, Sabry had dived over the 25 yard line and in the process conceded a penalty for holding on to the ball. It was some consolation however when he did score the only try of that series with about 10 minutes remaining in the game.

However, this was not a reason for Royal losing the Bradby in 1982. Trinity captain - Lord Byron as he was referred to by the media that season, was simply superior in his execution of the game plan on the day.

Sadly, we have since lost 4 members of our squad, who have moved on to play the game in heaven.

At this rugby dinner, we reminisce on memories of rugby at Royal. However, what we learn from this game goes beyond school ties, socio-economic status, ethnicity and language. I was selected to the Sri Lanka team's tour for the ASIAD in Japan in 1984 – Captained by the evergreen CPP Abeygunawardena, I was a 21 years old debutant sharing a room with Navaratne the burly Army prop forward who at 32 years of age had plenty of life experiences.

The team comprised of 8 Royalists and 12 from my club – the CR&FC. In those days on such representative tours you could not share a room with a player from the same school or club. This was to promote team spirit and avoid cliques. To be fair to both of us, my comprehension of Sinhalese was as good as his comprehension of English. Equally we were both self-conscious however of speaking the respective languages.

So for the duration of time we were room mates, I would speak to him in English and he would respond in Sinhalese and vice versa. Of course, I would sleep with one eye open just in case the prop forward wanted to practice “Crouch, Touch Pause & Engage!”

I well remember scoring my first try on that tour. Rohantha Peris took a pass from CP making a break on the blindside and creating the overlap for me to do the rest, just as he had done many times at the CR – the first man to congratulate me at the corner flag was Prop forward Navaratne.

When I met with Navaratne some years later, he confided that he felt intimidated by me on the tour, because I was from Royal College. Imagine that!

As we prepare to witness another year of Bradby shield encounters, let us remember this great game for harnessing commitment of a diverse group to a common cause, for life long camaraderie, for the qualities it evokes of human spirit: integrity & decency - All key ingredients in the products of the game of rugby.

Rugby is indeed a game that commands respect for the rules, but even greater respect for our opponents.

Gentlemen of Royal Rugby, please be up standing and drink a toast to “The Game”

**Hiran Muttiah**

.....  
**New Website**

**Visit**

**[www.rcobaa.org.au](http://www.rcobaa.org.au)**





## '87 Group Silver Jubilee Celebrations

Royal College 87 Group Silver Jubilee celebrations held on 22nd Sep at St Scholasticas' Community Hall in Burwood with the participation of 23 batch mates & their families from different States (NT, QLD, NSW, ACT, VIC). Some of our mates met each other after 25 years and showed the same spirit we had 25 years ago. Guests were entertained by "Reminiscence" where our own group member Kapila played the lead guitar. The Chief Guest was one of our past teachers Mrs Kusumi Soysa. She recalled how she dealt with this lovely group of students 25 years ago.

This was followed by a fellowship barbecue on 23rd at Rowville. In line with the celebrations, 87 group Australians collected & funded Silver Jubilee projects initiated by their mates in Sri Lanka. Funding was directed to RC past teachers, free medical camp at a remote village close to Mathugama & other projects of the group.



## Royal Rowing 1970 – 1972

When a member of the souvenir committee approached me to write a few words on Royal Rowing during the 70 – 72 period, I did not hesitate in doing so, as all the senior schoolboy oarsmen of both schools of that era are not seen at the Rowing Club any more. The only person whom I see at the Rowing Club who somewhat fall in to this category is Ajith Goonawardena, the present Thomian Coach, however he too had left school when I started Rowing in 1970.

The economic activity of the country was at very low ebb compared to today as this was an era where one had to queue up for their bread, cake of Soap and even Rice which was rationed and not freely available like today. There were no mobile phones and the only telephone that was available in the club premises was the land line of the Colombo Rowing Club which school boys had no permission to use under any circumstances. There were very few cars and busses on the road as all imports to the country were controlled by the Government. A private telephone in the house was considered a luxury. When the boys finished practices late the parents had to wait patiently till they got home as there was no method of communicating like today.

The Colombo Rowing Club then, had only two sets of Fours of which one set was exclusively reserved for the Club Members (known as Shell Fours) and the other (known as the Clinkers) which were very much heavier, was mainly for the school boys. Today we see a different scenario where school boys now use better boats than the Rowing Club Members. The Colombo Rowing Club from that era to today has not grown in extent and yet occupies the same piece of land which it occupied, maybe 100 years ago in the 'most expensive area in Colombo' although one could see a development of activity at the Club. The second Rowing Club in Colombo which was known as the Government Services Boat Club which had its Boat House in close proximity to Cinnamon Lakeside Hotel died off when we were yet in school. The third Rowing Club which died a natural death later on was the Nuwara Eliya Boat Club where several Planters used to Row at the Nuwara Eliya Lake. These two clubs used to participate at some of the Colombo Rowing Clubs Regattas. Having looked at the past one should be in a way thankful to the Colombo Rowing Club's Royalist and the Thomians who kept the sport going in the Country.

