Brief notes

Apparently it's a publishing axiom that there are never enough pages to publish all the articles. Well, it sounded like a contradiction to me when I first began putting together this issue. We hardly had anything in the pipeline. So, I had to follow another axiom—Do the best with what you got. Then Edan (Class of ’55) sent his promised story about the reunion and Srini (Class of ’78) sent the profiles of two of his classmates. Old Boys always come to the rescue!

There have been many discussions on the mailing list about various potential projects we should consider. Julian Prabhu (Class of 1969) proposed the establishment of Alumni Scholarships for the best overall student (during the final school year) and for economically needy students. A positive response has been obtained from a few of the Old Boys supporting this proposal. Further discussion continues with regards to the scope of the proposal and the details of execution.

Another proposal which has been suggested by quite a few Old Boys is the establishment of an annual Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award for the best teacher as voted by current students of St.Pat’s. The details of this proposal have yet to be discussed. Your ideas, comments and suggestions are awaited. Let Echoes be a forum, in addition to the online discussions, for us to exchange further thoughts on these and other interesting proposals.

Since the last issue our online network has grown significantly. We now have over 120 members! Although, our directory remains largely untouched and needs to get updated (the Yahoo! Database). All subscribed members are requested to log into the group and verify their listing. In addition, subscribed members are requested to invite some more of their friends and classmates to our online forum.

Profiles of my Classmates

Srini Nagasundram, Class of ’78

I remember Ravi Rangan joining our class after moving to India in 1975, from London. He is remembered for lending many of us his Superman comic collection! His was in Section ‘A’ (there were three sections those days) and belonged to Andrew’s House (blue).

Some of his unforgettable moments at Patrick’s
being a victim of corporal punishment
being part of both the school football and cricket team
the Quadrangular meet

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His favorite teacher at Patrick’s was Marcus Romeo who taught Mathematics.

After Patrick’s he went for his plus 2 to IPCL School at Baroda, did Mechanical Engineering from MS University in Baroda. He then attended the University of Wyoming for his Masters in Mechanical with CAD/CAM/CAE and went to Georgia Tech for his PhD in Mechanical Engineering specializing in Information Management. He finished his formal education in 1990.

He then started his career with SDRC in Cincinnati, OH moved to Washington State in 1995 to work on the Boeing account for SDRC. In 2000 he quit SDRC and became one of the founders (and the CTO) of Product Sight a startup that has built a highly specialized software application for use by designers and manufacturers of highly engineered products.

He stays in Bothell, WA with his wife Yamini, daughter Kamna and son Hirshee and works in Bellevue, WA. He loves hiking, running, reading, spending time with his family. His favorite author is John Steinbeck.

After leaving our school in 1978, it was again in 2001 that I met him at a friend’s house warming.

Krishna Reddy Kanapuram or KK was in my class from 5th to 10th. He joined St. Patrick’s in 1972. After passing out in 1978 from our school, the next time I met him was in a queue for admissions at the JNTU College of Engineering, Hyderabad. So, he is one classmate from school with whom I have been in touch with for the longest.

In Patrick’s he was in the Patrick’s group (green) and in ‘C’ section till seventh and then ‘A’ section. His memorable moment was when he had to place a flag on a board during assembly every month for being the first student in class.

His favorite teachers were Mrs. Rosario (Math), Raghupathy, Rajinder, Lucas, and Ralph (Math) Sirs.

After Partick’s KK studied in Wesley Junior College, JNTU Hyderabad EEE and subsequently did his MBA from JNTU evening college.

He started his career with Hindustan Cables Ltd, moved to Bharat Dynamics Ltd., and then worked with Softstar Compu Consultancy - all in Hyderabad. He came to the United States through Softstar and moved later on to Oracle. Except for the initial six months in Connecticut, he has been living in New Jersey.

KK is currently a Technical Manager in Oracle. He is based in New Jersey and helps customers in over six states on the East Coast design their architecture and implement Oracle Applications. He stays in Monroe, NJ with his wife Madhavi, son Ravitej, and daughter Bhavana. He likes reading (mainly Wall Street Journal) and dabbles in stock (trying to figure out how he lost his money like many others).

