DIFFICULT TIMES
AT ST. JOHN'S FROM 1954 TO 2004

The facts and features of history are stubborn and at times, interesting and intriguing. St. John's, in its one hundred and eighty year old history, has gone through several phases of this nature. From the day the school was born, (1823) in spite of experiencing two world wars, the sailing perhaps, was smooth till 1960, though there were a few hiccups in between, similar to a storm in a teacup.

The most significant period at St. John's economically, socially and culturally has been the last five decades (1954 to 2004). I vaguely remember the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Old Boys in 1954, with cricket and soccer matches, fancy dress parades and cultural items. Though associated with the school, I was not at St. John's then, but joined the following year.

The Rev. J. T. Arulanantham, who took over office in 1940, was the Principal at that time and conditions were very pleasant. The evenings were with full of activities on the playing field, children rushing to book a place for them on the grounds. Cricket and soccer were the most popular games with athletics occupying an important place during the second term stretching up to October for those who qualified for the public schools’ meet.

When Rev. Arulanantham retired in 1957, Mr. P. T. Mathai took over the reins for a brief period of two years. Mr. A. W. Rajasekaram succeeded Mr. Mathai in 1959. Conditions were as good as ever when he took over. I wonder whether he did ever foresee that the school was to face one of the biggest crises in its history, but it happened.

The schools take-over act by the state in 1960, plunged the school into a critical position financially and otherwise affecting the normal life to a great extent. The Principal himself set a classic example to overcome the situation, sacrificing certain comforts and privileges that his predecessors were entitled for. The school car was sold in order to pay the salaries for the staff. A few gigantic mahogany trees depicted in the college song were also sold.

The Old Boys' Association was the only recognized body that came forward to the rescue of the school at this time of trial. The Manager Mr. J.C. Handy, Dr A.V.A. Vethanayagam (President – O.B.A) along with other stalwarts like Mr. S. Kanagaratnam, Mr. C. Canagiah, Mr. D. P. Sundarampillai and others swung into action to collect funds to sustain the school. Mr. J. T. Chelliah, the vice principal at that time led a team of staff members for the same purpose. The O.B.A. South Ceylon too was equally active in the same mission.

The stress and strain perhaps, had its toll on the principal and he retired prematurely due to ill health. Mr. K. Pooranampillai with a great reputation as a principal with rich experience was invited to take the place of Mr. Rajasekaram in 1967. Though the school continued to struggle financially, the standards were maintained in studies and sports. Mr. Pooranampillai weathered the storm with courage and determination, steering the ship out of troubled waters.

Mr. Anandarajan (1976) continued on the path paved by his predecessor to take St. John's to greater heights. He was courageous enough to take a bold decision to recommend the school to opt for state assistance offered by the government in 1980 for non-fee levying private schools. This was a great blessing and relief for the school financially. On the 26th of June 1985 around sunset, the school plunged into darkness caused by his untimely death riddled by an assassin's bullet.

Mr. Gunaseelan described as a citizen of St. John's by birth took over but ill health forced him to hang up his gloves. Within a span of three decades from 1960 the school some way or the other continued to face crises after crises from several corners but in spite of all this, forged ahead and the Johnians continued to play the game.

When Mr. Gunaseelan fell ill in 1987. Mr. Pooranampillai came out to bat for a second innings on an even more difficult wicket. With perfect technique he put things in order within a short period for Dr. E. S. Thevasagayam to take over in January 1988. Dr. Thevasagayam stepped into St. John's with a vision for the future and envisaged a ten-year plan to re-build the school. The school continues to tread on that path.

Though Dr. E. S. Thevasagayam was principal from 1988 to 1993; he continued to function from Colombo from June 1990 as proper transport was not available due to conditions that prevailed because of the ongoing civil war. Considering the situation, I was appointed performing principal in 1990 and later took over on a permanent capacity in 1993.

The year 1995 towards the end, witnessed an unprecedented event in the history of Jaftha. On 30th October, a mass exodus took place.
and people evacuated the Valikamam area. We were no exception and had to leave the school considered to be our home. When we
returned six months later, the place was in ruins and overgrown with thickets. With the help of some staff who were available at that
time and a few senior students, we cleared the premises. The damages to the buildings and equipments were estimated at more than
fifty million.

Within two weeks of coming into the school, we re-opened on 13th May 1996 with a skeleton staff and about four hundred (25%) students. By the end of the year the number of students doubled and most members of the staff too reported to work. Conditions gradually improved with support from old boys, parents and others connected to the school and we were able to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the school in May 1998 on a grand scale.

Mr. S. Sivathasan, son of one of our retired teachers, affectionately known as Kadavul Subramaniam, was the president of O.B.A. South Ceylon during the celebrations. He spared no pains in raising funds to re-build the school. Assistance also came from P. P. Associations in UK., Canada, Australia and other places through individuals. While the school was in the process of re-habilitation and conditions looked set, yet another exodus (though not as bad as the earlier one) took place and we were displaced for a second time for more than a month.

2004 is a significant year in the annals of the school with the old boys having the Centenary Celebrations, the Battle of the North in its 100th year and the Publishing of the College Magazine enjoying the same privilege. The school continues to function and shines as a beacon of light in the field of Education setting the pace to many an institution here and elsewhere.

It is our earnest hope and prayer that the invisible hand of God would continue to guide this great institution to its destiny and uphold its noble traditions.

"Que Sera Sera
Whatever will be, will be
The future is not ours to say
Que Sera Sera"

S. THANAPALAN
Principal, St. John’s College, Jaffna
SCOUT MOVEMENT

Lord Baden Powel of England served in Africa as a military officer, during which time he saw a lot of jungle life and behaviour patterns of both animals and humans in these countries. There he conceived the idea that an outdoor life to young men would make themselves useful citizens. On his return to England he started the scout movement. This soon spread to all the British colonies. The movement entered Ceylon at the dawn of the 20th Century with a troupe being organized by one Mr. Stevens an Engineer in, Matale. This was followed by Dharmaraja College, Kandy. The movement spread to all parts of the Island with support of the Education Department. The movement came to Jaffna in early twenties of the 20th Century with St. John’s College starting the first troupe. This was followed by Central College. Until late thirties these two colleges, were the only educational institutions that gave prominence to the scout movement. In addition to the scout troupe, St. John’s had two platoons of Junior Cadets and Senior Cadets. Junior Cadets wore a uniform of kahki shorts and shirts with felt hats with the side folded to display the badge, and boots as foot wear. Senior cadets uniform consisted of kahki shorts, helmet, leather belt with boots paties in place of stockings They also used rile during exercises. Some of the cadets had ready access to the police department. An example of this is that three Van Den Driesen brothers joined the police as Sub-Inspectors and retired as Superintendents. To achieve this position when the number of superintendents was below thirty was creditable to St. John’s Cadet Platoon.

In comparison to the cadet, the scout uniform was colourful, khaki shirt, blue shorts, red and black scarf round the neck, peak flat hat, stockings with garter strapped with colourful strips of cloth. The shirt was adorned with badges won by the scout for various feats. To be enrolled as a scout one has to take an oath which went somewhat like this: trusty, loyal, helpful, brotherly, courteous, kind, obedience etc. The motto of the movement is "Be Prepared" in short BP, initial Lord Baden Powel.

Scouts need large grounds, parks, forests etc, to conduct their training. S1. John’s was lucky in that as there was a large park across the road known as old park whose owner was the Government Agent. Then Government Agent was Mr. Y. T. Dyson an Anglican Christian who attended services at the St. John’s chapel where the officiating priest was Rev. Henry Peto, Principal, St. John’s. Mr. Dyson and Rev. Peto developed more than a cordial relationship. So the Government Agent readily gave permission for the St. John’s Scout Troupe to do their training in the old park. Scout master during that period was Mr. T. M. Mathai a devoted teacher who was fond of extracurricular activities.

Main camping sites outside old park was Mandathivu Island. The scouts were taken to Mandathivu in two vallams, if my memory is correct. Four tents were pitched for the four patrols, one for the scout master and one for the kitchen. The patrols took turn to prepare food. At that time the food was delicious. The day’s programme ended with a campfire. One of the most eventful incidents in the history of scouting in (Ceylon) Sri Lanka was the visit of Lord Baden Powel. All the scouts in the Island gathered together in Colombo to welcome the Chief Scout, Lord Baden Powel. The welcome took the form of a March Past depicting something unique to the District. Jaffna district had only two troupes, one St. John’s and the other Central College. These two jointly produced the arrival of Yalpadi in Jaffna. The blind musician with his harp was carried in a palanquin with tom tom beating and nagasalam starting in tront of the state council up to the Galle Face Hotel premises. The scout who was chosen to play the role ofYalpadi was I because of my light weight. I had the good fortune to be a scout as well as a Junior Cadet at St. John’s.

My scouting career has not yet ended as I am a life member of the Scout Council. However though my heart is in the movement, I am unable to participate in activities associated with scouting as my age and health conditions prevent it.

- Mr. T. P. M. Ekanayake
Rigid Traditions of St. John’s College  Jaffna

It is my belief that the above subject has been rightly given to one who has spent many years at St. John’s College, except for a couple of years to complete my B.Sc. Perhaps there may not have been any Sri Lankan who has lived inside the school compound throughout the 24 hours of the day, for a period of 39 years. Joined in 1946 in the H.S.C, completed Inter Science in 1949, July 1949 to April 1950, as a teacher, 1951-1953 London B.Sc. at Jaffna College, July 1953 to 1987 teacher ending up as Vice Principal from July 1976 to 1987 - a total of 39 years. I feel honoured to write on the Rigid Traditions of St. John’s College.

Throughout the long history of St John’s College, the founder missionaries who came to Ceylon from London C.M.S. established the school on the firm foundation that the Lord Jesus Christ should always be the unseen head of the school; and to this day it continues to be so. The principal is expected to see that no activity of the school takes place without his approval. He delegates various tasks to various members of the staff or student body.

**Discipline:** Has always been the hallmark of the school and has been emphasized right up to the present day and is strictly enforced. Over the years, this system became more democratic with approved committees to do the work. The Principal is assisted by the Vice Principal, Teachers and the School Community.

The main activities of the school are:

1. To maintain Christian standards. The Principal and Chaplain, who is also a member of the staff co-ordinate the Christian activities.
2. To provide curricular and co-curricular activities focussing the student as the ultimate beneficiary of such activities.

**Intake of teachers and students:** To achieve the aim of the school, most of the teachers appointed are Christians, non-Christians are also appointed to fill the Quota. Students are admitted on their performance in the admission test. The selection depends on the number of vacancies that exist. Preference is given to Christians who obtained the required minimum aggregate marks. Non Christian are admitted in order of the marks scored, preference is also given to children of teachers and old boys and to the brothers of present students.

**Uniforms:** Students in the lower classes are expected to wear white shirts with blue shorts and white socks with black shoes. Senior students wear white shirts and white or light coloured trousers. Verty, national banians and slippers are also allowed. Discipline is maintained by both the staff and the prefects body of the school.

**Prefects Body:** Only the advanced level students who have put in six months of continuous attendance are eligible for election. During this period, they will be able to have a better knowledge of the school and the students. All advanced level students vote by ballot. The teachers also vote. Based on these votes the advisory body makes the final selection. Those elected, first become monitors. As time goes on they are promoted as prefects, if found fit by the advisory board. Taking into account many factors, the most capable prefect is nominated as Senior Prefect.

**The Advisory Board:** The advisory board consists of the Principal, Vice Principal, College Chaplain, the Senior Boarding House Masters, Prefect of Games are all ex officio members.

**Games:** It is an important co-curricular activity. Cricket, athletics and football are the main games. Later on other games were also included. The Secretary of games is in overall charge. Traditionally games secretary has always been a graduate teacher. The secretary, coaches and two members of the games committee form the selection committee. They recommend to the sports committee, names of players for award of colours. The sports committee has the power to accept them or even make suitable changes.

**Houses System:** The school encourages students to take part in co-curricular activities with this in view. The whole school is assigned to four houses. The students of the same family are in the same house. These houses are named after the ex-principals of the school. In 1954, Peto House was formed as the fifth house. There are two masters in charge of each house, who nominate a student as captain of the house.

The sports Committee: Consists of the Principal, Vice Principal, Secretary of Games. First Team Coaches and House Masters are ex-officio. Staff members are also elected to fill the required numbers. Students coming from distant places are either expected to be boarders in the school or stay in homes close to school approved by the school.

Governing Body: The Bishop of Colombo and Christians who have a sound knowledge of administration and education are members of the body. They meet once a term to discuss and decide on policies of the school. The principal of the school is also a member of the body.

Manager: Normally the Archdeacon of Jaffna Diocese is the Manager. He is the agent of the governing body. The principal gets his help whenever necessary.

The above are the rigid traditions of St. John's College. However, from time to time minor changes take place, which usually depend on the incumbent principal at that time. His method of administration, though in keeping with rigid traditions, sometimes changes according to the political climate of the school. Often they are welcome changes of the school. These changes gradually get incorporated with the rigid traditions depending on the administration of St. John's from its inception will probably elucidate this in greater detail.

The administration of St. John's changes from time to time according to the political climate, while rigid traditions continue to be upheld, the incumbent principal gets innovative ideas and puts them into practice. Hence this can be elucidated under the topic 'Administration of St. Johns'.

May all Johnians here and abroad endeavour to see that St. John's uprears her Crest on high, and that the Eagle of St. John's will always fly higher in the sky.

- S Panchalingam
Vice Principal  1976 -1987
At the conclusion of the Royal-Thomian encounter in March 1965, the Principal of that time, the late Dudley de Silva, announced that the school would be initiating ties with St. John's College, Jaffna, for reciprocal annual fixtures.

Accordingly, the Thursday that followed, found our team led by Hamza, Macan Markar, on the "YalDevi" to Jaffna. The welcome dinner hosted that evening by the school authorities was warm and hospitable. The match was played over the next two days in an excellent atmosphere and before a packed appreciative and enthusiastic crowd.

A challenging and sporting declaration by our captain left S1. John's a target of around 130 runs in less than 20 overs. They took it up admirably and sealed victory with 6 wickets in hand. Jaffna had seen a great game of cricket played to its highest traditions. Cricketing personalities such as Kanagadurai, Deivendra, Sooriyakumar, Vyravpillai, Vipulanadamoorthy, etc. whose names are still revered at St. John's made outstanding contributions.

At the celebrations that followed the night air was filled with music, laughter and songs in Tamil, English and Sinhala, as members from both teams exercised their vocal talents in duets! The next morning, a dip at "Keerimalai" was followed by a sumptuous seafood lunch before we headed for the station to catch the afternoon "Yal Devi" bound for Colombo. The platform was a scene of warm and affectionate hugs and fond farewells. As the train pulled out, there wasn't a single dry eye on board where our team was concerned. The hospitality had been overwhelming and the sincerity of the ties that were established over those four days we have cherished to date.

S1. John's visited us the next year and gave us the opportunity to reciprocate their warm and generous hospitality and these ties facilitated in addition, the migration of talented cricketers from the North to Colombo Clubs such as the Tamil Union, Colts, BRC, etc.

Yes, that was indeed a time when life was recognized as a precious gift of God, that deserved both equality and liberty. Additionally, the common and widely spoken language of English enabled us all to communicate freely and foster relationships of goodwill to the fullest.

Let us continue to pray for such an era to dawn again and sincerely commit ourselves to ensure it.

The Royal College Team


- S. Skandakumar
HOSTEL LIFE IN THE LATE FIFTIES AT ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, JAFFNA
Some thoughts by a hosteller

It was December 1957 just after the country was devastated by floods that I was on my way to St. John's College, Jaffna for admission. In fact my first attempt to appear for the admission test was foiled by the floods. I was fortunate to gain entry into this great college with hostel accommodation irrespective of my failure to sit for the admission test. Having spent my early life outside Jaffna, I was frightened of the new environment and also had lot of apprehension about the hostel life. I very soon found that my fears were causeless and that the hostel life at St. John's College is very enjoyable.

I learned very fast that it is not only the Jaffna onions but also the Johnians from Jaffna are famous. It gives me great pleasure to reminisce the hostel life of that time. What a wonderful and happy life that we all enjoyed together as a family. There were about 400 inmates housed according to seniority at "Fleming", Memorial Hall (with four dormitories), Thompson, Peto and Evarts hostels respectively. Among these Peto hostel (which was former Mahendra theatre) was outside the college compound shared the same dining hall. This dining hall looks the same even at present without any changes being effected. The racial riots of 1958 was another factor for students from Colombo and other parts of the island to seek admission at St. John's College at that time. Many of them were admitted to the hostel adding a lot of variety and colour to the hostel life.