Rowing practices as today started at 2.00 p.m on Tuesdays and Thursday. All the boys straight after school used to take the 116 bus straight to the Rowing Club. There was the tub for the starters, the Jefferson, better known as the Jeff (a large boat in the style of a coxed pair) for those beginners who are still very new, locally built Coxed Pairs, Coxless Pairs and

the Fours. Practices ended at 5.00 p.m. and by 5.30 all school boys had to leave the Club making way for the Club Members. However this rule was slightly flexible when the Royal Thomian was close by. Unlike today we did not have proper Coaches and the only coach we had was the Captain, Percy Fernando (who later joined the Army) and the vice-Captain Athula Eakanayake (presently the Principal Scientist at Proctor and Gamble, USA). I am not aware as to who coached them either, as there was no proper coach at that time. There were many days that there were less bows and more strokes, thus making it impossible to take a four out. A pair was possible although many had to return after rowing to the 750 or 500. Athula being a studious guy used to talk 'Chemistry' whenever there was time to chat (which were in plenty). When I, Mohan (B four stroke) and Viresh (B Four Cox) were seated on the grass one day he asked "why does NaCl precipitate in a Collielle Solution". None of us understood the question. That day soon after I got home I referred the Physical Chemistry book and the answer was just there.

Early 1971 was the first JVP insurrection when a group of Youth which were then called the 'Che Guevara' Movement (later called the JVP) took up arms against the Government. This was a period where a few youth armed with Shot Guns and 'home made' Hand Bombs could take over a Rural Police Station. SLBC suddenly announced curfew which we had never experienced before. Schools and officers were closed and we were all confined to the houses. There were days with 24 Hrs. curfew which was gradually eased off. The Government had to request for assistance from other countries and one thing I know for sure was the range of helicopters which were loaned to Sri Lanka by friendly nations. For a long period Curfew was clamped at 5.00 p.m. and one could hardly row at the club. We used to come to the Rowing Club and watch the Helicopters land and take off from the Air Force Grounds. For the first time we saw the Russian built twin engine load carriers with two propellers, the US built Bell Rangers and Helicopters of the Indian Air Force. This was a picture of a lifetime to us as young school boys, and no one even spoke of touching a Boat but had all eyes focused on the moving Helicopters.

The year was a slow one with none of the Crews having coaches (only on paper). We used to share the Boats with the Thomians who used to sometimes row on the same days. That year the Royal Thomian was won by the Thomians and we had to be satisfied with the A Sculls and the B Fours which I was a member. As a result of this outcome Royal had coaches appointed early in the year with Priya David undertaking to Coach the A Four and Varuna Wijaytunge (now in Australia) taking over the B Four. Practices were taken more seriously with properly structured road runs on Saturdays and weight training two days of the week. There was a weights room at the Row-

ing Club which we once used to train and later used some training material at Varuna's (Coach) residence at Palm Grove in Kollupitiya. The team was more focused and we had someone supervising us all the time. Like today we had to balance school work and rowing. The only advantage was that we could leave the club by 5.30 p.m. The Royal Thomian was held somewhere in July 1972. The "run up" to the Royal - Thomian was much more serious now. The 'A' Four consisted of Frank Sri Chandrasekera- Stroke (Later joined the Planting Fraternity), Three was Percy (Later joined the Army and sacrificed his life in the war against Terrorism whilst holding the rank of Brigadier. He was handpicked to lead the Commando Unit and was one of Sri Lanka's first Paratroopers.) Two was Daniel Hsu, who later moved to the US for higher studies. Bow was Zahidi Alif who later qualified as an Accountant. Cox, J. Pannikar (now in the US). The 'B' Four was more experienced now with Bow - Lalith Cooray (the writer), Two - Nilantha Hulugalle (Now a soil Science Specialist who leads the Soil Research Group at the Australian Cotton Research Institute), Three - Ranil Abayasekera (Now a Professor at the Peraduniya University), Stroke - Mohan Coorey (one of Sri Lanka's few students who secured a full scholarship to Harvard University, died after having detected of Cancer), Cox - Viresh Fernando (Chartered Accountant cum Attorney at Law, now in Canada).

