

## Glimpses

I want to thank Tan Sri President and members of OFA Selangor / Wilayah Persekutuan for inviting me to the anniversary dinner to-night and for giving me an opportunity to address you.

Old boys remember their Headmasters for a number of reasons. Much depends on the purpose of their visit to the office of their headmaster. Sometimes a student is there to ask the HM for a testimonial. Sometimes he is there to discuss some matter concerning a certain school society. Sometimes he is there on a personal matter.

One such student was in the office of Mr. R.H. Pinhorn, one of the most illustrious heads the Free School has ever had. He had come to say : "good-bye" to Mr. Pinhorn. The HM glowered at the student and said: " Have I ever caned you?" The boy answered: "No, Sir." Mr. Pinhorn replied:" Then, bend over!"

Mr. Pinhorn was Headmaster of the Free School for more than 20 years. His contribution to the school was tremendous. Many of the traditions we have in the school can be traced back to the Pinhorn era. There is a plaque put up in his honour at the entrance lobby of the school at the base of the right staircase.

There is one more story about Mr. Pinhorn. He walked with a limp. The story is told that he would ride his bicycle to school. And when he arrived just outside the school building he would shout, "Imam!" On hearing this, Imam, the school peon, would dash out of the school building just in time to catch hold Mr. Pinhorn's bicycle as he jumped off it!

These are two pictures of Mr. Pinhorn. To-night I would like to look at some other pictures which I have of some old teachers and students of our school.

When I assumed duty as Headmaster of the Free School. Mr. Ong Teong Guan was my Senior Assistant. I remember Mr. Ong as one of the kindest souls alive. I don't think he could have hurt a fly. He taught Mathematics to the upper school. My picture of him is his being seated at his desk working out the time tables for the teachers of the school. In all the years I was headmaster Mr. Ong completed the time tables for the classes and the teachers before the first day of the school year so that they could be distributed to all concerned before school opened for the new year and so that lessons could start on the first day of the school year. Such was the dedication of this fine teacher.

Mr. G.S. Reutens the composer of the School Rally studied at St. Xavier's Institution! He came, saw and was conquered by the Free school. He was the school Art teacher and when he handed me the School Rally, he said that he could not compose the School song as he had not studied in Free school. He said that the school song must capture the spirit of the Free school and only an old Free had this spirit. I see that the school song has yet to written.

My picture of Mr. N. Valupillay is on the hockey pitch talking with members of the school hockey team on a Monday evening at about 7.30pm. Obviously they were discussing

tactics for their annual game with Malay College that weekend. It was common for him to spend almost the whole day at the school on Mondays and Thursdays. And on Saturdays he was with his Sea Scouts in the mornings. Old Frees like Koe Chong Jin and Bashir Ahmad here to-night will know that his kidneys have failed him and he undergoes regular sessions of dialysis. I met him recently and I find that in spite of his health problem, his spirit has not dampened. Truly many boys of the School owe a lot to this fine teacher.

One day Mr. Quah Seng Chye came to my office with a proposal. He wanted to start a Volleyball team in the school. I told him that it was fine but we had no proper Volleyball court. He replied, "Never mind. Sir, we shall build one; just let have \$1000." And he did just that! Together with members of his Volleyball team with a borrowed concrete mixer, he built a volleyball court, albeit not a very elegant one! And in two years he coached a team which became the best school boy team in the state. Mr. Seng Chye would become emotionally involved during Rugby matches. He would walk up and down the touch line shouting instructions to his players and often cause embarrassment by making unwelcomed comments about referees, too. I remember having to ban him from attendance at some matches. But there was no question about his love for the school and for the games which he coached.

Lim Chin Kee was Headboy of the Free School when I took over the reins of the school in 1963. During his university vacations he used to visit me, informing me of his dream of returning to teach in his old school. His dream was realised in 1967 when he joined the teaching staff. In 1975 when I was Director of Education of Penang, I appointed him Senior Assistant of the school. He served our school with distinction, with a sense of dedication of the highest order so much so that for his outstanding performance of duty he had to leave the school. He was promoted Principal of nearby Georgetown Secondary School. It was always my hope that he would return oneday to head his alma mater. But that was not to be. He passed away suddenly in 1991, the year the school was celebrating its 175 th anniversary. So many of his class of 1963 were in the school with their classmate, Goh Hooi Beng, who was the Headmaster, but Chin Kee was not there.

Those of you present here to-night who attended Free School before 1951 will remember Capt. Mohd. Noor. I used to tell him that he was the only teacher who could control his by remote control. All he had to do was to place his songkok on the teacher's desk and all was well. Beneath that stern and disciplined exterior was a heart of gold with so much care and love for the students he taught.

And now a word or two about some old students.

My picture of Harris Beh is on the Rugby pitch. He is hurling himself against an opposing three-quarter in a crunching tackle trying to bring him down. The problem was that we are playing the Penang Sports Club and his opponent is almost twice Harris' size! But no matter the opponent must be stopped at all costs.

Who can forget the figure of Abdul Satar running the last leg of a 4x100 inter-school relay after receiving the baton from the third runner and successfully maintaining the lead as he flashes past the finishing line?

Student leaders often see me in my office on society or club matters. Choong Lai Huat was often there discussing matters relating to the Music and Drama Society. However very often the discussion did not end there. It would end up by his giving his point of view of some obscure school rule which, in his opinion, should be changed. And very often a heated discussion ensued. I am certain these experiences must have benefitted Lai Huat in one way or another.

Tarquiddin Farouk will remember the occasion when he was in my office trying to persuade me to approve an article of his which he wanted to be included in "Outlook," the Sixth Form magazine. He was terribly persuasive using all his charm to try and convince me. In the end you know what happened to this article.

Who can forget the sight of Teh Ping Choon bringing down an opposing forward on the soccer pitch who was on his way to score a certain goal? We were playing our arch rivals, St. Xavier's, and the goal would mean that we would lose the match. For that foul Ping Choon received the red card. To him the situation was clear: he had to prevent the scoring of the goal even if it meant his expulsion from the field.

Last night I looked at some of the old School magazines. I found the 1967 copy and I read the editorial written by Tan Heng Soon, the Editor. Many of you will remember him: he is one of the best all round students the school has ever produced. After a brilliant school academic record he read Medicine at Harvard University. I want to end my speech tonight by reading an extract from this editorial.

....."When we away from here in another time in another place, in pensive mood, nostalgia strikes sudden and hard. Memories will rush back through the years to October 21 a day mellowed with age, a timeless repetition of history; the simple ceremony at our Founder's tomb in early dawn, attended by a select few; the smart parade on the field; the grand ceremony in the Hall-- all these will have pleasantly surprised Rev. Hutchings. We will remember the morning assemblies: the measured foot-falls of the Headmaster tapping out its message across the still Hall, the eruption of applause following each announcement. We picture the Prefects, always dutifully there, the objects of students' aspirations and the pride of the school. We all remember "Showtime" a tremendous night of laughter, music and songs and the public exams-- days upon days of papers, during which time examination-phobia all but loses its sting. And then there were matches: games of skill, tests of fitness, grit, and determination:.....up the Fees! go the shouts.....our never-say -die spirit.....once a Free..... always a Free! These words more and more meaningful come the day when we say goodbye to the School for the last time."

Thank you.

Dato Tan Boon Lin