Strict discipline was maintained at the hostel at all times. No one was allowed to go out of the college premises without an "Exit" signed by the hostel warden. The hostellers were allowed to go home or to their relations house only during long weekends or once a month on occasions other than college vacations; but such instances should have been pre-arranged with the permission of the parents or guardians. Once in two months the hostellers were taken out to watch films at the theatres. Though hostel was considered a place of strict discipline and every movement of the hostellers were monitored by the wardens, college monitors and prefects.

There were many instances where some dare devil type could overcome such vigilance; and once caught in the act of disregarding laid down rules or procedures would come out with excuses which would amaze the regulators and create admiration towards the offenders.

One such episode that I remember is that there was a guy who slips out of the college premises without going through the ordeal of obtaining permission. He does not even tell his friends when he leaves, or where he is going. Once when he was caught and asked for the reasons for leaving without permission: The reason he gave was "It gives me a chance to be creative, when I am asked where I was, rather than getting prior permission".

There were complaints from poultry breeders most of whom were our college teachers neighbouring the hostel about their breed of chicken that were vanishing at an alarming rate. Suspicions were cast on the hostellers and each one of us was a suspect. Our warden commenced an inquiry into the matter and the response received from the hostellers were varied but I remember this when one said that though he is allergic to the crowing of the birds that he would not dare to touch them; but the fact was that there were experts among the hostellers who would snatch a fowl by throwing wet towel. The loot is thereafter smuggled through kit bags to the mends who were non hostellers and would find its way back to the hostel as a mouth watering dish.

There was a guy at Crossette hostel at that time who spent a lot of time to keep his body in an immaculate shape. Whenever he had free time he would engage in some activity of body building. He is also noted for hilarious howlers. One such day after going through the motions of exercise he was perspiring a lot, and there was a visitor to meet him; when this message was given to him he said to the mend who informed the arrival of the visitor, "tell him that I am exhausted and expiring and if he wants to see me he had to wait till my body is washed". On an another day he came out with a 'gem' that is 'genius is 99 percent perspiration and 1 percent inspiration'. On another day he came out with a 'gem' that is 'genius is 99 percent perspiration and 1 percent inspiration and I am 100 percent genius because I have 100 percent perspiration without any inspiration'.

Once when Mr. A.W. Rajasegaram the then Principal was strolling round the hostel and saw some of us having a bath under the shower with nothing on. These shower rooms were open air type with only a wall to cover those bathing. The Principal was perplexed to see us in the 'birthday suit' and questioned us. We said "Sir this is an Oxford bath", but what we failed to inform was that we were only copying the Australian school boy cricketers who had such a bath at our showers during their recent visit. The next day at the college assembly Mr. Rajasegaram announced that he himself was a student at Oxford and no one there takes an 'open bath' as we did and said that the term "Oxford bath" is a misnomer.

Once while travelling by vehicle from upcountry back to school in the company of other hostellers namely Ruban brothers, Sivakumar brothers and Navabalachandran, our vehicle was stopped by the traffic police at Matale but we urged our driver not to stop and the
cops chased us for about two miles and brought us to a halt. Now we were all worried and was expecting the worst, but our driver was so diplomatic he apologized to the cops saying thus "Sir, please excuse in had made a mistake, all the passengers are Johnians travelling to Jaffua and they admire the way you gave chase and so much so to enjoy watching your ride they made me not to stop. So please excuse and as a goodwill please take a packet of good upcountry tea". This made the trick and we were let off with a smile from the cops.

There are many such instances which flood the mind. When you think of hostel one cannot forget the great cooks in the hostel who had cared for us and gave us the meals on time. Velappah the head cook with the potbelly and Nagamuttu his able assistant at the pantry. We all admired the way that Nagamuttu lays the plates on the table. He would stand at one edge of the table and would swing each plate which would swiftly swerve to be in the exact position of the table. A great art which no one else has mastered. Chinniah is the one in charge of the sick room. No hosteller would dare to make a false sick report because Chinniah’s first treatment for sickness is starvation. He was known as “Dr. Kill” among us. He is a great asset, he could walk in to the General Hospital with the sick ones without any appointment with the doctors. Most of the doctors in Jaffna were those who were treated by him at the college and they would shiver at his sight; nevertheless Chinniah is a caring person.

Some of the hostel wardens whom I could remember are Mr. C. E. Anandarajam, Mr. V. R. Amerasingham, Mr. S. C. Arulanantham, Mr. W. T. Gunaratnam, Mr. Chandrasegaram and Mr. Panchalingam. We are thankful to them for making our life so comfortable and happy at the Hostel. It was a home away from home. We were a family who had the good and bad times together.

The Saturday meetings, the gossips and yarns on Sunday evenings at the grounds, the healthy rivalry among the hostellers competing for the boarders day were all a learning process which brought us together. Our bonds made at the college hostel are still binding and strong. Many of us who were together at that time have not met each other since. Some of those colleagues are no more but yet the memories linger. It is great to be a Johnian to be a St. John’s hosteller is still greater. I shall never forget those moments, of youth spent in happy company.

Johnians are spread all over the globe but wherever the Johnians are they have one thing in common that is the spirit of "Johnians which would never ever fade".

"God Bless our Alma Mater"

- K. Kanagasingam (GUPTE)
I can recall the day I was admitted to St. John's College, Jaffna in the early fifties. My father took me to the Principal Rev. J. T. Arulanantham and he placed me in the 4th Standard of the Primary Division in the School where the Head Master was Mr. Thurairatnam who was wearing the National dress. There were about seven classrooms close to the Chundikuli Junction and I was accommodated in one of those classrooms. There was a hostel in front of these classrooms and also was a cemented circle bench. Sometimes we sat on this bench and had our lessons. Every morning we used to gather at the assembly.

Our Teacher of Tamil was always wearing a Verti and a Bush Shirt. He travelled in a pushbike that had a carrier fitted behind. Particular Teacher had a handwriting test in Tamil and awarded me first place.

After our promotion to the next class we shifted to one old building near the St. John's Church. During our period in school no boy carried money to school. We visit the Tuck Shop very rarely. There were no vendors at the main gate nor by the side of the parapet wall.

At Lunch I used to hire a small pushbike from a cycle shop at Koyyathoddam Road near Mr. and Mrs. Champions house and rush home situated at Fletchers Lane and return within an hour after lunch and pay the cycle shop 25 cents as hire. Champion family had a very keen interest in our family and guided us in our studies.

In the following year we were shifted to a classroom behind the graveyard. Once we were taken for a film show at the Mahendra Theatre. This Theatre was later converted as the St. John’s Academy. I still remember one of my classmates being caught stealing some eggs from the residence of the Boarding Master and was caned in the Assembly by the Head Master.

On the first school day of the year one of our classmates met with a tragic accident colliding with a lorry and ended his life on the spot at Old Park Road, Kandy Road Junction. During our leisure time we used to go to Dr. Hunt’s Bungalow and see the Cannons built of cement. Some days we used to go to the Old Park (Old Kachcheri Yard) and plucked Koolam palam (Kong).

We had very interesting Annual Johnian Vs. Patrician Cricket matches. We never missed them. When I think of my College Days I feel really proud of myself and of the school.

May the schools St. John’s and Chundikuli live long.

R. M. R. NILAME BANDARA
49, Millie Mawatta, Rambukkana
**THE PREFECT BODY AT ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, JAFFNA DURING LATE FIFTIES AND EARLY SIXTIES**

**Introduction** - the Prefect Body in any school plays an important role within and outside the school. Within the school, the members of the Prefect Body provide a link between the teaching staff (including the Principal) and the students. This link is very essential to maintain discipline, the day to day administration of the school, general behaviour of students, and performance of the students in their studies and sports field.

Outside the school, people judge the school by the performance and behaviour of the members of the Prefect Body as they being the student leaders of the school.

**Organisation** - The Prefect Body at St. John’s College comprised of Monitors and Prefects and are selected amongst those students who have successfully completed the Senior School Certificate (SSC) examination and have taken part in extra Curricular Activities/Sports/Games... etc. They are initially elected by the students and finally ratified by the Principal and the upper school teachers at a staff meeting of the college.

Those monitors who perform their duties well and complete one year service as monitors are reviewed at the staff meeting by the Principal and teachers and promoted as "Prefects". Among the prefects the most senior member is appointed as the "Senior Prefect" by the Principal. He is the leader of the Prefect Body. The Senior Prefect has to reside in the school premises, and he is fed by the school and given a room at seniors hostel called - "The Fleming House".

**Duties** - Prefect Body at St. John’s College is expected to maintain good discipline at school. Therefore the Prefects and Monitors should be of exemplary behaviour and a "model student" to the student population in school. As the school bell rings at 8.30 a.m. the students take their seats in the pews in the "Williams Hall" and teachers take their seats on the stage for the morning "Assembly". Until the arrival of the Principal, the Prefects and Monitors take position in the hall - three of them on the right flank, three of them on the left flank, and four along with Senior Prefect on the centre passage of the hall, to ensure silence in the hall.. They also check whether students have brought their "Hymn Books" to the assembly hall. With the arrival of the Principal, the assembly starts with the singing of the hymn to the accompaniment of the piano. After the hymn, the school chaplain or a teacher gives a message or a talk on a topic of interest to the students.

Thereafter the Principal makes his announcements and declares the assembly as over. The pianist plays a music and prefects and monitors take position once again and ensure the students leave the hall row by row, silently and in an orderly fashion to their respective class rooms. Whilst the assembly is going. on, a few monitors and prefects are at the entrance to the school taking down names of the late comers, to be dealt by the Vice Principal or the Head Master.

During free periods students are expected to be in the Library or in the main hall studying. Whilst the Librarian maintains silence in the library, a Prefect or a Monitor who is expected to sit on the stage and maintain silence in the hall.

The members of the Prefect Body are also called upon to maintain discipline and orderliness during school functions such as special assembly meetings, Prize. Giving, Sports Meets, Cricket, Foot Ball or any games Matches, Exhibitions, School Dramas, Plays, Visit of dignitaries. . . etc.

Prefect Body meets once a month to discuss the coming events in the following month and make plans for the successful conduct of the events. Sometimes senior teachers attend these meetings to guide the members of the Prefect Body.

**Hostellers** - Prefects and Monitors who are hostellers have the additional task of assisting the hostel Wardens – (i.e. Masters-in-charge of Hostels) in maintaining discipline, cleanliness of the dormitory, Hygiene, attend on to the sick hostellers, special counselling for new students or students with problems. . . etc.

There were several hostels at St. John's College catering for the different age groups. The most junior members (7 to 10 yrs.) were housed at the "EVARTS HOSTEL". The teachers who supervised this hostel were Mr. C: E. Anandarajah, Mr. V. R. Amarasingham, Mr. S. Panchalingam who were resident with their families at certain times during this period. The next is the 11 to 13 year group housed at
the "PETO HOSTEL" outside the college premises in the old "Mahendra Theatre" under the total control and administration of Mr. W. T. Gunaratnam who was resident with his family and assisted by Mr. C. Chandrasegaram. Next was "THOMPSON HOSTEL" for the age group 14 years to 15 years supervised by Mr. C. J. Eliathamby and Mr. N. E. Jeyasingham who were also resident with their families during certain. times of this period. Next was the "MEMORIAL BLOCK" a large up-stair block built in the mid fifties having four dormitories under the names "CROSSETTE", "DR. RAJASINGHAM", "HANDY" and "ALISON". Those hostellers of the age group 16 and 17 who formed the biggest group among the hostellers were housed here. Masters-in-charge of these dormitories as I remember were Mr. K. Kathiravelauthapillai, Mr. R. A. Samuel, Mr. A. P. Paramanantam, Mr. C. Thurairatnam, Mr. J. N. Ponniah, Mr. S. C. Arulananthan. These teachers were all bachelors and lived in a room adjoining the dormitory. The seniors hostel was the "FLEMING HOUSE" where all the seniors i.e. above 18 years were housed. Mr. T. Gunaseelan supervised this hostel and as a bachelor lived in the room at one end of Fleming House and the room at the other end was occupied by the Senior Prefect.

Hostel Prefects and Monitors are nominated on a roster basis to supervise the study time of the hostellers. During their duty they have to sound the study gong at the correct times. Morning study at 6.30 a.m. and goes on till 7.45 a.m. Evening pt study at 6.15 p.m which goes on-till 7.45 p.m. and after dinner the 2nd study at 9.00 p.m. goes on till 9.45 p.m. Lights are knocked off by 10.00 p.m and all hostellers should go to sleep except those senior students who are given permission for late study in the dining hall.

Initiation - In the twilight sea bath the newly elected monitors undergo an "initiation ceremony" conducted by the seniors. The ceremony starts with an oxford bath and slowly moves towards the land to the Camping site where a 'Campfire' is lit. The new monitors are asked to dance, sing songs, imitate like a madman, like a girl, like a lover, like a lady teacher... etc. The arrogant, proud, shy and reluctant ones under go a longer procedure until they mellow down and become more cooperative. Dinner is served after the sing song and everyone ensures that the old bus of 'Esty & Co' drop us at school before 10 p.m. No sooner we arrive, the Senior Prefect reports to the Senior Boarding House master that all members have arrived from the picnic safe and sound.

The College Dinner - The most eagerly awaited event by the upper school students those days referred to as sixth formers or High School Certificate (HSC) students is the "College Dinner" organised by the members of the Prefect Body. This dinner is held in the decorated "Williams Hall", attended by the Principal, teachers of upper school and the sixth formers. Some girls, students of Chundiculi Girls' College (our sister school) who attend the sixth form classes at St. John's College also attend. Representative members of the Prefect Bodies of other reputed schools in Jaffua also attend on invitation. This dinner is held in the month of November prior to the University Entrance examination held usually in December every year. The formality of the dinner, table manners and etiquette and the post prandial speeches by the students and teachers are good experience for the school leaving students. After dinner some students make use of this occasion to express their thankfulness to teachers and sentiments to their beloved school mends as in the back of their minds they know that this is the last get together before the impending final departure from school after the examinations.

Conclusion - Over the years St. John's College, Jaffna is well known for maintenance of good discipline. The role and tasks of the monitors and prefects at St. John's were easy and effective because the teachers at that time were disciplined, dedicated and concerned in the development of the students in to good citizens of the future. And students in return gave their highest respect and regard to their teachers and were obedient and generally were of good behaviour.

In the present context, cultural, social and family values have changed and people have become more materialistic and pecuniary
conscious. The concern of teachers towards their students has vanished into thin air. "Student unrest", "violence in school", and "assault on teachers" are the order of the day. But the good news is that the good name of the school and discipline at St. John's is still flying high.

The experience and knowledge gained as a monitor and a prefect at S1. John's College has helped me and many like me to acquire leadership qualities, maintain good human relationship and practice good management techniques in the working environment of our later lives.

"May Almighty God Bless Our Alma Mater For Caring and Nurturing Us"

- Major General T. Sivashanmugam USP
THE SUCCESS OF JOHNIANS PREPARING OR ENTERING MEDICAL FACULTY IN LARGE NUMBERS AND MY INVOLVEMENT IN THIS DELIGHTFUL EXPERIENCE

To stick to length of article specification on the above topic assigned to me and to telescope my 28 years of Botany teaching in A/L classes from 1953 to 1980 in retrospective terms is exciting but formidable.

1954 was the beginning of excellence for St. John’s results into University Entrance for medicine. We topped the list in the island relegating Royal College, Colombo into second place. St. John’s now became a bright star for students to navigate towards her. Ethnic problems had not raised her ugly head. St. John’s had already made her mark in educational circles for her discipline, and parents did not hesitate to send their children here for university entrance, medical faculty and other disciplines of study. It might be a matter of interest to know that four students from Royal College, Colombo, who had finished one or two attempts at the university entrance came to St. John’s in 1957 and all entered the medical faculty in one year. Many others had come from leading schools both from the peninsula and from other parts of the island for medical and biology sciences. Mr. Pooranampillai who at this time was principal of Hartley College sent his A/L Biology, Physics and Chemistry teachers to St. John’s a couple of times to find out the secret of exam oriented teaching in medicine.

At various times the university had different methods of testing for university entrance: In early stages students had to go through theory, practicals, herbarium, interview all conducted by the university. Later practicals was dropped. In still later years standardization according to districts was the criteria. So I cannot pinpoint any student as having the best results at university entrance from St. John’s. Many have shone after entering Medical Colleges both in Sri Lanka and abroad. Still later in specialized medical and allied fields Johnians have made their mark in countries in which they live. Still others who were preparing for medical, biology or agriculture switched on to accountancy, banking, business executives etc. or other innovative fields and many have reached national and international fame. All the above mentioned, I consider as very successful. Coupled with the discipline each one experienced for few or many years at St. John’s they should have no difficulty for successful living.