KK has kept track of a lot of his classmates and is in touch with a few till date, Here are a few names and what they are doing:

Sridhar – CEO of Sankhya Technologies, Hyderabad
Jagdish Reddy – Cardiologist in Houston
PV Prasad – Partner in Techno Cables, Hyderabad
AV Prasad – Hindustan Zinc
Pattabiram – Ford, Michigan
V Mohan – Air India
A Mohan – Doctor in Chary Nursing Home, Secunderabad
Venkatramana – Running his own business in Hyderabad
M Rajkumar – Fighter Pilot in the Indian Air Force
Anil Arora – was working in a Bank and died due to ill health in late 80s.

Check this class picture on the web album at http://st.patricks.tripod.com/
My mind began its usual wanderings, trying to find some of the past incidents that made very strong impressions on my self. I was soon reminded of an elocution competition conducted by my mother’s employer, the State Bank of India (Main Branch, Hyderabad) sometime in the mid 80s when I was in my middle school. The topic of the competition was ‘Train Journey’. To begin with I was an ill-confident kid, with a terrible fear of the stage. Added to that I was almost pathetic with my spoken English. Despite these shortcomings I really wanted to participate in the competition – not to win, but just to get out there and talk about something.

Well, I had no clue what I should or could talk about a train journey. Silly as it might sound, I didn’t have the realization that I could actually talk about one of the train journeys I really made. I had this nebulous thought of a ‘perfect’ speech that I wished to give – without any specifics of the content or style. My mother tried to help me out and suggested that I could start by saying ‘Life itself is a big journey and we make smaller journeys within that…’. I thought it sounded cool and decided to start the talk with those same words. The kids who haven’t given their talk were not allowed to listen to those who were telling their stories. So, the participating kids were in an adjacent room to that of the ‘competition’ room.

It was my turn and as anticipated I had a huge rock settled in my throat and a million butterflies began fluttering their wings in my stomach. My mouth was dry and I began wondering why I chose to do this in the first place. It was too late for these thoughts. My name was announced and I stood in front of a cheerful crowd of kids and their parents. As prepared, I began my speech saying ‘Life itself is a big journey and we make smaller journeys within that…’. I hoped something would easily follow that cool statement. Nothing seemed to be happening. So, I pushed myself hard and unleashed my creativity. I said ‘I was going in a train to Kothagudem and …’. What was I thinking? I never went to Kothagudem. I didn’t even know where it was. This was all baloney. I had no story to share. As one could easily guess, I was lost. No words came out of my mouth. I was terribly humiliated. I excused myself from there and sat in the audience. I was brain dead and could not make sense of what other kids were talking. I was waiting for the day to end so that I could get back home and may be cry out all my agony and anguish.

The competition ended soon and we were walking out of the room. One of my cousins who accompanied us that day seemed amused with my performance. Being quite older to me she might have found the fiasco very cute. She began mocking me about my ‘train to Kothagudem’. It didn’t help my already-hurt confidence. I wanted to run away but pasted a sad smile trying to make myself believe that I was fine.

This episode kept revisiting me for a long time. Evidently, it still does. I can feel a lot more confident now, having given a few talks about my research projects and an occasional talk on teaching and learning. But what would I say now, after all these years since the humiliation, if I had to give a talk on a ‘Train Journey’? That was the domain my wandering mind entered. Would I talk about the first train journey I can remember – the trip to New Delhi in 1981? Would I talk about that vivid experience on my first train journey from Secunderabad to Varanasi in 1993, when I first left home to pursue my undergraduate studies at the great Banaras Hindu University? Would it be about all those encounters I had, with so many people, for about four years when I traveled frequently from Hyderabad to Varanasi? Would I talk about my journey in the trains when I revisited India after my first four-year stay in the United States? Or, would I talk about the beautiful landscapes and amusing railway stations I have seen on my journeys? So, the question that was actually on mind was – were my train journeys memorable because of my own emotional state, or because of the people I encountered, or because of the landscapes? Obviously, it had to be a cumulative of all the above. But it was the people that I encountered and how I dealt with them which made those train journeys more memorable. The landscapes were always a pleasure. They were very important in my journeys as well since I depended on them to evade people and any exchanges that involved people.

