

Ninaivil Nirainthavai

by

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I am lying down at home in Melbourne Australia and letting my mind walk through the past, my happy days at St Johns College Jaffna. The following scenes flash through my mental screen. These are random thoughts and no specific sequence is considered.

Beginning of a School Week

Its Monday morning and another school week begins, it is 8.15 a.m. and Mr K Pooranampillai our enigmatic principal begins his long walk from the principal's bungalow to the office. The students on his path would have to greet him and also have to make sure whether during the weekend we have on our best behavior ie what is expected of a Johnian. The sunny morning and the clean air whistles through the mahoganies and we the students gather in the majestic Robert Williams hall for the morning assembly. The bright sun gleams through the ancient windows of Robert Williams Hall. The Principals begins the assembly with a message (in typical English Grammar school style) which stimulates our young minds to achieve higher goals in life. I can still vividly remember the Watergate Scandal, which shook the American presidency and how Mr Pooranampilai related it to us. He subsequently directed us to read magazines like the Newsweek, Times and made sure there were enough copies in the library. The current affairs class which Mr K Pooranampilai started instilled in me a life long interest in politics /Economics/Law.

A day in the Handy Memorial Library

Well its another happy afternoon at St Johns College and our Pure Maths teacher Mr K Ganeshalingam is absent and we have been asked to go to the library for the period. Lo and behold we have first contact with our new librarian Miss AH. At the sight of the Advanced level boys the new librarian seems to shudder, but her determination to keep her boys under control is evident in her face. My dear friend JM is equally determined to have a laugh and stir up the new librarian. I pre warned him of the risks involved as Mr KP would not tolerate any signs of disturbance in the library. But JM would not have anything of it, he walks unto the young librarian and demands that he is planning to do research in electricity and he want all the books relating to the subject, much to the amusement of all us. The librarian faithfully brings about five books and gives it to JM. His reply was "well this is not sufficient" and instructs the librarian to request the principal to stock more books so that he can do his research. Well ! Well! I thought the matter has been settled, but after a few minutes, the principal request JM to see him in his office. On JM's return to the library I noticed, his face was red with pain, when I asked him as to what had happened he replied that MR KP promised to get more for books for his research. However this story didn't convince me, as a matter a casual interest I asked Miss SS who was the principal's secretary as to what had happened, to my horror I found that my friend had been caned by him for six times and the library was made out of bounds for two weeks. Poor he could not complete his research, but this very same enterprising young lad rose to become a captain in the Merchant Navy and commanded many a large freight liner.

Friday of a Cricket Season St Johns vs St Patricks

The morning is filled with excitement and we are in the Physics class of Mr T Thavaraslingam. Teaching of physics becomes secondary and everything from the toss, selection of the team are the issues of the day. I happened to be the opening batsman along with Balajothy during that season. A sense of anxiety and frustration grips me - will be in the team or will I be dropped?? Mr Thavrasalingam looks at me and realizes my fear and tells me "payapadathey you are my choice". Players are allowed to go home by 1.30 pm and we are expected to be back by 2.30 pm and the team is announced by Mr S K Mahalingam at 2.45 PM. I could not believe it - yes I am in the team and

opening with CS Mills and Balajothy is going down the order as playing as an all rounder. SJC wins the toss and Thevapalan our captain decides to bat. OH WHAT A FEELING as I walk out with CS Mills to the middle, the joy of opening for SJC floods my mind and the applause still reverberates in my ears. A wonderful sunny afternoon in Jaffna and the SJC ground is filled with appreciative spectators from all walks of life. The old park road wall is a vantage point for spectators from bicycles and of course for Chundikuli girls as they finish school walk past at 3.45 PM.

A Saturday afternoon at the Y .M.C.A

Chundikuli drifts into a lazy Saturday afternoon after a busy week most of the Jaffna folks are looking forward to the weekend snooze. But definitely not for the YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS in the suburb of Chundikuli. The cars and buses to and from Kachcheri bus stand are few and far between. And we gather at the YMCA table tennis room, fortunately this room is strategically located since while playing Table Tennis you can watch the movement of people outside. We have a good game of Table Tennis and any scoring issues are sorted by Brodie Master and his word is final. A nice cup tea at the YMCA canteen refreshes us for another round of table tennis. In case the table tennis bores us just come and stand at the porch of the YMCA. I assure you it is far better than walking down Chapel street in Melbourne. If there is a overflow of young men at the YMCA, well Thurairajah's cycle Kadai is there. As I walk in to utter excitement I see some of my senior friends trying out cigarette smoking, after all smoking was the done thing in those happy days in Chundikuli. We never thought of Cholesterol, Nicotine or heart attacks

Our College Crest

**The Eternal God, Creation's Prima Causa
the Big Bang that set the galaxies in motion
and decreed, "Let there be light" – wisdom
for Homo Sapiens to research, discern, share
the latent laws of Nature and of life;
the Light that lights humanity – revealing
mysteries through philosophy, religion,
and the sciences:- Moses and Manu*,
Socrates and Plato, Galileo with his
Helio-centric theory, Newton the laws
of motion, Darwin, the evolution of life,
Faraday, Raman, Einstein, many more:
all, inspired by that Eternal Wisdom,
revealing her mysteries to the humble.
"Lux in tenebris lucet"@, on the College Crest
proclaims the power of light to conquer
evil, with the Queen of birds – the eagle
winging its flight to mountain heights,
challenges Johnians past, present, future,
strive to find the unfailing Eternal Truth,
that in the school's hallowed precincts great,
has been taught for ages by revered Gurus,
whose total dedication to teach and share
their wisdom with countless pupils dear,
year in, year out, enlightening tender minds
with Jnanam# great ,subtle, we remember.
May the College with its Eagle Crest
nursed by sturdy Mahoganies
continue long, to foster noble alumni,
faithful to what is just, right and true.**

– Rev A J C Selvaratnam

* wise man @The light shines in darkness # wisdom