Rapport during school life: Over the years, I realize more that a friendly relationship between teacher and student brings absorption and retention of imparted knowledge. Spiced with appropriate humour to drive home a relevant idea brings added retention. Of course an astute teacher develops this over the years of teaching experience. University entrance students are mature adults and a teacher has great opportunity to command respect and still be a companion. Many students are keen to learn as long as you deliver the knowledge no matter how it is delivered. A teacher should wink at youthful innocent mischief but should be firm monitoring every student’s progress in his subject.

Biology excursions and field study has scope for even greater fellowship between student and teacher. Thus over the period of one or two years students gain confidence to face public examinations.

Sometimes, a few successful at public examinations are given some months to join the staff. These students suddenly become our colleagues and soon realize that their teachers are ordinary humans who have their masked teacher face exposed in the staff room. Relationship still becomes closer. The St. John’s academy started in 1961 catered for external students and a few St. John’s teachers including myself taught here. Large numbers entered the university from here. After 1965 the clamour for Medicine and Biological Science as first choice waned since medical students
were finding difficulty to get employment after internship. Engineering and Maths were now a serious first option for A/L and consequently numbers for medicine declined comparatively.

Permit me to sound a note of caution to my past pupils now in the medical, paramedical, business, management and other fields who due to their own choice, unknowingly burn out in their professional work. I quote Sir William Oster, Professor of Medicine at John Hopkins, who was overwhelmed by teaching, administration and clinical duties. After 10 years there, he was offered the Regius Chair of Medicine in Oxford (largely a sinecure in those days). His forceful wife telegraphed him, "Do not procrastinate, accept at once". Years later he wrote to young doctors and medical students "I warn you against the day, soon to come to some of you. The day of large and successful practice when you will be engrossed in late nights of professional cares - earning and spending. You may so waste your powers and energy that you will realize too late that there is no place in your place in your habit stricken souls for gentler family and social influences that make life worth living".

To all who glance at this article my desire is that you choose your values so as to lead a life worth living, always remembering that giving is at the centre of successful living.

- V. R. Amarasingham
### Statistics of University Entrance from 1950 to 1980 (Ref College Magazine – Courtesy Principal)

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MASS EXODUS OF 1995 
AND IT'S IMPACT ON ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

St John's College, with a cherished history of 180 years has witnessed unprecedented periods of troubles and turmoils, destruction and resurgence, and success and resurgence, and success and jubilations. The College has encountered many challenges - surmounted most of them and stands out as a beacon light in dispelling away the, gloom of ignorance. The noble principles enunciated by the founders of the college have permeated into every nook and corner of society not only in the North but also in the rest of the country and overseas. Today the College embraces all aspects of education - mind, body and spirit. The College being the envy of many has braved many hurdles in the recent past. Finance and infra-structure facilities had been the main handicaps the College faced in its first 150 years of existence.

The latter part of the last century witnessed a revival of Tamil nationalism and the youths took over the leadership of Tamils in the North and East resulting in encounters between the Sri Lankan Apty and the militants. This brought about a chain of confrontations culminating in the extensive damages to St. John's in 1987.

But the worst to happen was to begin in July 1995 following military operations in Valigamam West resulting in St. John’s College becoming a refugee camp. For three weeks refugees were well looked after by the College and the Church. Little did we realize that in less than four months the Thenmarachy and the Wanni too would become full of refugees. Once the School reopened after three weeks, attendance of students dropped; the parents taking away their children to safer places. In October 1995 the Sri Lankan Army started "Riviresa operation" from Palaly and was advancing towards Jaffna town. On the 30th of October, like, a bolt from the blues the people of Valigam are were asked to move away to Thenmarachy of the Wanni resulting in what was known the famous mass exodus. But some people who were reluctant to leave their familiar places flocked into St. John's. The stay in the College was short lived; for the Principal and the teachers who were staying in the premises decided to leave. The family members of the staff, students with their parents numbering about 150, had a lingering last glimpse at the College, left for Wanni.

A person's attachment to his own house, environment and society is inseparable. The Jaffna man, the conservative that he is, has a penchant for what belongs to him. Hence he would not sever his attachments to things that are verily his. But the circumstances in October were such that it forced him to leave behind all that was his in his original habitat. Parents of the students of our College were not an exception. They too were affected by this panic and exodus.

In April ‘96 the Government called back the displaced people to their homes in Valigamam except in certain areas where the army has stationed. People came back, Schools were re-opened and St. John’s College too got back to its premises.

AFTER EFFECTS OF THE EXODUS

The catastrophe caused to the College buildings by shelling and aerial bombardments was too much to bear. No building was spared. The premises was full of debris and overgrown with shrubs. The Ter Jubilee Hall, the Memorial Block, Evarts Hostel and the kitchen were badly damaged and other buildings too had not been spared. Worse still was the damage and loss of vital College documents, records, equipments of the laboratories and sports goods, either
destroyed or stolen. Most of the furniture especially the tables in the Dining Hall were missing. The assessed cost of damages was more than ten million rupees.

The impact of displacement told heavily on the activities of the College. Most of the activities were not held. Two major functions like Prize Giving and Inter house Athletic Meet could not be held. To induce the personality development of the students the College provides about twenty clubs and societies and none of them could carry out their normal programmes. The activities of all the College societies and clubs that go a great way to develop student personalities grounded to a halt.

With more than one third of the student population yet to report, classroom activities too were retarded. Most of the students had no text-books, leave alone College uniforms. Teachers, who were displaced to the Wanni, could not report for duty due to lack of transport facilities. Some opted to retire while some others continued to stay away in safer parts of the country. To run the Schools under these conditions was indeed a Herculean task,

**EFFECT ON STUDENTS**

A democratic educational environment is one of the essential pre-requisites for better performance of students was thus totally absent. Even during the years preceding 1995 students had to face several handicaps. The exodus of 1995 perfected the chaos.

When in October people left their homes they took with them what was very essential for their sustenance, School-books and uniforms were secondary in their opinion. But when Schools re-opened in 1996 students found it very difficult to do their classroom work. More than the material loss the psychological impact on the students was immense. Frustration set in resulting in very poor performance. Another characteristic development among the patterns towards parents attitude. They developed defiant and negative behaviour patterns towards parents, their peers and elders. They lost most of the basic values of life. Parents and Schools found it difficult to keep on track.

As for St. John’s, though we didn’t face much of student indiscipline or misbehaviour the displacement ‘did create many problems. Once the school reopened the attendance of students was less than 4% to begin with, but it gradually rose to about 75% by the end of the year. The average number on roll at College over the past years was approximately 1500. But in 1996 the number was 1015 and it took three years for the number on roll to stabilize. Furthermore displacement also told on the performance of our students at the GCE O/L and A/L examinations. In the GCE O/L examinations the number qualifying for A/L studies had always been above 80% (90% in ’93; 83% in ’84; 83% in ’95). But the percentage dropped to 77.7% in ’97 - long term effect of the displacement. The number qualifying for University admissions on the results of A/L examinations used to be above 80% prior to ’95 (82.3% in ’93, 81.2% in ’94). But from 1996 the percentage fell drastically - (58.2 in ’96; 59.5% in ’97, 67.3% in ’98). This drop naturally affected the number finally selected to the various faculties in the Universities.

**IMPACT ON THE STAFF**

The effect of the displacement on the tutorial and non-tutorial staff of the College was very severe. The panic caused by displacement, the fear psychosis and above all the safety of the members of their families compelled them to move to safer places. The majority of them found abodes in Thenmarachy and Vadamarachy and a sizeable number of them went to the Wanni.

When the Schools reopened in May ’96 those within the peninsula were able to report for duty but those in the Wanni and outside could not resume due to transport difficulties. A serious and rather unexpected situation arose when about twenty members of the staff both tutorial and, non-tutorial either retired or resigned from College during 1995 and ’96. It was an impossible task to any principal to manage a School under such circumstances, but undaunted the Principal surmounted this difficult situation by making alternative arrangements and replacements. It was tragic that Mr. S. A.
Ganeswaran, the Principal's efficient secretary passed away in Killinochchi. It was the stress and strain caused by displacement that had contributed to his untimely death. He fell a victim to a massive heart attack.

CONCLUSION

The infra-structure facilities at St. John's got worsened by the destruction and devastation caused by the military operations of 1995 and the resultant displacement of civilians. Also the psychological and emotional suffering caused was very severe. It would take a long time to heal. But the financial losses and infra-structural damages have been solved quicker than was expected due to the untiring efforts of the Principal. It is our prayer that what had happened in 1995 and earlier does not recur and impair and impede the progress of institution as ours.

- **Mr. S. KANAPATHIPILLAI**
  
  *Emeritus Vice Principal*
As I was asked to write an article to the Centenary Souvenir of the O.R.A of my experience as student, teacher and Head Master in the Primary School, it gives me great pleasure to write down some thoughts and impressions of my life at St. John’s for the benefit of the younger generation.

I came to realize the true greatness of the school only when I had the opportunity to study at St. John’s. The greatness of the college lies in various persons who dedicated themselves to the welfare of this institution at various stages.

I joined St. John’s in 1956 during the period of the first national Principal Rev. J. T. Arulanantham. He was very much loved and respected by the students and parents. He won the esteemed admiration of those in his charge and earned the reputation as a firm but kind disciplinarian.

When I entered the school I could see the two great iron gates wide opened to welcome us. On the right was a beautiful church and the office on the left. As you proceed, you have the Handy Memorial Library on the left and Robert Williams Hall on the right. The coolness of the tall huge mahogany trees on either side welcomed the people who visited the school. Just in front of Williams’ Hall there stood a lofty umbrella like huge giant "Vakai" tree which gave coolness to the students during interval times.

In front of the hall there appeared a line of class rooms, consisting of a lecture room, the junior science lab, geography room and at the tail end part of the primary school. The school bell hung on a "Elupai" tree between the Handy Memorial Library and Junior Lab. There was a shed roofed with cadjan along the grave yard in which wooden stands were kept to park the cycles properly. At the end of this shed there lay a cemented ring shaded by a beautiful, short, wild tree which created a pleasant atmosphere for the students and teachers who had classes in the open. Mr. Arumainayagam a fair pleasant gentleman, our music teacher, occupied this ring mostly, humming a tune all alone till the next class arrived.

A few yards away next to the grave yard lay a "T" shaped Primary School block. The grave yard is close by, separated by a wall. This block housed the Kindergarten to standard 4. Mr. D. M. Rajaratnam was the Head Master. He was tall, dark, dressed in national. He starts the day with worship with a hymn and prayer. His thundering rough voice kept the boys calm and quiet. He observed the behaviour of the students and administered punishment. Students from different parts of the country and within the area studied in this great institution. Some were boarders and others were day scholars.

There was hardly any private tuition and no special need for it. The students gracefully imbibed the teachers' exemplary way of life of simplicity and integrity. School emphasized and guided the children ably, inspired and encouraged by the teachers and eminent parents. The boys grew not merely in knowledge but in body, mind and soul too. The credit for this should go to the teachers for their dedication, devotion to duty, leadership and their untiring efforts in building up the institution. I remember quite a few teachers of whom I was most impressed. Mrs. N. Yogarajah, M. S. Thambithurai, I. K. P. Paramothayam, T. Thangarajah and Mr. V. Thuraisamy strengthened us maintained the glorious traditions and discipline and made a remarkable standard in studies.

The next session of my life in St. John’s was as a teacher in the Primary School in 1971, appointed by Mr. K. Pooranampillai. Throughout my career as a student and teacher I was extremely fortunate to have come under the wings of some of the most dedicated teachers and principals. Without the care, guidance and encouragement given by Mr. Pooranampillai I would not have become what I am. My task was made easy because I served with my Gurus and under seven eminent principals who have made magnificent contribution to the school.

To cultivate leadership and reading habit in the tender age, Primary School monitor system was introduced and a
library was installed in the primary school by Mr. C. E. Anandarajan. His pleasant majestic personality, boldness, courage and many good qualities promoted the welfare of the school. The period in which he had been principal was extremely difficult, tense and uncertain. His assassination brought much grief and great loss to the school and public.

I was appointed Head Master of the Primary School in January 1995 by Mr. S. Thanapalan, the present principal. He took charge of the school when the entire North was still continuing to be ravaged by war imposing immense hardships on the people. Long years of the on going war had indiscriminately caused severe destruction to the whole of the North of Sri Lanka, due to shelling and bombing. This was made still worse by the mass evacuation of Jaffna in Oct. 1995. St. John's lost several class rooms, the primary school buildings have been severely damaged and many other buildings including the Peto Hall were badly damaged and some partly destroyed.

Mr. Thanapalan boldly stepped out to go to any length to ensure a secure and conducive atmosphere. He made maximum use of the available resources and manpower in any venture undertaken and started rebuilding, renovating and constructing new ones. He brought many new innovations to the school. The Peto Hall was re-structured, a new magnificent administration block with auditorium and computer section and the new beautiful up stair block (a dream of Dr. E. S. Thevasagayam the predecessor of Mr. Thanapalan) with all facilities to the primary school were constructed. A spacious library too was instituted in the Primary School. These are some of the notable structures. He is the Architect of our modern School. As true to the 175th Anniversary hymn, St. John's with age grows in beauty.

He strove for excellence in both studies and sports. English was introduced in the curriculum for grade one and two and in sports and games, Interclass cricket tournaments, Chess tournaments, Indoor game tournaments, Junior Pentathlon meets and Mini Tennis tournaments were organized. Afternoon English medium classes for grades 3 to 5 are in good progress. The Primary School Prize Giving is re-introduced along with the Parents' Day.

Eminent people in all walks of life have gone, but St. John's is still there to elevate the standards of the present generation to fill their gap. Working with the innocent is pleasant and glorious and children shouting singing, dancing and playing all around us gives me joy and great pleasure.

"May the college flourish from age to age and be a Lighthouse of Wisdom, Joy and Hope in the darkness."

D. J. Thevathason

Head Master Primary School, St John's College, Jaffna
Year 2004 is a landmark year in the life of St. John’s as they celebrate three important centenaries. A week long celebrations are being planned for the latter half of March both in Jaffna and Colombo. The school itself was founded 180 years ago in the year 1823 and it took time for other Institutions to develop along the line. The three centenaries are:

a) Old Boys’ Association
b) College Magazine
c) St. John’s / Central (big match)

(a) Old Boys’ Association

Old Boys’ Associations are the back-bone of every school. The principal depends a great deal on the support of staff, old boys and parents. The Old Boys’ Association concept is something drawn from the English Public School System and plays a very important role in the school. In the American System there is no real equivalent except that there are class re-union. In Old Boys’ Associations all generations get-together, from the youngest to the oldest.

St John’s is fortunate in having very strong supportive Old Boys’ Association in Jaffna Later the South Ceylon was formed. Now old boys being spread through all parts of the world. Associations have been formed in the UK, Canada and Australia. In the 1930’s there were a large number of old boys in Malaya and Singapore and one recalls the Late Rev. Henry Peto and two members of the staff going over to Malaya in the thirties to meet the old boys. They were most cordially received and travelled the length and breadth of the country and came back with a substantial amount towards the development of the school.

In my view the loyalty and affection of old boys is directly proportional to the amount of time a student spent outside the classroom. It is not necessary to those who excel in the academic field who were most loyal but those who participated in other activities like sports. I may be wrong here. In the same way those who spent years in the boarding house show even greater affection. Students, from age 6 to 18 spend their most impressionable and formative years in the school and therefore develop an attachment like to a second home. I once talked to another schoolmate whom I met after 30 years and the conversation was mostly about St John’s. His young son who was listening inquired as what is so great about St John’s that you are so worked up about. I told him, if you don’t know, I can’t explain. It would be like trying to explain why you love your mother.

St John’s has been very fortunate in her old boys for the immense support that they give to the school.

(b) College Magazine

Every College produces its magazine. It serves three main purposes among others. First by it is the record of events in the school. It gives list of staff, results of examinations, results of sports events, prize winners and all other activities of the school. Principal’s Report would be a full summary of the happening of that period. So the magazine serves as an archives for the school.

In 1995 when the school was bombed and the roof of the library shattered, the cupboard with the old magazines escaped in a part where the roof was intact. Subsequently vandals had ransacked the place and books thrown around. But the cupboard with magazines was untouched. May be that the culprit had the good sense to realize their value and
left them alone.

Secondly the magazine serves as an opening for creative writing and articles from the lowest to the highest class are published giving the opportunity for students to develop their writing capability.

It also gives an opportunity for staff and students to participate in its publication which is a good training.

