

Newsletter



Editorial

Admission of daughters of Old Girls to VV

However uncomfortable it may be for most of us, an issue that some of us for long sought to ignore needs now be brought into the open.

It is the reluctance of many Visakhians, some of whom are second & even third generation Old Girls and some former Executive Committee Members, to admit their daughters to Visakha. This at a time when there is enormous competition in the admissions to our school which is acknowledged as the best in the land!

Loyalty to and pride in their alma mater of many of these Visakhians are unequivocal. Most of them never miss an OGA function nor fail to donate generously when the hat is passed around on behalf of the Association.

What then are the reasons for their opting to send their daughters to private schools rather than bequeathing the privilege of being Visakhians on their progeny? They are many none of them trivial and all worthy of digestion by all of us die hard Visakhians.

The competition at admission is cited as a major reason, although it is the view of many of us that how ever hard the admission process may be, the outcome is truly worth it.

The peer pressure, the competition, the constant striving for the best in achievement, all hall marks of Visakha are regarded detractors by them. Surely they say, each student has her own pace of learning, special skills & leanings which they believe are neither recognised nor supported at Visakha.

It has to be admitted that the individuality of persona is not one of the traits encouraged at our school. Conformity to a certain ideal is.

Perhaps a certain degree of lessening of pressure for achievement and the encouragement of a rounded personality of each and every student should be the needs of the day. This is not to woo every Old Girl to admit their daughters to Visakha, but to strengthen our belief that Visakha is the best in every sense imaginable.

Priya de Silva

Sita Rajasuriya Remembered

This is my personal appreciation of a much beloved and respected Girl Guide Captain of the 11th Colombo Girl Guides of Visakha

Mrs Rajasuriya arrived at Visakha with her two stalwart assistants Yaso Punchihewa & Rupa Gomes. The trio, all past Visakhians were to awaken a hibernating 11th Colombo Girl Guide Company and see it become one of the best amongst those in the Island.

We would gather in the shade of the magnificent Na tree which stood beside the netball court in those days. Planning meetings, establishing patrols, appointing patrol leaders and even having patrol badges embroidered were tasks embraced with enthusiasm. I do not remember a single meeting at which Mrs Rajasuriya was not present – always her charming self, wearing her sunny smile.

Visakha had the honour of having four Visakhians among the contingent of six to attend a World Jamboree in Narabun Australia – a first for Sri Lanka. Needless to say Mrs Rajasuriya took on the responsibility of accompanying this bevy of lively teenagers to the event ably assisted by Janet Vairakian. On a train journey to an evening campfire, two of our group unused to the automatic doors on the train, got over carried. Mrs Rajasuriya seeing us from the platform didn't appear to 'turn a hair'. After the first minutes of panic, we decided to disembark at the next stop. Having navigated ourselves to the opposite platform & travelled back to meet the rest of the group, we leapt off the train to be greeted by 'I knew you'd be sensible enough to know what to do'.

Much has been written about her services to the Girl Guide Movement where she rose to the highest office as All Island Chief Commissioner, and her subsequent work with Sarvodaya.

Sita Rajasuriya during her tenure took the Girl Guide movement to the rural areas & I believe tailored it to local needs. It appears that in that

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time Sri Lanka also acquired the redesigned Trefoil with its elephant emblem.

Despite many ups & downs which she weathered with fortitude and good humour she was an example of unstinting service to Sri Lankan women. Her trade mark smile will be missed by all of us who knew her along her journey.

Kumari Wickramasuriya

Notice to Fellow Visakhians –

The Visakha Archives

The Visakha Archives is now open every Tuesday & Thursday from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm. An OGA member will be available to guide you around. Young Visakhians can find out how Visakha began and why it was started. There is information about the Founder Mrs Jeremias Dias nee Selestina Rodrigo and about how today's National School grew from small beginning. Older members will be able to indulge in nostalgia and will perhaps have a few anecdotes to share with present Visakhians.

Please make use of the resources offered to get to know your school and its traditions especially as Ramya Wanniarachchi and her team have worked doggedly to make the Archives what it is today.

Visakha Web Site

Please await a redesigned web site www.visakhav.org

Professional Directory of Visakha Alumni

With the aim of identifying the resources and tapping on the fund of loyalty of Old Girls, a Professional Directory is to be set up which would be a source of information and assistance to Visakhians as and when needed. Those wishing to subscribe could send in the following data to *Kumari Wickramasuriya* iramku@sltnet.lk

Name – married & maiden

Profession –

Place of work –

Address at work –

Home address –

Contact information - postal, email & telephone

(Please remember to send updates on any changes to the data furnished)

75th Anniversary Celebrations

A milestone of the VVOGA was celebrated in style and with much fellowship on the 21st November 2009 at the Galle Face Hotel.

The highlight of the evening was the recognition and felicitation of past Visakhians who since leaving school have brought honour to the Country and to the School.