I’m still not sure what I would really talk about, if I had to. But I am certain that it would be a lot better than an incompletely concocted fictional train journey I was attempting to describe many years ago. I wish I could go back to that humiliated kid and say that there would come a day when he could talk about many wonderful train journeys he would make and how they would enrich his life. I badly want to tell him that it’s more impor-

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Executive Committee of the Old Boys Association

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The Train Journey

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Anil can be reached at challa.2@osu.edu

tant to make all those journeys, in trains and otherwise, and become a true traveler than worry about telling the stories of those journeys to others. Anyways, the kid eventually did seem to have learnt that he does have a lot of tales to tell about his train journeys, whether anyone would want to listen to them or not! And one thing seems to remain a fact - "Life itself is a big journey and we make many smaller journeys within that...". Especially revisiting many things of the past.

Just in ...

Over 100 Old Boys got together on January 4, 2003 at St. Patrick's High School to celebrate the New Year.
More news from the home front is awaited.

Erratum.

Fr. Gnanadevan SJ continues to serve as the Principal of St. Patrick's High School. The "Brief notes" in Echoes 1.3 mentioned that Fr. Devan would be replaced by Fr. Louis Doss. The error is regretted.
Dear St. Patrick's Alumni:

This year I decided that rather than tell true stories as in the past, I will tell you instead a story that is true. What I am about to narrate, lazy and germs, actually happened to me. To me! You may ask: if this is a story that is true, then what of previous tales? Are they merely stories? Well, here's how to solve that issue: don't ask.

The whole story could be blamed on the Internet. Exploring www.alumni.net, I looked up St. Patrick's School in Hyderabad, India, and found that I was the only genuine old fart registered. Class of '55! A few months later I received an email from a fellow called Anil Kumar Challa, who spent all 12 years of his schooling at St. Pat's and is now a grad student at Ohio State University. Young buck. At his request, I wrote a story for the first issue of St. Pat's web-based alumni newsletter, “Echoes”. As I wrote about my childhood, there was much to tell. I was born during WWII days before Pearl Harbor, lived through India's independence, and survived many challenges. But I was a normal kid. Like kids anywhere, we were full of pranks. We lived through prejudice, ethnic and religious riots, sugar cane and mompally toffee. The story grew and grew; and Anil decided to split it into three installments. You may read all Echoes issues on http://st.patricks.tripod.com/index2.html. A few months after the first issue was published, Anil was visiting Hyderabad and dropped in at St. Pat’s on Sports Day. He saw three "old men" by the basketball hoop. Anil began to chat with them, hoping they may know me. Indeed! They were Banaji, Naidu, and Mathi, my classmates from 1955!! They were in my story! (More than that!! My story had killed off Naidu!!! Killed him dead!!!) But here he was, in the flesh. As proof, Anil took pictures and collected Naidu’s business card and emailed them to me. Well, do you trust anything you receive through the Internet? Or do you trust your instincts? Should I trust a photo? Or trust my fading memory? Fortunately, the episode that killed Naidu dead was not yet published!! Well, I rewrote the part that greatly exaggerated Naidu’s demise. Naidu is now officially alive. The second resurrection in 2000 years. One every duo-millennium.

But what a thrill for me!! Three people I had not seen in over 45 years, still hanging together at the same old school!!! Banaji, it turned out, still rides the same bicycle he rode then!!