In the early days school produced three magazines each year one for each term. We got our copy on the last day of the term. Its size was also close to A5. It was in the late, thirties when late Mr. E. C. A. Navaratnarajah was editor that the present format was developed and became an annual issue.

Thirdly the magazine serves as a link with old boys. Like a family separated by distance keeping in touch by letters, the magazine serves to keep old boys spread far and wide keep up to date with the school.

(c) St. John’s/Central Big Match

Sports in Jaffna mainly consist of soccer and cricket matches played between schools. Jaffna Schools Sports Association (JSSA) organised inter-school soccer in the common grounds at the esplanade. Cricket matches still were being played limited to about 7 or 8 schools, played as home and away matches within the school. JSSA soccer matches started attracting outside spectators, which sometimes resulted in ugly incidents. So some schools withdrew from competitive matches and friendly matches continued. The annual cricket match between St. John’s and Jaffna Central two of the earliest to start cricket in Jaffna, played each other twice each year. When more schools started, it became one encounter each year. The match started attracting members of the sports loving public of Jaffna and gradually grew into a 'big match' in the early forties.

In the recent past this match has attracted large crowds from the public and undoubtedly the biggest sporting event in Jaffna. Because of the large crowds St. John’s was unable to host this match in the past two decades as the St. John’s grounds are surrounded by school buildings which may become the target of frustrated spectators as it happened once or twice in the past. As the Jaffna Central College grounds are large and can accommodate up to ten thousand spectators, St. John’s has agreed to forego the home advantage and play each year at Jaffna Central College grounds until such time when a stadium in Jaffna becomes a reality and the two schools can play on the common grounds.

This match now popularly known as a battle of the North still the biggest sporting event in Jaffna providing the much needed outlet for the sports starved public of Jaffna.

- Dr. E. S. Thevasagayam
Christianity is to live and act according to the teaching of Jesus, specially based on the reign of God. It’s expectation is, to invite people to follow the model of Jesus and to live according to his teaching and preaching. The core of the message of Jesus is, to build the reign of God. To achieve this task he prescribed two ways. One, to love your God whole-heartedly; and second, to love your neighbour as yourself. By saying this, Jesus posed a question. How can people love God when they do not love their neighbours? Through this question Jesus challenges us whether we should give a prominent place to God or human.

Christians affirm faith in one God, who has revealed himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Today, Christianity expects the Fruit of the Spirit such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control from the people who follow the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. As humans, we always ponder what will happen when we finish our earthly life. If we want to enter Heaven after our earthly life, Jesus said, we can qualify ourselves, by giving food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, invitation to strangers, clothes to the naked, taking care of the sick and visiting the prisoners. This is Christianity! Christian love! Christian life! And the Christian call.

A group of people, who accepted the above call known as Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), arrived in Colombo in June 1818 after the heavy exploration of seven months at sea. Rev. Joseph Knight was one of them, stationed at Nallur, the famous historical city. He established several free education schools in Jaffna District. The Nallur English Seminary was started in April 1823 at his Bungalow with seven students under his leadership to give more knowledge and concern.

The seed which was planted at Nallur English Seminary, today has grown as St John’s College, which is 181 years old of full blossomed flower, which is a vessel that is not only useful to Jaffna District, and the whole Island of Sri Lanka, but also to the whole world to which we should be thankful to God. The present SIC, at the beginning when it was founded as Nallur English Seminary, her aim was to prepare the local people for the Ministry.

The Bible which was made as an important subject along with other subjects made it easy to achieve their aim. The seed which was planted in 1823, gave its fruit in 1826 by Edward Bickersteth, William Marsh, Josiah Pratt, John Raban who dedicated their lives to Christ. Another remarkable incident is that, one of the Non Academic Staff, who was taking care of the Principal Rev. Adley’s Horse, dedicated himself to Christ in 1825. John Hensman who was one of the beginners (1828-1835) was the first Tamil who was ordained in Jaffna District, which portrays the early growth of Christianity at St. John’s. The lifestyle of the Missionaries and the call for the Christian life were inducement to others. According to 1837 report, within the first sixteen years out of hundred students one third of them dedicated their lives to Christ.

The growth of the school encouraged the Missionaries to start the Girls’ hostel. Suitable place was suggested at the same place in Nallur. So in 1841, Nallur English Seminary was shifted to Chundikuli. Same year the Old Portuguese church with its 90 members was handed over to CMS and the service was conducted by the Principal Rev. Johnstone. Students also participated in the worship. The Liturgies were distributed among the students. In 1880s the spiritual growth was observed among the students in various ways. It also produced commendable obedient disciplinarians. They not only felt the Christian responsibility but also came forward to fulfill them. They performed their duties as Y.M.C.A. Unit. The participation of the senior students and the young teachers was remarkable. School campaigns were organized in the neighbouring island Mandaithivu. Students functioned as The Chundikuli Gospel Association, in order to help the people who are neglected by the society. They concentrated their functions in four areas such as the Sunday School. Reading Room, Gospel Meeting and Prayer Time.

When they were celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the shifting from Nallur, the Nallur English Seminary was named as
St. John’s College, in 1891. This shows the dedication of the school to the Christian Commitment. Mr. Horace Thompson drew the crest for St. John’s College in 1908 showing the Christian Identity. The identification of Evangelist John and the Christian Faith are shown by the Eagle and the shield respectively. The light represents the knowledge that comes through Christ. Above all these the Motto of the College, ‘The Light Shineth in the Darkness’, is the verse which Evangelist John used to introduce Christ to the World, verse.


We are happy to mention about the vital role played by St John’s in the Jaffna Christian Union (J.C.U.) from the beginning which was founded in 1907. The Jaffna Christian Union records justify how St John's College contributed towards the church Ecumenism.

The Student Christian Movement's (S.C.M.) activities such as, the Wednesday morning service, evening S.C.M. gathering for learning and sharing - talks, Bible studies. Campaigns etc., help to maintain the spirituality of our students. They interact with other Schools Student Christian Movements under the umbrella of Jaffna Inter Collegiate Christian Fellowship (J.I.C.C.F.) which brings more understanding among the various denominations and deepen their spiritual life. They also interact with the National S.C.M. covering the whole Island schools which brings harmony and understanding between the races and cultures. The S.C.M. activities help them to have a good relationship with God and human.

- The Rev. N. J. Gnanaponrajah P-1996

  Area Dean of Jaffna, Vice Principal
The most outstanding sportsmen in the Fifties were E. G. Thevanayagam and D. Kanaganayagam. Thevanayagam excelled in Cricket and Cadeting. His bowling figures of 6 for 12 and 6 for 47 in the "Big Match" in 1951 took Johnians well into the victory target, but failed by just 7 runs. He captained the side, winning five of six matches by an innings but lost the "Big one". D. Kanaganayagam justified his position as the best school boy batsman in 1951 by scoring a flawless 128 against Jaffna Hindu. and hard hitting 148 against Kingswood College, Kandy which to-date continues to be a record against an outstation school by a Johnian. He was also the best school boy sprinter of the Island in 1952 winning the 100 yards race in the Junior AAA meet and coming 2nd in the Ceylon Public School Athletic Meet held in Colombo. He was adjudged the all-round Sportsman for the year 1951.

S. K. Mahalingam is no doubt the best fast bowler produced by Jaffna in 1950s. He captained Cricket in 1954 and Athletics in 1953 and 1954. His best figures bowling was 8 for 6 runs against Jaffna Hindu who were all out for just 18 runs. M. B. J. Tissanayagam was one of the best cricket captains produced by the school. His unruffled temperament as a bat with a 142 runs against Kotte, Christian College in 1958. He captained cricket in 1957 and 1958 and also Soccer XI in 1957. His Big matches in 1956 and 1957 with scores 80 and 96 earned him the best batsman awards. He captained Jaffna cricket team in 1958. The only cricketer who challenged him in the North was R. K. V Premachandra of Jaffna Central (1954-1957).

S. K. Paramalingam is the youngest brother of "S.K." Brothers. His 2nd brother S. K. Shanmugalingam also excelled in all three sports, namely cricket, soccer and athletics. All three brothers won colours in all three sports. S. K. Paramalingam captained cricket in 1959 and soccer in 1958 and 1959. He captained Jaffna Cricket team (1959) and Jaffna Team beat Colombo Combined Cricket Team in the last ball of the last over of the game. This is the only occasion that all Jaffna side beat Colombo combined schools team in the history of cricket of the country and it was under S. K. Paramalingam in 1959. S. S. Shanmugarajah bowled the last over of the match (another Johnian).

S. S. Shanmugarajah was another outstanding fast bowler during Paramalingam’s time. Performed well in the 1958 big match to score 34 not out and captured match bag of 10 for 24 runs and won the best bowler's and best allrounder's cups in the 1958 big match which was a low scoring match ended one hour before the lunch of the 2nd day (innings victory for St. John’s). As an outstanding athlete he made record breaking effort of 40’ 8" in the putt shot event in 1958. This record stands to this day as the oldest individual record in our inter-house meet. He obtained a 3rd place in the Public schools meet and won his public schools athletic colours. Also M.W. Rajasingham and M. Wijeratnam played soccer for St. John's in 1960-1962 and performed well in District Level. V Sivananthan is another fine Cricketer during the period 1959 - 1960 and is probably the best Wicket Keeper produced by St. John’s. In the combined Jaffna Team, that beat the combined Cricket Team played at St. Peter's grounds, Colombo he excelled behind the wickets and was quoted by one of the Umpires as a schoolboy keeper who has reached club level of Ceylon standards.

During the golden era of sports (1960's) one name that stands out is that of M. Theivendra. He is undoubtedly the finest all-round sportsman St. John's had produced in this period. He played cricket for a record 7 years (1960 - 66) equaled only by Perumal in (1928 -34). Theivendra scored 134 runs and captured 10 wickets in a match against Jaffna Hindu in 1965 as his best all-round performances. He captained St. John's in 1964 & 1966. Represented Jaffna Team
between 1962-65 and captained All Jaffna Team in 1964. In the year 1965, the Jaffna combind team, where six Johnians played and captained by M. Deivendra, performed quite well. As an outstanding athlete he became 1st in 120 yds. Hurdles (16.1 sec.) and 2nd in Triple Jump (44’7”) in the public schools meet of 1963 and won his public school colours.

Again in 1964 1st in Triple Jump (44’10 ½”) 2nd in Long Jump (20’ 10 ½”) and 3rd in 110 m hurdles (16.0 sec.)

Another Jaffna Athlete from Hardey College only achieved this feat in 1967. A. Kamaleswaran of Hartley won two first places and a 2nd place in Pole vault, Triple Jump and long jump respectively in the same year (1967). Theivendra won his soccer colours also and became all round sportsman of the year 1964. As a prominent cricketer M. Nadarajasundaram of Hartley College was the only challenge for Theivendra in 1965. At the public schools meet in Colombo (1963) S1. John's won the Tarbat Cup for outstation schools and V B. M. de Silva Cup for the field events. St. John's were Runners-up in the Senior Tarbat Cup and Dissanayake Cup for the field events and just missed the title to Royal College by few points. In 1964 also we retained the outstation schools title and the outstation field events cup.

P. Kanagadurai was another excellent sportsman during Theivendra's time. Most successful cricket captain in 1965 captained 10 matches in all and won 9. Also beat Jaffna Central College by 8 wickets and visiting Colombo Royal College by 6 wickets. He also captained Athletics in 1964 and won his public school colours for Triple Jump event in 1963 (Clearing 43’ 9 1/2”). His two ground records set up in 1963- still remaining unbroken. (H. Jump 5’ 9" and Triple Jump 43’) up to now. C. Sooriyakumar supposed to be the Best schoolboy Batsman produced by St John's since the war. His highest score of 181 runs against Hartley College in 1967 still being the individual highest score by a Johnian in First XI cricket (Earlier record by R.R. Scott in 1940 - 156 runs against Jaffna Hindu). His another top score was 154 against Jaffna College in the same year eclipsing J. M. Singanayagam's 113 against the same school in 1922. He scored 4 centuries in his career is another school record equalling with R.R.Scott in (1938 -1941). Sooriyakumar is the only Johnian who scored 3 Centuries in a cricket season. He also participated in the Public School Athletic Meet and won a 3rd place in the Pole Vault event in 1965.

R.G.Ravindra Kumar is the only public school athlete produced by St. John's to obtain 2nd place in Pole Vault in 1962 (10’), pt in Pole Vault in 1963 (10’ 91/2”) and also 1st again in 1964 (11’) and awarded public school athletic colours twice in his career. He also excelled in soccer as an efficient goal keeper. His own Pole Vault record set up in 1964 in the School Meet, still remains unbroken (10’ 11 ½”).

H. T. Vipulananda (Murthy) is another best sportsman produced by St. John's in nineteen Sixties. He captained athletics and unbeaten Hockey Team (1967) and also Vice Captained unbeaten soccer team of 1967 and also cricket team in 1968. He is considered to be one of the best fielders St. John's has ever produced. His allround performance of over 50 runs in each innings and a match bag of 13 Wickets against Nalanda College, Colombo in 1966, is one of the best performances by Johnians ‘against an outstation school Cricket Team. In 1966, he represented the Sri Lanka National Schools Cricket Association against the London school boys team. He won colours for all 4 sports as well. He won a first place in the Long Jump event in the public schools meet clearing 21’ 6” and was awarded public schools colours in 1966. In the Group 11 meet held in Vaddukoddai, he won 3 first places namely, 1st in Long Jump (21’ 4”), 1st in Triple Jump (43’ 4 1/2”) and 1st in 200 meter race (24.5 sec.) and also been the 1st Jaffna man to clear 21 feet in the Long Jump event in a Group 11 Meet (Athletics). S. Rajanathan captained Soccer XI in 1966 and won all the matches except the match against St. Patricks College.
S. M. Mootatamby, another successful cricket and football captain produced by St. John's. He won all the cricket and football matches under his leadership in 1967 and 1968. The "invincible soccer team" captained by him in 1967 is the first unbeaten team after 36 years. S. M. Mootatamby was also Basket-ball captain and St. John's remained undefeated under his captainship. Under his leadership St. John's won the big match in 1968 by an innings. St. John's had to wait for another 22 years to win a big match in 1990. M. Vamadevan captured a match bag of 12 wickets in the same big match. He also excelled in soccer and athletics. M. Surendra like his brother Theivendra captained cricket and athletics in 1969. He played very well in big matches and was awarded the best all-rounders cup thrice and best batsman cup twice in his career. He became 1st in the 110 meters hurdles at the public school meet in 1967 and also won third place in 100 meters final in a best timing (11.5 sec.) and won the prestigious all round sportsman award in 1967. He was selected for the General excellence award for the best all-round student of the year 1969. He captained All Jaffna Cricket Team in 1966 (Under 18) and 1969 (Under 20).

S. Antonypillai played football from 1967 to 1971 and captained the Soccer XI in 1969 and 1970. He was one of the members of the "invincible soccer team of 1967 and also member of the another undefeated team captained by P. Anandalingam in 1971. Antonypillai was selected to play in the All Ceylon Team as a school boy. For that he was first awarded the "Johnian's Eagle" Medal for the most outstanding performance in National level (only other sportsman awarded this was P. Thirukumar in 1984 for cricket).


N. Vasanthan and D. M. Ratnarajah excelled in batting in the late seventeens. D. M. Ratnarajah scored a century in the big match 1978 against Jaffna Central College (after 30 years) and scored heavily in other big matches also (1978-1981). N. Naveenan, N. Vasanthan and N. Prabaharan were another set of brothers like "S.K." brothers who excelled in all the sports in St. John's between (1971-1982).

After the ethnic riots in 1983 unsettled problems severely affected sports activities in Jaffna. In 1985 C. N. Canagerajah captained an undefeated soccer team. He captained Hockey, Basketball and athletics also. A. Vaheesan captained cricket in 1986 and 1987. G. S. Neshakumar also showed his talented batting effort in the season.

In 1990 a golden year of cricket for St John's Under T. Satheesan we beat Jaffna Central by innings and 27 runs. S. Surenkumar scored the series record score of 145 in this match. M. Kandeepan like his father S. K. Mahalingam led the side in 1992. The score 411/8 against Jaffna College created a ground record by a St. John's first XI cricket team eclipsing the previous record score of 389/8 scored in 1922. M. Kandeepan scored 154 against Jaffna College and equalled C. Sooriyakumar's record held in 1967. He also captained the athletics team, and shared the all-round sportsman title with P. T. Gershan in 1992. S. Vimalan also performed well in cricket, Soccer, Athletics and Volleyball and became the best All-round Sportsman for the year 1995.