Nominations were received from diverse fields from the public and winners were selected solely by a panel of eminent judges who described the winners as being the “Best among Equals”.

The winners of the Platinum Awards were –
Mrs Upeka Chitrasena de Silva - Performing Arts

Dr Binodh de Silva – Science & Technology

Mrs Nela De Zoysa – Architecture

Mrs Shirani Damindra Dias – Industry & Entrepreneurship

Dr Shanika Karunasekera – Engineering

Dr Kamini Mendis – Medicine & Health

Professor Ira Thabrew - Education

Mrs Anoja Wijeyesekera – Community Service

Mrs Kishani Jayasinghe Wijeyesekera - Performing Arts

Dr Anula Wijesundere – Medicine & Health

In addition, a Life Time Achievement Award initiated and presented by the OGA was awarded to the well known Film Director & Cinematographer - *Mrs Sumithra Peries*.

The awards took the form of a glittering ceremony preceded by the screening of a documentary of the OGA.

The evening was rounded off by singing & dancing by a capacity crowd both young and old who seemed bent on enjoying the camaraderie of being fellow Visakhians. (Pics. on page 3)

Visakha Dinner Dance 2010

Date - Friday 13th August 2010

Venue – Oak Room, Cinnamon Grand Colombo

Bands – Misty & Flame

Proceeds would be used towards the further development of the English medium of study which is now available in the entire senior school.

Urgently needed – Sponsorships, souvenir advertisements, display banners and donations

Inquiries:

Jeevanie Pandithage jeevsp@sltnet.lk

Anusha Malwatte anushamalwatta@yahoo.com.au



Some award winners with the President OGA. From L to R *Anoja Wijeyesekera, Nela De Zoysa, Sandamali Aviruppola (President), Sumithra Peries, Anula Wjesundere & Ira Tabrew*

Award Winners not present in person to accept awards – *Upeka Chitrasena de Silva, Binodh de Silva, Shiranee Damindra Dias, Kishani Jayasinghe Wijeyseker, Shanika Karunasekera & Kamini Mendis*

Pictures from the 75th Anniversary Celebrations of the VVOGA



Mrs Manel Ratnatunga (a former Head Girl VV) & Miss Sumana Saparamadu (a former Vice President VVOGA) cutting the anniversary cake



DVDs of the documentary of 75 years of the VVOGA are available for purchase at Rs 450/ each. Inquiries: *Priya de Silva* 2856268/0773185044

Calendar of Events - 2009/2010

- March 25th** **Founder's day Pirith & Dane**
Inquiries: Mihiri Gunawardena 0773912089
mihiring@sltnet.lk
- April 3rd** **Avurudhu Pola**
Inquiries: Ramani Gomes 0714340046
Sabitha Guanatilaka
jithnsabitha@gmail.com
- May** **Vesak Project - Donation to Cancer Hospital, Maharagama**
Inquiries: Mihiri Gunawardena
mihiring@sltnet.lk
- June** **VVOGA AGM**
- July 23rd** **Susan George Pulimood Oration**
by Prof. Ira Thabrew
- July 25th** **Esala Sil Program**
Inquiries: Mihiri Gunawardena 0773912089
mihiring@sltnet.lk
- August 13th** **Visakha Dinner Dance 2010**
Inquiries: Jeevanie Pandithage
jeevsp@sltnet.lk
Priya de Silva chulalds@sltnet.lk
Sharmali Kodagoda
aeoldt@isplanka.lk

Obituaries

The VVOGA records with much sadness the passing away of many Old Girls among whom mention must be made of –

Mrs Sita Rajasuriya – Appreciation by Kumari Wickramasuriya is on page 1

Mrs Yaso Punchihewa - Past Secretary of the VVOGA

Contribution from a Member

The well-woman concept

Screening include –

- Pap smear – every 3 yrs for cancer of cervix (mouth of the cervix)
- The Human Papilloma Vaccine (HPV) can prevent Cervical cancer
- Pelvic examination
- Breast Examination over age of 35 yrs
- Annual mammograms (over the age of 35 yrs). Particularly those at high risk eg family history
- Weight & Body Mass Index. A BMI > 24 kg/m²; indicates excessive weight & necessitates advice on diet & exercise
- Blood Pressure
- Cholesterol levels
- Blood sugar
- Thyroid levels

Those over 50 yrs (in addition to the above) –

- Management of menopausal symptoms
- Pelvic Examination, Blood test & Ultra Sound Scan for Ovarian cancer
- Stools for occult blood & Colonoscopy for colorectal cancer

With best wishes to my fellow Visakhians for good health and happiness throughout the coming year and decade, “*Arogya parama laba*”

Professor Chandrika N Wijeyaratne

MBBS, DM (Col), MD, FRCP (London), FCCP

Consultant Physician & Endocrinologist