Business called me to India early in 2002. I called the newly resurrected Naidu who was blissfully unaware of his earlier death. He was excited at the prospect of meeting and we promised to get together. When I arrived, Naidu and Mathias were at the airport to greet me. Naidu on his motorbike, and Mathias came by bus! Later, Banaji showed up at the hotel, on, you guessed it, his bicycle! We decided to round up as many classmates as we could (our High School class had only 17) for dinner. At my request we went to the old hangout, a divey old greasy spoon known as Garden Restaurant that still serves the best samosas this side of heaven.

On the rear of Naidu’s motorbike, I toolied around the city for much of the day. We found Jaffar, the artist sitting at his used-car dealership. We found Vakil, the brainy one, who set up his living room table with dozens of pictures from our days at St. Pat’s. It was beautiful. We had tears in our eyes remembering the old days.

Naidu and I cruised for hours. Try as we might, we talked to dozens of people, but could not locate Adams and Thompson. By dinnertime, seven of us (Jaffar in his used car, Vakil who hitched a ride, Sridharan on his scooter, Naidu, Mathi, Banaji on his fifty year old bicycle and I) met at Garden Restaurant. We did have samosas, but it turns out that the others considered this restaurant just too much of a dive. So we went to Jaffar’s son-in-law’s Hyderabad House instead. A sumptuous feast. Hyderabadi food at its very best. Rumali rotis to die for.

We swapped stories. Great, wonderful events from the fifties that only we could relish! And it was the stories and the gang at Hyderabad House, my friends, that enabled me to redeem one of the greatest failures of my youth: I finally got to thank someone for a great kindness rendered forty-seven years ago. Fate provided me with the perfect opportunity.

The impromptu sexagenarian (only a mild pun intended) alumni gathering of St. Pat’s was the only forum that could make it possible. It is a Christmas story for the ages. Read on:

Volume 2, Issue 1
Then, a miracle!!! Jaffar stepped up. Jaffar was a big fellow, at least six inches taller than Girgut. He walked right up to Girgut, looked down at him and quietly said, “I did it.” There was an ominous silence!!! We stood with bated breath! Girgut looked up at Jaffar. Jaffar looked down at Girgut. Jaffar was stern, almost fierce. Girgut was stern, and did his best to look fierce. Then Girgut blinked. In the mildest of voices, he said, “Please don’t do it again”. Whew! I felt the sweat climbing up my back and disappearing back into my skin. The crisis was averted!! No Principal’s office. No canings!! No notes sent home to parents!! Just a simple, “Don’t do it again”. All thanks to Jaffar! Jaffar the hero! Jaffar the magnificent!! Jaffar, my brother!

Through all these years, I had never thanked Jaffar for his brave act. I had buried it under deep inside and went on with life; all but forgotten. It was only when Mathi related the story, and he told the story as just another fond remembrance, that I realized my grievous omission. That night, I rectified forty-seven years of neglect. In front of my peers, I bared my soul. I bowed for my dastardly act and admitted my craven cowardice, my terror, my weak knees, my gutlessness. I then acknowledged Jaffar’s greatness, his towering strength, his selflessness. I thanked Jaffar for his act of courage. I could not have created a better forum for my expiation. Here I was, meeting Jaffar after all this time. The people present were the only ones on earth who could relate to the story. We were together thanks to fate; thanks to the Internet; thanks to Anil; and to a chain of coincidences. I finally got to unburden my conscience to Jaffar. Now all that’s left is to find poor Mr. Krishnamurthi, clear Jaffar’s name, and apologize to him as well. Mr. Krishnamurthi, today you’d be between 75 and 80 years old. If you ever read this, know that I was the evil, if playful perpetrator. Jaffar was innocent. And except for this story and the storied reunion of this letter, I have never called you Girgut in 47 long years. I request all of you reading this story to please help me track down Mr. Krishnamurthi so I can apologize.

Jaffar, you, truly, are the Great One! My hero! You deserve a Nobel Prize for “Sheer Guts”. I hereby create a new word, “Jaffarism” which represents everything you did that day. Jaffarism: to stand up for your friend right or wrong; to take the rap for another. “Greater love no man hath…”..

May you encounter a thousand Jaffarisms!

With best wishes,
Edan Prabhu