In the late nineties A. T. Gowripahan participated in all the sports available in the school. Gowri captained in cricket, basketball and volleyball as well. He scored heavily in the "big matches" in the year 1999. He created a new partnership record with K. Pragasan scoring 201 runs for the fourth wicket in which his contribution was 91 runs and captain
Pragasan scored 100 runs. St. Johns declared their innings with a series record score of 326/6. Gowripahan was awarded allround sportsman for the years 1997 and 1998 and also awarded the General Excellence for the best student in 1999. His score of 236 against Kokuvil Hindu (Under 17 team) is a record and the highest individual score in the history of cricket in Jaffna. His innings included 18 sixes and 18 fours (1997).

At the beginning of the New Millennium P. Lavendra shown his ability in both bat and ball specially in the big matches. He was selected as the "School Boy Cricketer of North" for the year 2002 by Observer and Bata Ltd. P. Lavendra was awarded the Best Bowler in 2000, Best Batsman in 2001 and Best All-rounder in 2003 in the big matches against J.C.C. In 2003 C. Ahilan captained another undefeated side. His score of 52 N.O. against Royal in the Turf wicket in Colombo is a notable achievement by a Johnian cricketer in recent years and St. John's became "runners up" in the quadrangular series held in Colombo (organized by Royal College).

At St. John's many brothers excelled in games, and thus we can proudly say that the skills in the field of sports, can be recognised even in family members.

K. Mahadeva
Central Bank of Sri Lanka,
Schooling from 1957 -1968
THE CENTENARY "BATTLE OF THE NORTH" ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, JAFFNA VS JAFFNA CENTRAL

While preparations are underway in the South to celebrate the 125th year of the "Battle of the Blues., the Northeast is preparing itself in a grander scale to have the centenary match between St John's and Jaffna Central popularly known as the "Battle of the North. from the 18th of March to the 20th of March 2004 at the Central College grounds. This is the first time that this 'big match' is going to be played as a three-day game. Elaborate arrangements are being made by the principal of St John's College, Jaffna and the OBAs of Jaffna and South Sri Lanka to make this event a success. In addition to this centenary match St. John's is also celebrating the following events.

(1) Centenary year of the OBA Jaffna and South Sri Lanka - 22/3 - 24/3/2004
(2) Centenary of the College Magazine
(3) Centenary of the 'Big Match' -18/3 - 20/3/2004

So it is a triple Centenary celebration.

The St John's College, Jaffna OBA (South Sri Lanka) is very busy with a tight schedule in organizing these events. This Centenary match has attracted world-renowned sponsors like Singer Sri Lanka, LG Abans and Janashakthi Insurance Ltd.

The 50 over one day match is fixed for the 25th of March 2004. St. John's College Jaffna OBA is expecting its faithful old boys from USA. UK, New Zealand, Australia and Canada to attend all these functions.

Although St. John's College was founded in 1823, the cricketing ties between both schools started in 1904, and up to now St. John's has won 32, Jaffna Central has won 22 with 34 draws. However due to situations beyond control a few matches were not played during the years 1948, 1961, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1889, 1991, 1996, 1997 and one match in 1967 was abandoned.

The first win for St. John's was in 1908 and the last win was in 1990. The first win registered by Jaffna Central was in the inaugural match in 1904 and the last time they won was in 2002. As St. John's has not registered a win since 1990, this crucial centenary match is very vital for them. In contrast since Jaffna Central won the inaugural match in 1904, they will be all out to win the centenary match too. However, in cricket nobody can predict results until the last ball is bowled.

Although St. John's started playing cricket in 1901 under the captaincy of Mr. R. R. Nalliah, the first Big Match in 1904 was captained by Mr. P. S. Hallock for SJC while Mr. L. R. Alexander led the JCC team. Mr. S. K. Mahalingam captained the 50th year match for SJC while Mr. S. R. Kanagalingam led the JCC team. It is with pride that I mention the name of Dr. C. Balakrishnan who captained St. John’s in 1960 and 61, later represented Sri Lanka in the unofficial Test Matches played prior to gaining test status.

The first century in this series was scored in 1920 by Johnian C. A. Dissanayake, (104 runs) while A. Ramalingam was the first Centralite in 1945 to score a century (103 runs). The highest individual score in this series is 145 by S. Sureshkumar of St. John's in 1990. The highest team total by St. John's is 326 for 6 wkts. in 1999. The Burghers who captained St. John's were Mr. F. Vancuylenberg in 1906, H. K. Vandendriesen in 1926, T. Vandendrisen in 1936 and 1937. The only Muslim to captain St. John's was Mr. M. Y. A. Fowzan in 1978.
For Jaffna Central the only Burgher who captained was Mr. Bunny Vantwest in 1957. However following Muslims captained Central, namely Mr. T. M. S. Mahamood in 1930, Mr. E. R. S. Jacob in 1941, M. S. Nazeer in 1973.

The best bowling figures in a single inning for both teams were in 1960, where A. J. Somanadar of St. John’s captured 8 for 18, while Mr. A. B. Segarajasingam captured 8/22 for JCC. Jaffna Central won this low scoring match.

These details were derived from the souvenir published in 2003 by both schools. We are unable to produce the score sheets of the inaugural match in 1904 due to records destroyed during military operations of 1987 and 1995-1996.

- L. N. Balaretnaraja
My heartiest felicitations to the Alumni of St John's who today celebrate their hundredth anniversary most reverentially recalling their past, pondering over the present and planning for the future. It needs no special mention here that all old Johnians past and present have distinguished themselves most brilliantly in all their vocations and professions. Indeed St John's is justly proud of all her Alumni. It is not for me to narrate their loving concern and magnanimity.

St. John's College - Jaffna!

Now 180 years young, rich, vibrant growing gracefully in the educational horizon! A premier institution in Sri Lanka - Jaffna's. diadem educationally and culturally. Nursed, nurtured and nourished by the dedication of an able band of missionary heads and an equally elite group of teachers. This institution truly has been all along blessed by such a tribe of teachers! May their tribe increase. It is not the imposing buildings or the facilities it has got, it is not the mere externals of an educational institution but its "intrinsic makeup" carefully formed, framed and implemented by its teachers. St John's has all along been an innovator in an educational sense. Its numerous activities in the classroom, the school, the playing field are a class in itself, not found even today in many other institutions. Here again, all these are due to the perfect planning and implementation by the staff.

Generations of Jaffna's students famed for their intelligence and integrity, who have had their education at St. John's not merely confined to books notes and examinations but to the endearing values that made them rounded gentlemen out of mere humans. A wonderful achievement full of splendour that words cannot adequately elaborate. St John's is always secular and liberal. One does not see any trace of discrimination on grounds of region, race, religion or caste. Its staff and student population are the living examples of broad and cosmopolitan whole.

In spite of all the blessings it has had, it had its reverses too, in the recent past following the ethnic war. Twice it had to be displaced and for an institution of the size and shape of St. John's, to be displaced was rather stunning, shocking and nerve breaking. But the Lord in His infinite trace and wisdom had ordained a man of the calibre of the present principal and equally strong-willed dedicated staff to face this disaster management. To its present principal Mr. S. Thanapalan it was his lot to face those challenging tasks, trials and tribulations. None of his predecessors ever had to face such a situation. With divine grace, guidance, he withstood all the tragedies and shifted the school to distant Thenmaradchi and then to Vaddukoddai - all, tiring, heart breaking exercises for a man. But he did accomplish it of course with his able band of assistants. But he had to be the captain to lead, to dare, to do or to die. This way St. John's owes a great debt to him and the Lord has found in him a true servant who dared and not sank at the hour of trial and tension. The St. John's of today has a new look and fresh urges. Here again the credit goes to its tried and tested steward, to its alumni from all walks of life, the state, to foreign agencies and its parents and well wishes.

Let us praise the lord - one above by whom our destiny is guided.

May the alumni of St. John's and its Association be richly blessed and may it continue to serve its Alma-mater.

Lux in Tenebris Lucet - Shine! Shine!

- S. Arasakesari

Former Teacher & Asst. Editor
The church missionary society from London established this great institution in 1823. 'Basic foundation for education has always been Lord' - Jesus

CHRIST

The pioneer Rev. Joseph Knight started the School with 07 students. From the inception of St John's College, Jaffna, teacher pupil relationship had been emphasized. It is significant that every Principal of St. John's College, Jaffna, right up to Rev. J. T. Arulanantham had been an ordained priest. Also discipline in all its manifestation where a student after leaving School and gets into the wider arena of the world is still able to have self discipline. Any school in its long history which is able to achieve this is surely a mark of educational excellence.

There were one or two Sri Lankans who were in charge of our School for quite a few years like Jeremiah Evarts (who was Head) and Charles Handy (who was ordained later as priest). Though they were in charge, they were supervised by CMS officials both in Sri Lanka and U.K.

Discipline which includes high academic performance, true sportsmanship and brotherly love has always been the corner stone of education at St John's.

It might be redundant for me to detail out the work of foreign principals. However the first national principal was Rev. J. T. Arulanantham. This article relating to the administration of St John's College, Jaffna, will commence with the national Principal- Rev. J. T. A. He steered the ship of St John's which continues to sail right up to the present Principal. During this period, the Vice-principals, Head-masters, supervisors etc. have all played a significant role to the betterment of the school.

The Prefect Body, boarding system at the College assembly, the playing Field took important roles towards the administration of the School.

During Rev. J. T. As time the Memorial Block boarding house was built and the boarders in various hostels increased to over two hundred. The Boarding discipline played a very important role in the administration. It might be important to note that this time that many of the senior Teachers including the principals Messrs P. T. Mathai, J. T. Chelliah, K. Subramaniam (Kadavul), E. M. Ponnuthurai, W. T. Gunaratnam, P. T. Somasundaram, M. S. Thambithurai, C. J. Eliathamby, D. M. Rajaratnam, V. T. Thuraiyam were all able lieutenants helping the College administration to maintain standards in keeping with the tradition of the School.

Mr. P. T. Mathai as principal for the period 1957-1959 was the beginning of an era which continues to the present day where the Head of the School is not an ordained priest. Mr. P. T. Mathai was a stern disciplinarian. Though from India, Kerala, very long at S.J.C. has steered the School in the line of his predecessors.

Mr. Arulpragasam Wilson Rajasekeram 1959-1966. It was a crucial period in the entire history of St. John's. In 1960 St John's was to take an important decision to maintain the School, as a non-fee-levying private institution or to be under government control. If private, finance was a serious problem to run the School coupled with losing traditions which was built up over the decades to tumble down as what has happened to some of the private schools which were taken over by the government. The old boys, many senior staff and parents vision on the horizon and stalwarts like Mr. J. C. Handy (Manager), Mr. Vairamuthu a parent, later on the Chairman of the welfare society, Mudaliyar Muthuthamby, Dr. A. V. A. Vethanayagam S. Kanagaratnam (proctor) R. E. Rajanayagam, D. P. Sundarampillai W. T. Gunarathnam and
other strived hard to collect money to sustain the School. Mahogany trees, houses belonging to School and many others means had to be resorted to maintain traditional standards. This was not an easy task for a school of such caliber. The strain of this compelled Mr. Rajasegaram to retire prematurely.

Mr. Kanapathipillai Pooranampillai 1967-1987 (April to January 1988). The Governing Body of CMS institutions in Sri Lanka invited Mr. Pooranampillai to take charge of reins of St. John’s in the time of her trails and tribulations. He is the only principal who held office twice in the entire history of St John’s. Any member on the staff nor old boys could not match the administrative of a highly respected educationist as Mr. KP. He was neither an old boy nor a teacher. He readily accepted, the clarion call for St John’s. The School regained her former prestige. The welfare association brought in money and so finance was not so much a problem in every aspect of the School.

Whether it was class room, boarding house or sports, the traditional rich values or discipline was meticulously upheld which percolated into the very morrow of staff (both tutorial and non-tutorial) and students.

Mr. Chelliah Eawin Anandarajan 1975-1985. Mr. Anandarajan was an old boy, teacher, senior hostel master, vice principal and principal. He was groomed by KP. to become the head of the school after him. Since he was for long years associated with school he knew the ins and outs of true tradition of St. John’s. Also it was not very difficult to maintain the standards after taking over from Mr. K.P who raised with innovative idea administration. During Mr. K.P’s period there were more opportunities for students to exhibit latent talents and in his administration set leadership qualities enhanced in the student’s population.

Mr. Thambithurai Gunaseelan 1985 - 1987. Mr. Gunaseelan was very closely associated with St John.’s for over forty years as a student, senior hostel master, prefect of games, middle school supervisor, vice-principal and principal. He becomes a part and parcel of St. John’s. The time he took over the administration there was much student unrest due to civil war in the island. He strived hard to maintain the traditional standard and discipline but the situation over powered him unfortunately. The severe strain took a toll on his physical health and to resort to retirement.

Dr. E. Seevaratham Thevasagayam 1988 - 1993. Dr. Thevasagayam has long and proud record of close association with St. John’s as a student, teacher, senior boarding, and perfect of games. In 1988 he accepted appointment as Principal rather reluctantly when the political climate was very volatile. During his time as head, he brought the rich and varied experience he had gained as a united nation civil servant. He introduced the community system of decentralization on the administration. This enables both and student to greater integration, due to the ethnic crisis of the country he could not perform duties as a resident principal but operated from Colombo. However as the chairman of the governing body of the CMS institutions in Sri Lanka his advice and contribution to the school in this high positions were invaluable and he was of formidable help to Mr Thanapalan to steer the school administration.

This position enables him to do much to the school in way of building up financial help from abroad. This was an indirect way by which St. John’s had greater scopes for better administration.
Mr. Sivasambu Thanapalan, Acting Principal 1990 - 1993. Principal Mr. Thanapalan almost entirely has been connected to St. John's as a student assistant, teacher, hostel master, Prefect of Games, Middle School supervisor, vice principal and now principal.

Never in the history of the island has there been much displacement of so many schools in the North. Old boys, staff, well wishers and parents were terribly concerned. The civil unrest compelled St. John's moving away from Jaffna. The captain and his crew of the ship of St. John's though sinking, sailed the ship to many places even outside the peninsula. The principal and his dedicated staff never abandoned it but courageously faced the challenge to sail on. Inspite of the situation, the school maintained high academic standards, excelled in the sports field and above all continued to maintain disciplinary standards so that St. John's now became a byword for discipline.

Old boys here and abroad, parents, staff, well-wishers, international community now rally round the Principal to rebuild the destroyed and damaged buildings. Also, a large number of new buildings in keeping with architectural history of the school continue to be built. These new buildings which are seen now bear ample testimony to the excellent administrative ability of Mr. Thanapalan. He has certainly put St. John's on the map of the world where old boys here and abroad rally round their Alma Mater.

The administration is ready to be handed over with pomp and dignity to his successor in the near future.

- P. S. ARULRAJ
St John’s College, O.B.A. in Jaffna and South Sri Lanka, began their Centenary Celebrations in style with the laying of foundation for a new library building and the teachers’ quarters. Past Pupils, Associations have been responsible for the advancement of school education in Sri Lanka.

The O.B.A. of St. John’s College, Jaffna and South Sri Lanka is a case in point. Inaugurated in 1904, the O.B.A. has done yeoman service to the College. This dynamic organization has overseas branches established in USA, Canada, UK, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Germany and France. The school was able to overcome its financial difficulties through the contributions made by these associations in addition to the contributions made by Non Governmental Organizations such as GTZ, WCC, High Commissions of UK and Norway, Asia Foundation etc.

It is to the credit of the O.B.A. that the College now consists of a number of new buildings to house classrooms, science laboratories, computer center etc. The College which started in 1823 has over 180 years in existence and has brought shining souls in the world of darkness. The last 20 years the College went through unprecedented crisis and setbacks, destructions and resurgence, success, and jubilation. Among these were the problems that arose during the IPKF in 1987, and from the exodus and military operations of 1995/96. There was mass destruction of College properties such as library, hall, classroom, laboratories/equipments etc. The Jaffna O.B.A. lost all its belongings including the books that contained the history of the O.B.A. The O.B.A. finds it difficult to reconstruct these details since the old boys involved in building up the association are not living. However, we are thankful that those old boys living in Colombo preserved the souvenir issued in 1954, celebrating the 50th anniversary.

The first testing time for the O.B.A after the 50th anniversary was the move to takeover. St. John’s College, Jaffna by the government in 1960. The O.B.A. Jaffna and South Sri Lanka prevented this move by raising funds to run the school privately. The school did not have any reserve funds to sustain itself. The principal Mr. A. W. Rajasekaram opted to sell the school car to pay salaries to teachers. Further the majestic mahogany trees together with houses and properties belonging to the school were sold. Mr. J. C. Handy together with Dr. A. V. A. Vethanayagam, Mr. S. Kanagaratnam and a band of loyal old boys and teachers joined in raising funds. The College as well as the present old boys are very grateful to those who spearheaded this move to remain private. The College had a mixture of students prior to 1956. However with the introduction of the Sinhala only, the students from the South began to leave. These students are still grateful to their Alma Mater and are members of the O.B.A in the capacity as vice patrons, among them are Mr. T. B. M. Ekanayake, K. B. Basnayake, Nilame Bandara and Samarakone.