The 1972 Royal Thomian Regatta was a clean sweep for Royal, Thomians having won only the Senior Pairs race. The "B" Four established a new record with a timing of 3 mins 51.4 Secs. With this victory Royal secured once again the T. Noel Fernando Trophy and the Royal - Thomian Boat Race Trophy. Thomian "A" Pair too established a new record clocking 3 mins 58 Secs. In the month of September, was the Fourth National Rowing Championship. I had now given up rowing and was studying for the Advanced Level Exam. Suddenly one evening two crew members appeared at my house and pleaded with me to start practices again. Though, with reluctance, I agreed. Finally, Royal ended up winning the Intermediate Fours race. Another Royal Success at this Regatta was that of Percy Fernando winning the Senior Sculls over one mile, the first time a school boy achieved this feat. Later on the same year Frank Sri Chandrasekera became the second school boy and the second Royalist (first being Percy Fernando) to take away the Gordon Armstrong and Wardrop Trophies for sculling. Towards early January 1973 the Centenary Oar Trophy was held which was another roaring success for Royal. During this period the Ceylon Ceramics Corporation was on a work stoppage and obtaining Ceramic Mugs was an issue. As a result the Rowing Club offered the winners, beautiful wooden replicas of Oars which would have been a one off occasion. I may be one of the few who possess two such oars, one for the RCyYC Trophy and the other for the Centenary Oar. With these trophies my rowing

career came to an end.

Finally, it is also important to me at this time to remember those old Royalists in the caliber of C.P.R. Perera, N. D. J. Silva (Late) and Nirmala Ranasinghe for their untiring efforts in addition to signing up any food bills of ours, when requested.

**Lalith Cooray**

**1972 Royal Crew**



### **Upcoming Events**

---- Tentative Schedule ----

**GOLDEN OLDIES .....FEB. 2013**

**STAG NIGHT.....MAR. 2013**

**ROYAL THOMIAN CRICKET MATCH.....MAR. 2013**

**CURRY NIGHT.....APR. 2013**

**DINNER DANCE.....JUL. 2013**

**AGM 2013 .....SEP. 2013**

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## Rugby 7's in Melbourne

Kingswood college concluded their annual Rugby 7's tournament on 27 October 2012 at Norman Luth Reserve in Springvale. 10 teams participated in this tournament and Royalists were aiming for back to back wins.

The first game against Dharmaraja College ended in a draw. Next game was against the arch rivals St Thomases College. The game ended in a draw despite our valiant efforts to penetrate the thomi-an defence.

The third game was against Carnagie club which had a mix of a few schools. Royal recorded their first win.

Last game of the pool was against Trinity College. Amazing rugby skills were displayed in this game and Royal beat Trinity 3-0.

Semi-finals were a repeat of last years Finals. Royal Vs Atkinson. Having played in 3 finals Atkinson players were determined to win this year and The Royalists were targeting back to back wins. Atkinson beat Royal 3-0 and progressed to win the tournament by beating the Maroons in the finals.

Although Royal lost in the semi-finals the boys fought hard and were determined to return next year to win the trophy for Royal College.

Royal Team : Damith Fernando, Shehan Senavirathne, Prajeeth Perera, Thilanga Gunaratne, Rajith Jayasundara, Kushan Atikorale, Harsha Maligaspe, Dimitri Siriwardena, Umesh Goonawardena, Shanaka Perera, Madhava Wijayarathne, Chamith Perera



L to R - J.Panikkar, Danial Hsu, Frank Sri Chandrasekera, Zahidi Alif, Percy Fernando, Ranil Abayasekera, Mohan Coorey, Lalith Cooray, Nilantha Hulugalle, Viresh Fernando.

## Membership Drive

At the first committee meeting held on the 1st of November 2012, I was appointed to lead a sub-committee to build the Royal College community in Melbourne. The sub-committee consists of Chathura Liyanagama, Charith Jayatillake, Dhammika Perera and Harsha Maligaspe. Since the launch of the membership drive, 36 new members have joined the RCOBAA and another 16 persons have expressed an interest in becoming members. This is a tremendous result achieved in just one month. A big thank you to the President and Committee of the RCOBAA and the Membership Sub-Committee for their enthusiasm, efforts and support in bringing in new members as well as reminding the remaining 32 members who have inadvertently not renewed their membership for the 2012/13 membership year. This is a great effort and commitment on the part of the committee members to keep the college community active in Melbourne.

On behalf of the RCOBAA Committee, we would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members as at 30 November 2012

- Abdullah Mahmud, Arun Kumeresan, Charith Lankachandra
- Chinthana Wijeweera, Charavaran, Dhilharan Sivaratnam
- Dulip Jayakody, G. W. M. I. Subodha Wanasundera, Hasanga Wijetunge
- Indrajit Abeywardene, Isuru Alagiyawanna, Jeya Jayakumar
- Kavi Bodhinagoda, Kingsley Rajasingham, Lakindu Manawasinghe
- Lakmal Abeysekera, Lal Jayasinghe, Madushe Jayawickrema
- Malindra Fernando, Mangala Jayawardene, Methruwan Jayakody
- Navin De Silva, Rad Rasaratnam, Ranjith Gajendra
- Ranjit Jayawardena, Ramesh Nadarajah, Rasika Jayasinha
- Ruchira Withana, Sachithra Sarathchandra, Sarasi Herath
- Saru Sivarajah, Shanaka Perera, Shanaka-Gunawardana
- Tharaka Chandrasakera, Waruna Wickrema and Yasantha Kalupahana

**Aynkaran Sivaratnam**