During the period 1962 - 1970 many a Johnian who left school came down to Colombo to find employment or to continue higher studies in the Colombo and Peradeniya Universities represented their respective campuses in cricket, football, hockey and athletics. Others who got jobs in the government service, banks and other mercantile firms became members of the Tamil Union Club and represented the club mostly in cricket. Mr. M. W. Rajsingharn and Mr. M. Vijayaratnam were towers of strength to the old boys in Colombo who brought the youngsters into the O.B.A. South Sri Lanka found at times paying their annual subscriptions. The association found it difficult to raise funds to run the O.B.A. in Colombo. Hence it was decided to organize a fund raising project first of its kind in South Sri Lanka by the Johnians. It was very successful and projects of this nature were held whenever the College needed funds to put up classrooms, equip the laboratories and to purchase sports goods. The old boys who were heads of mercantile firms, banks and in business, lavishly contributed towards all fund raising activities either by giving advertisements or purchasing tickets. Mr. M. W. Rajsingharn and late Mr. M. Vijayaratnam used to spend their own money to take’ the Rajsingharn Industries cricket team every year to St. John’s to play friendly matches. Both of them got together to build a modern scoreboard to the College in 1977, which was at that time the best in Jaffna.

In the year 1963 St. John’s won the outstation Tarbet Challenge Trophy at the Public School Meet, just missing the championship by mere 2 points. Mr. Lal Samuel of the under 13 College badminton team became all island champion in 1983. In 1984 St. John’s was selected as the best 1st XI cricket team in the North. Mr. P. Lavendra who led the 1st XI
in 2002 was selected as the best schoolboy cricketer of the Northeast at the Observer cricket contest sponsored by Bata Shoe Company.

Despite the war situation, which had a bad effect on the college, the teachers and the students held the College flag flying high in their educational field. In 1980 St John's became the All Island winner in the Quiz Championship. In 1981 the A/L batch performed so well that the College was placed 1st in the island. Mr. Nirthanan Selyanayagam became 1st in the all island English short story competition conducted by the Sri Lanka English Association of Writers and Playwrights. The Tamil debating team became runners-up in the all island competition held in 1982. In 1982, St John's won the first place in the Mahaweli Quiz contest semifinals scoring maximum possible points of 100. In 1989 Mas. N. Subeshan got an aggregate of 351 at the A/L exams and was placed first in the order of merit in the island in Bio-science. It is pertinent to mention that he was one of the students who got injured in the car bomb in September 1988. In 1995 the Kamban Kalaham awarded the prestigious "Mahara Yarl" to Dr. T. W. Jeyakularajah who was the College manager.


During 1977 and 1983 racial riots a large number of Tamil students who were displaced were accommodated at St. John’s irrespective of whether their parents or brothers were old boys. This facility was made available through an appeal made by the O.B.A. South Sri Lanka to the governing body and the principal St. John’s Mr. C. E. Anandarajan. Many of these students were admitted without a cent being charged as admission fee but with the payment of facility fees. The Tamil militancy, which was building up slowly in the mid 70’s climaxed in the 80’s after racial riots in the South and a war broke out. St. John’s lost quite a number of staff, students and a principal. Due to the security situation in the North, the Jaffna O.B.A.’s activities were restricted. They were unable to launch any fund raising projects for the fear that they may be branded as collecting funds for militancy. The plight of the College, staff and the students gave more pressure to the O.B.A. South Sri Lanka to take more responsibility in looking after College affairs. At this period of time those who migrated out of Sri Lanka started opening up O.B.A. branches in UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. All the O.B.A.’s started playing the game and contributions started flowing on by the way of monetary benefits and scholarships. In 1987 during the IPKF operations quite a number of students fled Jaffna and sought refuge in Colombo. The O.B.A. South Sri Lanka immediately launched a "student relief fund" to help out needy students to continue their studies in Colombo. We were instrumental in obtaining admission to students in Colombo schools like St. Thomas’, Royal, Hindu College (Bambalapitya), St. Peter’s, Wesley etc. The College relief fund helped many a student on a recommendation made by the principal. The governing body of that period led by Rt. Rev. Kenneth Fernando was also instrumental in helping out our students to gain admissions in Colombo schools. The O.B.A.South Sri Lanka held many small fund raising projects to collect funds to repair the damaged buildings which included the College hall, science labs and equipments, sports items, classrooms, books and magazines. The O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka) too was lying low due to the tense situation in Colombo. We could not organize large fund raising projects due to the fear of being arrested for collecting funds to help the militancy in the North. Thanks to our old boys and well wishers, whatever projects we launched were all very success and we were able to support the school by sending the profits derived. The O.B.A. was also instrumental in finding suitable employment for our students who excelled in sports and studies. Although the language barrier was there Johnians were able to get into banks, Audit firms, mercantile establishments and in the government service as doctors and engineers. The Old Boys' Association in
Sri Lanka and abroad were also instrumental in influencing a few NGO’s to donate funds to improve the infrastructure of the College. While the war was being fought St. John’s was growing old and was nearing its 175th year in 1998. During the exodus of October 1995, more damages were caused to the school buildings including the Handy Library. The Jaffna O.B.A. lost all its belongings including the membership registers and other books of importance. In my opinion the war and the exodus of 1995/96 were a blessing in disguise since St. John’s decided to demolish most of the old buildings to put up some showpieces. Dr. E. S. Thevasagayam, S. Thanapalan (principal) and S. Sivathasan (President O.B.A. South Sri Lanka) despite the ground situation prevailing at that time took up the challenge to mobilize funds to make St. John’s what it is today. Short and long-term plans were drawn up for the next 7-10 years. The laboratory complex was completed through funds made available from the President’s fund and some other sources. Through the good office of the O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka) an administrative complex with a computer lab was constructed from the Norwegian aid.

The O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka) was instrumental in purchasing most items from Colombo and dispatching them through sea transport by obtaining security clearance, which was necessary during that period. By doing this the College saved a lot of money since building materials were almost double the price in Jaffna and the quality and selections were poor. I still remember Mr. S. Sivathasan and myself shopping from shop to shop to purchase hardware items, floor tiles, wall tiles, mirrors, towel racks etc. Mr. V. Ponnampalam was the person who arranged transport. The O.B.A. was instrumental in obtaining computers for the College from Mrs. Srikanthy Handy. Here again we were able to obtain the assistance of the Sri Lanka Air Force to transport it without any cost. Despite all odds against us the College was able to complete the construction 30 days before time. Thanks to all those who rendered a helping hand to achieve success.

The O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka) organized several activities in Colombo during 1997 and 1998 in connection with the school’s 175th anniversary. Among them is the Tamil Vizha cultural show, social, sports activities and the 175th anniversary dinner. Well over 300 old boys attended all these functions. The O.B.A. was co-ordinated the arrangements with regard to the issuance of the commemorative stamp and the first day cover in Jaffna on the 1st day of the 175th anniversary celebrations. This was cover in made possible due to the untiring efforts of Mr. S. Sivathasan and Mr. K. C. Logeswaren (who was the secretary to the Ministry of Posts and Telecom). The O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka) organized 2 flights from Colombo to Jaffna - Colombo to carry old boys who wanted to attend the 175th anniversary. The O.B.A. also made reality the publication of a quarterly newsletter titled “The Johnian” in August 1997. This newsletter was circulated, inland and abroad gave all news about the College and the O.B.A. The O.B.A. organised several media interviews in print and electronic and also write-ups from Johnian’s and non-Johnian’s were published.

The O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka) for the past several years had been celebrating the International Teachers’ Day on the 6th of October every year on a grand scale. All retired teachers are invited for this occasion where both parties meet each other and exchange memories. This is followed by the presentation of gifts to the teachers and a sumptuous dinner. Mr. M. W. Rajasingham, J.A.Sethukavalar, D. Narain and Ravi Thambiah have sponsored this event since 1995.

The O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka) was able to arrange a donation of primary and secondary school books every year since 1996 from the Asia Foundation. The value of books donated each time is in the region of Rs. 75,000 - Rs. 90,000. The main person behind this event is Mr. L. N. Balaretnaraja the former and present secretary of the O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka). The O.B.A. also organizes the annual carol service and get-together with Chundikuli Girls College PPA, Colombo branch. This is the most eagerly awaited event in the O.B.A. calendar. The O.B.A. was instrumental in organizing the felicitation for H. E. Mr. Jon Westborg and Mrs. Westborg (the departing ambassador of Norway) for the contribution Norway has made to St. John’s and the investment in promoting peace in Sri Lanka during his tenure in Sri Lanka. The O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka) also felicitated the election of 2 MPs Hon. N. Raviraj and Hon. T. Maheswaren to parliament after the December 2001 elections. In August 2003 the O.B.A. felicitated Dr. E.S.Thevasagayam for the dedicated service to the school during the last 50 years. The College 1st XI cricket team and the football team on their visit to Colombo too were felicitated by the O.B.A. during 2003. In connection with the O.B.A. centenary the O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka) has launched an ambitious project to contribute funding of the College library. Appeals have been made to a number of Johnians for their contribution towards this worthy cause. The centenary dinner of the O.B.A. South Sri Lanka is fixed for the 27th of March 2004 at the Taj Hotel, Colombo 3.

L. N. BALARETNARAJAH
Secretary. O.B.A. (South Sri Lanka)
FIFTY YEARS 1904 - 1954

On reaching a golden milestone in the history of the Old Boys' Association (South Ceylon) it is but natural that the minds of Old Boys should flash back across bygone years and their hearts tingle with delight and thankfulness as they recapitulate in their minds all the circumstances which made their years at St. John's happy, and thereafter their membership in the O.B.A., equally pleasurable.

Mr. L. Macrae, the then Director of Education, proposing the toast of the O.B. A., at the College Centenary Dinner in 1924, remarked that there was an imperial decoration - the O.B.E. It was a great honour to be a member of that Order. But there was a local decoration as high as the O.B.A., and that was membership of the O.B.A. He felt sure that the greatest honour one could aspire to in the North was the O.B.A., S.J.C., Jaffna.

For fifty years such a noble aspiration has inspired successive generations of Old Boys to foregather on countless occasions, with warmth and affection, almost parallel to family reunions of soldiers returning home from distant battlefields. It is Johnian fellowship, the warmth of which only Old Johnians know.

And so it was that on that auspicious day June 4, 1904, our Association was born, and we read that the stalwarts of the time - the Rev. R. W. Ryde as President, Messrs. W. Wadsworth and Mudir. C. Kailasapillai, as Vice Presidents, Mr. J. A. Muthuvaloe as Secretary and Mr. C. Arulpragasam as Treasurer, created history and took into their strong hands a new tradition for St. John's to be nurtured and handed down to posterity. Today with hearts filled with gratitude we celebrate - yes, celebrate - continuing to maintain old traditions and creating fresh history.

The Annual Meetings in those bygone years commenced with a "Conversazione" - a more colourful word than the modern "Social" - and Tamil music rendered by Indian Musicians to the accompaniment of lily flutes. At the third Anniversary Celebrations the conversazione was followed "by an entertainment of songs recitations etc." presumably by the Old Boys themselves. The light-hearted conviviality that naturally prevailed at these annual gatherings did not deter the Old Boys attending to serious business which directly concerned the School.

From its very inception the O.B.A. evinced an abiding interest in the welfare of the School. At the First Annual Celebrations held at Christ Church, Galle Face, School Room, on Saturday, June 17th, 1905, Mr. W. Wadsworth moved a resolution "That it is desirable that students of St. John's College, Jaffna be prepared for the examinations of the English Universities and not those of Madras". It is recorded that this motion was hotly debated for two hours before the motion was carried. Besides the mover, Mr. A. B. Vannitamby, Dr. V Saravanamuttu and Messrs. C. Arulpragasam, M. C. Wanniasekera, S. Kanagasabai, M.A. Arulanandam, John Joseph and L. S. Evarts took part in this verbal dual.

At the second Annual General Meeting a resolution that the study of the Tamil language and literature be made compulsory in all the classes of the College was moved by Mr. Advocate Arulanandam and seconded by Mr. J. V Thambypillai, M.R.A.S. A further resolution moved that year was by Mr. W. Wadsworth, "That the authorities of St. John's College be requested to take steps in consultation with other College authorities in the Island to induce the Senate of the London University to include Sinhalese and Tamil in the syllabuses of the University". This was seconded by Mr. S. N. Asirvatham and carried.

Though the first President was elected after him until 1944: the Principal of the College was President (Ex-Officio) of the O.B.A. There will be no Old Boy with memory so dim as not to remember that great man - the Rev. Henry Peto - and the earnestness and cheerfulness with which he presided over our meetings. To him Old Boys were still part and parcel of the School. The writer recollects his frank confession that he never felt so happy as when he was among Old Boys of St. John's.
For a few years until 1931, Mr. Gordon Kadirgamar was the Secretary. He threw himself wholeheartedly into the work of the O.B.A. To his untiring energies perhaps must be attributed moves of the O.B.A., to revise its constitution in 1929, to compile a comprehensive list of Old Boys, and to contribute a letter known as "The Colombo Old Boys' letter" to every issue of the College Magazine.

The minutes of a Special General Meeting held on September 2, 1929, records the passing away of Mr. J. A. Muthuvaloe, the first Secretary, and at the time of his death a Vice President. At this meeting Prof. Suntheralingam urged that St. John's should pay more attention to the study of the 'vernacular' than they were doing at that time. It is safe to presume that the learned Professor's entire speech was not confined to that one sentence! Reflect on it in the educational set up of today, and it will be seen that the mighty brain peering through years yet unborn, was almost prophetic.

The records abound with instances where Old Boys have initiated various funds to help the school and perpetuate memories of men who gave of their best - their very best - to St. John's. In 1929 following the retirement of Mr. T. H. Crossette, Vice Principal, the Crossette Scholarship Fund was launched and islandwide collections were attempted by Mr. Gordon Kadirgamar (Secretary) and Mr. E. M. Ponnudurai of the staff of the school.

There was again the Thompson Memorial and College Extension Fund, Centenary and Thompson Memorial Fund and now the Peto Memorial Fund is being earnestly commended and confidently launched. Mr. D. S. Abraham was Secretary for two years and was followed by Mr. A. A. Chellappah.

On November 11th, 1932 a meeting of the Executive Committee was specially convened at the request of the Acting Principal Mr. A. M. K. Cumaraswamy. The news of the death of the Rev. Jacob Thompson, perhaps the greatest Principal St. John's has had, reached Ceylon. The Acting Principal laid before the meeting a Thompson Memorial Scholarship Scheme, which had already been approved by the O.B.A. in Jaffna. The scheme found ready approval in Colombo too, and the Committee agreed to assist in collecting the necessary funds. It is interesting to notice that the O.B.A. in Colombo also desired "that a Memorial Column of stone should be erected in a prominent place within the College premises". For twenty two years this idea had somehow been allowed to slip into the background. And now in the Golden Jubilee Year it has been proposed to erect a Belfry in stone, in memory of the Late Rev. Jacob Thompson. May it soon be an accomplished fact.

At the Annual General Meeting held on February 2, 1934, we read that an Old Boy Dr. A Kandiah, who lived to gain the distinction of being the first Dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of Ceylon and a much loved Dean, as was evident at his funeral - gave a talk on the present system of education. "He emphasised the point that students should be trained to acquit themselves creditably in any walk of life they may choose. He also remarked that St John's College was one of the best in the North and that he was very glad to have been given that opportunity to speak to them". As far as St John's is concerned Dr. Kandiah's hopes have amply materialised, and the galaxy of Old Boys referred to within the compass of this Souvenir is sufficient proof, if proof were needed, of how creditable Old Johnians are acquitting themselves in every walk of life in this Island home of ours.

1934 saw Mr. S. Manunayakam taking on the Secretaryship. He was a prolific writer of minutes. Some of his minutes run into pages. In August 1934, the Executive Committee on behalf of the O.B.A., pledge itself to co-operate heartily in raising of funds towards the Centenary and Thompson Memorial Fund for the acquisition of the Chundikuli Girls' College premises and for the erection of buildings as a memorial to the late Rev. Jacob Thompson. The Committee also pledged itself to co-operate with the Management of the College in designing and approving plans and in the construction of the buildings.

Perhaps as early as 1934, the members of the Committee conceived some idea of a Headquarters for the O.B.A., in
Colombo, where records, photographs and other documents could be preserved, for in one of the minutes Mr. Manunayakam makes a brief reference to a proposal to have an album of photographs. This resolution does not appear to have been followed up. It may however be stated at this stage that our present President, Mr. A. J. R. Vethavanam, in 1938 or 1939, gave expression to a scheme of purchasing a house property in Colombo which could serve as the Headquarters of the O.B.A., and as a hostel or clearing house for Old Boys coming to Colombo fresh from College till a permanent home could be found for them. But for the intervention of the War and the consequent economic upheavals this cherished and desirable scheme might have by now seen the light of day.

It was also in 1934 the services of Mr. Gordon Kadirgamar then on the Staff were again harnessed on behalf of the College and the O.B.A., this time for the arduous work of going to every nook and corner of Ceylon to raise funds for the Centenary and Thompson Memorial Fund. This roving ambassador of the O.B.A., in his "Baby Austin" had the unique experience of meeting and knowing every Old Boy at the time and experiencing the lively hospitality of scores of them. Whatever the financial success of this scheme might have been, it cannot be doubted that the velvet tongue of Gordon Kadirgamar successfully focussed the attention of the Old Boys on the College.

At the Annual General Meeting held on March 16th 1936, Mr. J. T. R. Perinpanayagam was elected Secretary. At a meeting of the Committee held soon after, presided over by Prof. Suntheralingam, a Resolution of appreciation of the services of Mr. A. M. K. Cumaraswamy, Vice Principal, proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayagam was passed.

For about a year the Committee appears to have handled business rather seriously with men of the stature of Messrs. Suntheralingam, S. J. V. Chelvanayagam R. R. Crossette Thambiah, E. J. Rajaratnam, Dr. A. N. Coomarasamy, A. A. Chellappah, J. T. R. Perinpanayagam taking intimate interest in the School and in tackling the campaign for collection for the Centenary and Thompson Memorial Fund.

The Secretary's Report for 1936 records that after an existence of the College for over a Century, that year saw the birth of the College Tie.

In 1936 the O.B.A., and particularly the Old Boys who worked unstintedly over the Centenary at Thompson Memorial Fund rejoiced at the acquisition of the Girls' College premises, the extension being formally opened by Sir Sydney Abrahams, the then Chief Justice.

In February 1938 the Committee gave its mind to the question of the nomination of an Old Boy by the O.B.A., on the Governing Body of C.M.S. Educational Institutions, and sought such a nomination to fill the vacancy created by Dr. A. N. Coomarasamy's term coming to an end. This suggestion evidently found favour with the Principal of the College for it is recorded in the minutes of March 11th, 1938, that the Chairman, the Rev. H. Peto, said that he proposed to suggest Mr. J. T. R. Perinpanayagam, Hony. Secretary, as a member of the Governing Body in place of Mr. Coomarawsamy. This move was further developed in 1941, when Old Johnians thought of asking for a separate Board of Governors 'for St. John's College. In the Annual Report presented by the Secretary, it is stated - "We are the oldest school in the Island having lived for nearly a century and a quarter of useful life and if we could have produced a Principal of our own, surely, we are good enough to govern ourselves. We, therefore, urge that we have a separate Board of Governors for S1. John's consisting chiefly of Old Boys of the School". This move was taken a step further in 1949, when a deputation of the O.B.A. in Jaffna, met the Governing Body of C.M.S. Institutions, and when a member of our Association joined this deputation as an Observer.

There are many in Ceylon who know Mr. J. T. R. Perinpanayagam and his genial personality. He has a knack of
originating attractive ideas. It was in 1936, during his time as Secretary of this Association, history was created by the
organising of the first Joint dinner of two institution of that type ever to be held in Ceylon. In the words of Mr. A. M. K.
Cumarsawamy, those, were the days of co-operation, and there they found co-operation between men and women in
that large gathering of old boys and old girls - some of them still young. Mr. Perinpanayagam gave articulation to a
little known 'historical' fact on this unique occasion when he said "The Trinitians flirted with the girls with whom the
Royalists were in love and the Thomians married them; but we in Jaffna at St. John's College flirted with the girls in
Chundikuli Girls' College and then married them too!" Had location anything to do with this incontrovertible fact? We
have it from Mr. C. Sutheralingam that as far as location was concerned, Chundikuli (meaning the Girls' College) was
not so close to St John's as to create considerable distraction, and it was not so far away as to preclude the forces of
attraction. The distance was so judiciously contrived that we in St. John's derived more inspiration than distraction.

The year 1940 brought tragedy in its wake by the sudden and untimely death of our beloved Principal, the Rev. Henry
Peto. The O.B.A. in Colombo convened an emergency meeting on June 18th, 1940, and passed the following resolution:

- "The Committee of the S1. John’s College, Jaffna, Old Boys’ Association, South Ceylon Branch, place on record their
sense of irreparable loss at the sad and untimely death of the Principal, the Rev. H. Peto, who by his long and unselfish
service and by his simple and Christian ways had become the beloved Principal of all Old Boys of the College. They
convey to Mrs. Peto and her children, the condolences of his friends who share their loss and feel it is their own." The
memory of that hour of grief cannot easily be erased from our minds.

The O.B.A turned its thought immediately to the School, bereaved and bereft of its Head. The Committee proceeded to
consider the question of a successor to the Late Rev. H. Peto, and addressed a communication to the Chairman of the
Governing Body, embodying a resolution unanimously passed, that in their opinion the permanent office of Principal
should be offered in the first instance to an Old Boy of St. John's College, whose qualifications made him eminently
suited to this high office, and in the alternative the next Principal should be a University Classics graduate from England
with proved administrative ability.

Fresh history is created again in 1941. For the first time an Old Boy, the Rev. J. T. Arulanantham, is appointed Principal
of St. John's. Strangely enough, almost at the same time and, for the first time and Old Girl of Chundikuli Girls' College
is appointed Principal of that school - Dr. (Miss.) M. Thilliampalam. About this time Mr. P. C. Gaussen was appointed
Vice Principal of St. John's. The O.G.A of Chundikuli Girls' College and our O.B.A held a combined Social and Reception
to the two newly appointed Principals and to the newly appointed Vice Principal of St. John's. This was a colourful
function on the spacious lawns of the YW.C.A in Colombo. For us it was a proud day to felicitate an Old Boy on his
unique distinction and to wish him Godspeed.

In 1940, death robbed us of two of our most loyal and in many ways lovable Old Boys, Dr. A.N. Coomarasamy and The
Rev. Dr. Isaac Thambiah. Their contributions to the College and O.B.A will doubtless be assessed and recorded
elsewhere in this Souvenir.

At the Annual General Meeting held in March 1941, it was decided that all Old Boys residing in the South should be
members of the O.B.A, South Ceylon, and it was also decided that our Association should cease to be a branch of the
O.B.A in Jaffna, and that the status of both Associations be equal. In 1944 a Sub-Committee consisting of Messrs. A J.
R. Vethavanam, C. A W. Edwards, F. E. R. Vannithamby and G. H. R Hubert made a complete revision of the
Constitution. The most important change being that the President was to be an elected President, and the Principal of
the College the Patron. This revised constitution was adopted at the next Annual General Meeting held on June 10th,
1944. It was at this Annual General Meeting that Mr. A. J. R Vethavanam was elected President, and he deservedly
remains today to be the Jubilee Year President.

It was also at this Annual General Meeting that Mr. G.H.R Hubert was elected Secretary, an office which he filled with acceptance for nine years. The athletic figure of Hubert and his prowess in sport, his organising ability and popularity are well known. Oppose or counter him in any matter connected with the O.B.A and you unlock the flood gates of earnest eloquence; with a rapid flow of words, upraised finger, scowls and smiles, he will fight the cause of the O.B.A., till his opponent lies vanquished. He continues to be an ardent and a most vocal member of the O.B.A.

World War 11 had considerably disorganised the normal working of the O.B.A. Many Old Boys had changed their residence, many others had been transferred to various new Government Departments create all over the Island. One of the first duties in 1944 was then to compile a complete Directory of Old Boys. A Sub Committee, with Mr. H. C. T. Somasunderam as its Secretary, was appointed and how successfully this membership campaign was organised is seen in the fact that the Directory today contains nearly 1000 names of Old Boys. This Sub-Committee is constantly revising the Directory in an attempt to keep it as up-to-date as possible.

In 1944-45 the Education Policy of the country came under fire throughout the Island, and later the "Free Scheme" came into operation. Once again the thoughts of Old Boys went to the Old School - "What was the future of St. John's under the new Education Scheme?" On September 4th, 1945, a lengthy but earnest discussion was held, led by Dr. A. Kandiah. Ultimately the Committee decided that St. John's should fall in with the Scheme. The management must have valued this considered opinion of the O.B.A. in such a vital and far-reaching change of policy.

In 1947, Old Johnians rejoiced in the appointment of Mr. C. Nagalingam as a Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Ceylon. He was the first Tamil to be appointed to this high office. The O.B.A. organised a Complimentary Lunch in his honour. It was one of the grandest functions of the O.B.A. The Rt. Rev. Lakdasa De Mel, Bishop of Kurunegala, proposed the toast of the College. Referring to Mr. Justice Nagalingam he said, "One of her (St. John's College) most, distinguished sons has been raised to a distinguished Position, exalted to the Bench we are all proud of, and we have tremendous faith in the Supreme Court Bench of Ceylon.

In 1950, St. John's added to her laurels, when Mr. M. Kanagasabay was appointed General Manager Railways, Ceylon. This was the first time a Ceylonese was appointed to this important post. The O.B.A. celebrated this event with a Complimentary Lunch. The O.B.A. had a Complimentary function for the third time in 1952, when it organised a Lunch to felicitate Mr. W. T. I. Alagaratnam on his gaining a similar distinction becoming the first Ceylonese to be appointed Director of Irrigation. At this Lunch we also felicitated four other esteemed Old Boys who had been elected Members of Parliament - Mr. C. Suntheralingam (Vavuniya), Mr. Maitripala Senanayake (Medawachchi) Mr. D. B. Welagedera (Kurunegala) and Mr. S. H. Mahadiulwewa (Kalawewa).

The strength of the O.B.A. lies in the combined strength of its individual members. The galaxy of Boys holding high and responsible positions in almost every walk of life and having in our midst legal luminaries, expert medical practitioners, merchant princes, honoured teachers, to mention only a few, give vigour and strength, honour and prestige to St. John's College and the O.B.A. alike.

The O.B.A. with its laudable past wakes now to greet the golden landmark its Jubilee Year. It greets its Alma Mater, it bows its head with gratitude to the great Principals of the past half century, an those of its loyal members all of whom have now gone beyond the veil; it salutes the present Head of the School; it pledges its loyalty to the Old School and seeks to remain ever in its service.

- F. E. R. Vannitamby
O.B.A. INAUGURAL MEETINGS AND THE FIRST OFFICERS

(From the Jubilee Souvenir)

[This account was sent by Mr. A. J. R Vethavanam who is the most senior member of the committee and office bearer of the O.B.A. having served on the committee continually since 1906. He is President of the O.B.A., South Ceylon since 1944.]

JAFFNA

At the request of several old boys the Rev. Jacob Thompson, Principal of St. John's College, called a meeting of old boys to be held on April 18th, 1904. A very large number of old boys met in the Old Hall (now Library) for the purpose of forming the St. John's College Old Boys' Association. The Principal presided and made a few introductory remarks, after which some of the senior old boys spoke in support of the object.

After the resolution to inaugurate the St. John's College Old Boys' Association was unanimously adopted, the election of Office Bearers took place.

Patron:
The Rt. Rev. The Lord Bishop of Colombo

President:
The Principal of St. John's College (ex-officio)

Vice-Presidents
The Head Master of St. John's College (ex-officio)
Mr. J. M. Hensman & Mr. Isaac Tambiah

Hon. Secretary and Treasurer
Mr. Edgar A. Niles
It was announced amidst applause that Mr. Isaac Tambiah had consented to be Editor of the Magazine to be started as the Organ of the O.B.A.

The following became Life Members at the same time: - The Rev. C. C. Handy, The Rev. J. Thompson and Mr. W. Wadsworth.

COLOMBO

Following the inauguration of the O.B.A. in Jaffna a move was made to organize a Branch Association in Colombo, as there was a large number of old boys residing in and about the city. As a result Messrs. W Wadsworth and J. A. Muthuvelu undertook to call a meeting of old boys for the purpose. A large number of old boys, both old and young, assembled on June 4th, 1904, in the Christ Church Galle Face School Room, and met the Rev. C. C. Handy, Head Master who was then in Colombo.

The meeting began with Mr. Handy in the Chair. It was resolved unanimously to form a Branch Association of the St. John’s College Old Boys’ Association in Colombo. The election of Office Bearers then took place. The Rev. R. W. Ryde, a former Principal of S1. John’s and Vicar, at the time, of Christ Church, was elected President. Mr. W Wadsworth and Mudir. C. Kailasapillai were elected Vice-Presidents; Mr. J. ’A. Muthuvelu, Hon. Secretary and Mr. C. Arulpragasam, Treasurer. With a vote of thanks the meeting closed.

The Rev. A. E. Dibben, C.M.S. Secretary was elected an honorary member, and Mr. V. J. Tambypillai, Auditor, at a later meeting.
1904 -54 EX-OFFICIO PRESIDENTS OF THE O.B.A.

Rev. Jacob Thompson M.A 1904-1919
Rev. K. C. McPherson M.A 1919(actg)
Mr. A M. Nathaniel B.A. 1919(actg)
Mr. Henry Peto M.A 1920-1940
Mr. T. H. Crossette M.A 1921
Rev. J. T. Arulanantham B.Sc 1941

ELECTED PRESIDENTS 0 .B. A. JAFFNA

Mr. R. R. Selvadurai 1946-1948
Dr. C. Candiah 1948-1950
Mr. Sam Sabapathy 1951-1953
Dr. A. M. D. Richards 1953-1954
Mr. S. Thambydurai 1954-

ELECTED PRESIDENTS SOUTH CEYLON

Rev. R. W. Ryde 1904-1905
Mr. A.J. R. Vethavanam 1944-
ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

(From the Jubilee Souvenir)

Monday the 24th of April 1905, will be hereafter a memorable day to many of the Old Boys, and many too of the present generation, when they become "Old Boys" in their turn, will come to read it as the day when the alumni of St. John's College, Jaffna held their First Annual General Meeting which was a great success. The Rev. J. I. Pickford, the Acting Principal of the College presided. There was a large and respectable gathering of friends and Old Boys of College, Songs and recitations formed part of the interesting programme.

The secretary read the following report:

First Annual Report 1904-05

In attempting to survey the work of St. John's College Old Boys' Association for the year, the Committee feel thankful that they have to speak of steady progress. It was formed with the object of increasing the sense of fellowship in Old Boys both with one another and with the College, to promote good work among them, and to afford guidance and encouragement to the younger generation.

The formation of such a society has supplied a long-felt want, and has formed a link between the past and the present members of the College. If other Schools and Colleges in this Island can boast of having turned out men who have proved worthy of their Alma Mater, surely St. John's College can boast of as many, if not more, and these men banding themselves together for good purposes cannot but exercise a wide influence for good.

The Association at present (April 24th) consists of its Patron, President and three Vice-Presidents elected at the last General Meeting, four life-members, and 117 members who have enrolled themselves during the year. The Colombo Branch was started on the 4th of June 1904, and was duly recognized by this Committee. The success of this Branch, so far, is due chiefly to the exertions of the office-bearers; but in stating this we do not forget others who have helped them to this result.

Your Committee met for the transaction of business on four different occasions besides today, and at the first meeting inter alia appointed Mr. Isaac Tambiah, Editor of St. John's College Magazine. At a subsequent meeting, Corresponding Secretaries were elected for Pt. Pedro, Mannar, Mullaitivu and the state of Perak in addition to those elected at the General Meeting. The work in connection with the Association could not have been carried on as it has been but for the hearty co-operation of a large number of men specially of the Corresponding Secretaries. The Committee desire to place on record their high appreciation of their services, and to express their thanks to all who have helped throughout the year.

St. John's College Magazine' is the organ of the Old Boys' Association. The purpose of the magazine is to keep the alumni in touch with their Alma Mater. The cordial sympathy with which this journalistic venture has been received by the Press, the Old Boys and other friends is a source of great encouragement The Committee beg to offer their sincere thanks to the Public and the Press for their generous sympathy and support. To M. Isaac Thambiah who has helped in editing the Magazine, sometimes even at great inconvenience to himself, they feel they owe a great debt of gratitude.

St. John's College Calendar for the year 1905, which was published in January with the help of Head Master, the Rev.
C. C. Handy, is as comprehensive as it is useful and gives every information there is to be got concerning the College.

In conclusion, the Committee feel that they can look back a year of success, and with the support of Old Boys and friends of College they hope the Association still to go forward and the Magazine to live long.

The Committee now retire from office in favour of those to be elected today.

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS, 1905 - 06
The following Office Bearers were elected:
Patron: The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Colombo
President: The Principal of St. John’s College
Vice Presidents: The Head Master of St. John’s College
Mr. V Casipillai
Mr. Daniel Joseph, J.P.
Mr. J. M. Hensman, RA.
Dr. A. Rajasingham, M.B. & C.M.
Mr. Isaac Tambiah
Mr. L C. Williams, B.A.

Hony. Secretary & Treasurer: Mr. Edgar A. Niles
Committee:
Mr. C. Arumugam
Dr. R. Benjamin
Mr. A. Cadiravaloe
Mr. A. Charavanamuttu
Mr. C. T. Hensman, B.A.
Mr. D. M. Kanakaratnampillai, B A.
Mr. N. S, Lawrence
Mr. M. Luther
Rev. A. Matthias
Mr J. T. Muttiah, Mudr.
Mr. S. Olegasekaram
Mr. T. D. Olegasagriampillai
Mr. G. Philipiah
Mr. S. Ratnathicam
Dr. V Saravanamuttu, M.D.
Mr. S. Somasundram, B.A.
Dr. C. N. Vethavanam, L.M.S.
Mr. T. R Velupillai
Mr. W. Wadsworth, B.A.
Rev. C. T. Williams
CORRESPONDING SECRETARIES

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<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>Mr. W. Wadsworth, Mr. J. A. Muthuvaloe</td>
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<td>Kandy</td>
<td>Mr. E. T. Hoole</td>
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<td>Mr. T. Sinnathamby</td>
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<td>Matale</td>
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<td>Mannar</td>
<td>Mr. S. Vaithilingam</td>
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<td>Mullaitivu</td>
<td>Mr. A. Ariyacutty Mudr.</td>
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<td>Pt. Pedro</td>
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<td>Batticaloa</td>
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<td>Perak</td>
<td>Mr. M. V. Chelliah</td>
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SUMMARY OF SPEECHES

Mr. Proctor Caspiillai said that it was a pleasure to him to be connected with the Old Boys’ Association of St. John’s College. He spoke with affection and regard of Messrs. Robert Williams and Jeremiah Evarts, and the tutorial staff of Chundikuli Seminary during his time as a student. He remembered with pride the work done in the past and referred to the distinguished Old Boys turned out by the College.

Mr. J. M. Hensman, B.A., retired Principal of Cumbakonam College, said that he had forty years experience in India and that Ceylon was at least 25 years behind that country in intellectual life. While education in India, was progressive, Ceylon made little advance in teaching, especially of science. He illustrated by examples the defective method of teaching adopted in Ceylon schools. He was surprised to see that most schools and colleges in Ceylon had no libraries worthy of the name, journals of education, apparatus, gymnasiums etc, to aid in the culture of the mind and body.

Mr. L. C. Williams, B.A. Inspector of Schools in South India, and son of the revered Head Master of Chundikuli Seminary, the late Mr. Robert Williams, spoke with great feeling, and after giving some of his reminiscences as a student of the Seminary dwelt on the noble calling of a teacher, his qualifications and his influence, He referred to his father a strict disciplinarian. He thought that the Jaffna boy was superior to his Indian brother in intellect, physique, originality and resourcefulness. He compared Calcutta University with Madras, and spoke in terms of praise of the latter.

Mr. N. Selvadurai, B.A., Principal of the Hindu College, who represented the sister Colleges in Ceylon, spoke of St. John’s as an elder sister. He referred to the excellent work done by the indefatigable Principal the Rev. Jacob Thompson, and with a touch of humour dwelt on the necessity for rectifying the defects in the methods of teaching and inspection, adopted in Ceylon schools. He thought that St. John’s College implicitly believed the Director of Public Instruction in adopting the Cambridge Locals, and recommended affiliation with the Madras University for the chief reason that it was the only one where encouragement was given to the teaching of Tamil. He wound up his speech by saying that there should be only two first-grade Colleges in Jaffna, a union Christian College and a Hindu College, and that the rest must be only High Schools,
The Chairman referred to his connection with the Jaffna Mission for the last 25 years, during which time he was Principal for short periods more than once. After offering a few remarks in which he stated the probable object or the Director in encouraging the Cambridge Locals, he thanked the speakers, and the meeting was brought to a close with the singing of the National Anthem.
Today the Prefects System is implemented very successfully in all schools. In 1909 the Prefect system was started in our school. We have the distinction of being the first school to start the prefect System in Jaffna. The credit goes to the Principal Revd. J. Thompson. One of the purposes of this system was to train the senior boys in leadership and to advance the course of discipline. They had certain duties and privileges. The boarding house prefects were given rooms and they were allowed to study in their rooms during study hours. The prefects were elected annually arid the discipline of the College outside the class room was under their supervision. Minor offences were dealt with by them. They had the power to give 100 lines of imposition. Serious offences were reported to the Principal or Head Masters.

At the beginning, E.J. Rajaratnam was appointed as the first Senior Prefect. C.J. Chinnappah was elected as the Senior Prefect after him. The first batch of prefects was C.J. Chinnappah, A.T. Sabapathy, James Mather, John Eliyathamby and N. Kulanthavelu. This set was enough to control around 300 students which was the total strength at that time. Now the number of prefects' body is around 35 for the total number of 1500 students. The patronage remains nearly the same as it was in the past.

In 1967 with the appointment of Mr. K. Pooranampillai as our Principal, it goes without saying that the prefects' body received a very big boost during the tenure of his office. He gave more powers to the prefects and on the other hand the prefects rendered their services to maintain discipline and order inside the College premises.

The prefects who came from home helped in the morning and evening studies in the. boarding house, Mr. Pooranampillai praised the prefects when they did their jobs sincerely and admonished when they ignored duties. I still can remember an incident when I was the Senior Prefect in 1971. An exhibition was held in our College. The Principal wanted me to put the prefects on duty at the main entrance and gave a strict order not to allow any vehicle without a pass. So I had to think twice to select a suitable person to put at the main gate. I selected Eswarakanthan and one more project in order to carry out the Principal's order. In the evening a vehicle came and was stopped opposite the College gate. The words "G.A., Jaffna" was pasted on the windscreen. The prefect at the gate was very strict even though the person happened to be the G.A, Jaffna. He couldn't be admitted in without a pass. Our Principal who was at the culvert (corner of the hall) seeing this incident, hurried to the spot and allowed the vehicle to come in. I was frightened because I felt that the Principal might scold us. After the G.A. had gone, the Principal came towards us, patted on Eswarakathan's back and said with a smile "Well done! My boy, you have done a good job." This is one of the incidents that we are really proud of. There is a system to elect prefects in our College.

First of all the students of the A/L classes are allowed to vote to whom they wish to be elected as prefects. Then the prefects vote. A prefect's vote counted as two while the former is counted as one. After that, the teachers' vote and it is counted as three. According to the total votes, the needed number is selected by the advisory board by analyzing their character and conduct.

Every prefect is given a badge, according to his level to safeguard the honour of the College and keep up the trust placed on him. The prefect system is now expanded to all divisions in the College.

In primary and the middle school sections they have their own group of monitors called "Assembly Monitors". In the senior secondary section even though they do not have a separate assembly, they also have a group of monitors. All these monitors are also given badges. A prefect should have following qualities in him.
Perfection
Responsibility
Exemplary
Faithfulness
Earnestness
Capability
Trust

Undoubtedly these qualities make him a rounded personality. The prefects have ample opportunities to get wider experience during their school days. With these experiences, they can manage themselves in any part of the world.

We are really proud of our prefect system and wish them to continue their services with the same spirit.

- S. ANTONYPILLAI
CADETING AT ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE IN THE NINETEEN FIFTIES

Records show that cadeting was introduced to St. John's College, Jaffna, in early nineteen twenties during the time of Rev. Henry Peto as Principal.

The nucleus of the cadet platoon was formed from the physical drill squads in the school at that time. Mr. A. S. Abraham who was the master in charge of the senior physical drill squad was appointed as the master in charge of cadeting. He was given a Commission as Honorary Lieutenant in the Ceylon Cadet, Battalion by His Excellency the Governor.

The records also indicate that in 1924 St. John's had done well in the various competitions held at the annual cadet camp in Diyatalawa and was Runners-up in the "Herman Loos" Challenge Cup for the Best Cadet Platoon.

St. John's College, Jaffna, was the first to have a contingent of the Ceylon Cadet Battalion in the North, followed by Jaffna Hindu College and St. Patricks' College much later. Cadets from these three schools from the north were grouped as the "Attach Company".

In the early fifties there was only one Cadet Battalion in the country and it was called the Ceylon Cadet Battalion - CCB in short. At St. John's College during this period Mr. V. M. Mathews was the master in charge of the senior cadet platoon and Mr. S. Tharmalingam was master in charge of the junior cadet platoon. Both of them have had attended many camps and held the rank of "Captains".

The annual cadet camps were eagerly awaited event by both senior and junior cadets at St. John's. The junior cadets were boys who were between the ages of 13 and 16, whilst senior cadets were above 16 years. The junior cadet's uniform consisted of a Khaki slouch hat, Khaki shirt, Khaki shorts, yellow top black stockings and brown shoes, while the Senior Cadet uniform: consisted of blue beret, Khaki shirt, Khaki trousers, web belts, web anklets and black leather boots. The senior cadets had a strength of 25 boys in each platoon, commanded by a Platoon Commander (Master-In-Charge), a platoon sergeant, six NCO's (non commissioned officers) and 18 cadets. Junior cadets had a platoon commander (Master-In-Charge), a platoon sergeant, a lance sergeant and 5 NCO’s, and 18 cadets. Apart from these platoons, two of the most senior cadets who have attended camps among the three schools in Jaffna are selected to be the CSM (Company Sergeant Major) and CQMS (Company Quarter Master Sergeant).

The junior cadet Camp is held in the month of March every year in Galle at the Boosa Race Course. The duration is 3 days (from Thursday to Saturday). Junior cadets and their platoon commanders from over 50 schools from different parts of the island consisted of 1500 cadets. They were trained and administered by the permanent staff of the Ceylon Army consisting of warrant officers and senior NCOs seconded for service with CCB under the Ceylon Volunteer Force (CVF). Cadets are put through a rigorous training programme on a strict time table to instill discipline. The daily routine starts with the "wake up" bugle call called "Reveille" at 5.00 a.m. Physical Training starts at 6.00 a.m., breakfast at 7:30 a.m. and at 8.30 a.m. Muster Parade starts in the main Parade Ground where nominated Senior Officers inspect each cadet in the platoon for personal hygiene, (i.e. hair cuts, nails). Clean and pressed uniforms, shoes polished.....etc. while the muster parade is on, a different set of nominated Senior Officers inspect the billets referred to as "Huts Inspection" where cadets are expected to arrange their personal belongings, beds, blankets, plates, mugs, shoes etc. in a neat, tidy and orderly manner. After the muster parade there is squad drill till tea time at 10.00 a.m. From 10.30 a.m. till 12.30 p.m. there are classes in subjects such as Field Craft, and Map reading. Sports and other competitions are held in the afternoon and evenings. Variety entertainment by the different schools takes place from 6.00 p.m. till dinner at 8.30 p.m. Before the "lights offs" bugle call at 10.00 p.m. called the "Last Post", cadets have to arrange their P. T. dress, uniforms, polish their foot wear for the following, day. After the lights off call no-one will
switch on the lights. Marks are allocated for drill, turnout, Hut Inspections and other competitions to choose the best "Cadet Platoon". If any cadet is reported for in-discipline or for tardiness, not only does the platoon loose marks but the school also loses its name. So cadets are to be in their best behaviour.

The senior cadet camp is held in the month of August every year in the cool and scenic Diyatalawa amidst a Military environment in the CVF camp. The duration is 10 days. The senior cadets wear a similar uniform of a Ceylon Army Soldier and they are warned by the Camp Commandant in his opening address that during the duration of the Camp cadets are subject to Military Discipline and are liable to be checked by a Military Policeman. Senior cadets training is strenuous and more Military oriented. Apart from the usual basic training, inspections and competitions specialized training is given in Compass Marches; Recce Patrols, Weapon handling, Rifle Drill, Target practice and Live firing of .303. Rifle at the Army Shooting Range. Cadets compete with enthusiasm to get the most coveted award "Herman Loos Trophy" for the best school contingent.

In the mid fifties cadeting being introduced to more schools throughout the island, the CCB was up graded called the Ceylon Cadet Corps - CCC for short. The CCC had three battalions under command namely 1Bn CCC,2BnCCC,3BnCCC. School Contingents in the Matale and Kandy areas were grouped into the 1Bn CCC, School Contingents from schools in South of Colombo, Kalutara and Galle formed the 2 Bn CCC and 3 Bn CCC comprised of schools in Central Colombo, and schools North of Colombo. Jaffna School Contingents under "Attach Company" was attached to 3 Bn CCC. With the newly organised Ceylon Cadet Corp the Junior Cadet Camp were also held at Diyatalawa CVF Camp.

In the mid fifties Capt. V. M. Mathews left St. John's and went back to India. Capt. Tharmalingam took charge of the Senior Cadets. At this period of time Mr. P. James joined St. John's as new master in charge of Physical Training. He was a qualified PT Instructor from Y.M.C.A. College, Saidapet. He was an enthusiastic games master and a keen Dramatist. He took over the Junior Cadets and managed it well. Many are the yarns and jokes we had during his initial days with cadeting. He was later promoted as Lieutenant.

At St. John's the Cadets have been called up for duty at school functions such as Prize Giving, Exhibitions, Stage Plays (Drama) Sport-meets and any special school functions. Duties included to present a Guard of Honour to the Chief Guest, Street lining. Traffic Control, Manning gates, Maintain security orderliness etc.

In the early sixties, in 1962 to be exact, the Government then took a decision to take over all assisted schools and St. John's College opted to be a private school. The Government thereafter withdrew the facilities and cadeting came to an end at St. John's College

Cadeting has given the students an exposure and the experience to mould character to acquire and develop leadership qualities, instill discipline, work as a team mate. build courage, self confidence and teaches to be humble in victory and accept defeat gracefully.

The closing, ceremony of the Annual Cadet Camp is very sad as you know all the fun and good times have _me to an end. After the award of Prizes and Trophies, it is customary the Battalion Commander makes his closing address. In one such instance in the late fifties I still remember the words "Today you learn to obey so that tomorrow you are competent to command". Words of wisdom of this type given at the cadet camps have stirred the inspiration of many cadets to achieve great heights in their future lives.

"We thank our Alma Mater
for the Johnian spirit in us.

- Major General T. Sivashanmugam USP
Many thoughts pass my mind as I write this article for the O.B.A. centenary. This is an appropriate time to record the achievements of the school in order that the future generations will know what the past generations have done to the school to what it is today. We have to record with gratitude the contributions made by our predecessors whose task was to guide the destiny of the school.

According to records, Rev. K. C. Mc Pherson was Acting Principal when the first Physical Training Squads were formed. He in his wisdom assigned Masters to be in charge of these P.T. Squads. These were the nucleus of the Cadet Contingent of the school as they were formed.

During our time, that is, in the late 1950s Mr. P. James was the Master in charge of the P. T. Squad. He had been trained in India as a P. T. Instructor and introduced a number of new drills which became an instant hit. Mr James was also a Lieutenant of the Ceylon Cadet Battalion and was in charge of the Senior Cadets of the College. Thus, at this time the Cadets were the nucleus of the P.T. Squad.

In 1959, the Northern Province Physical Training Championship competition was held in Jaffna at the esplanade. The College P.T. Squad participated in this competition and came out as Winners with flying colours. Mr. Duncan White, the famous Olympic Silver Medalist was the Chief Guest at the award ceremony.

Due to the very high standards reached at this competition it was decided that the team should now go all out for the All Ceylon Physical Training Championship Shield. This competition was to be held in Colombo at the Oval grounds. The team had to travel by train to Colombo and were put up at St. Joseph’s College, Maradana.

As the day of the competition arrived, there were many anxious moments as most of the leading schools participated at this competition. Mr. Duncan White was one of the Judges. This was a full day programme. At last by evening the results were announced. St. John’s were the winners of the All Ceylon Physical Training Championship. This was a moment of glory, a singular honour, a historic and memorable day for the school. St. John’s proudly carried away the All Ceylon Physical Training Championship Shield that year.

- R. B. C. ARIARATNAM