

*Toast Proposed by M.V.M to Staff who Retired
and to 3 Supreme Court Judges*

SPEECH MADE BY ME AT OBA REUNION DINNER ON 10/2/1975

There was this Superintendent of Prisons who later became the Principal of a College. In keeping with the deep and abiding interest he had shown in the activities of the School's Social Service Union and the SCM - he had taken charge of the Sunday School in the prison.

The Bishop was visiting the Sunday School and the Superintendent called upon his brightest pupil - one who was having a date with the hangman - to recite a verse from the scriptures.

The Prisoner recited, "And Judas went out and hanged himself." The Superintendent was scandalized but the Bishop was amused. Let me have another verse, said the Bishop. The prisoner replied: "Yes m'lord, Go thou and do likewise!"

Indeed such emotions came my way too when your committee two days ago requested me to propose this toast. The reason being that not in the recent history of OBA reunion dinners have we had as many guests of honour as we have today. And what a powerful battery of persons they are: 3 Judges and 4 teachers who together could not only commit one to six of the best but send us 6 feet down under too!

Nevertheless, I must admit, that the task is of the pleasantest - for, they are all people whom the school deeply honours and for whom we have always had the highest respect and admiration.

It is not always that we get an opportunity to speak about Supreme Court Judges - what with the Press Council and Laws of Contempt of Court - But today in the precincts of this hall it is the law of Trinity that prevails and under powers temporarily vested in me, I suspend the operation of the laws of contempt of court.

In any event what I propose saying is certainly the truth and nothing but the truth - so help me God - and here I'm reminded of the man who went to court to face charges undefended. The Judge offered the services of an assigned lawyer but the defendant replied "No m'Lord, I don't need a lawyer, because today I want to speak the truth!"

Not only will I speak the truth today but I intend going a step further to indict the 3 learned judges of offences under the Criminal Procedure Code.

Mr. President Sir, do you remember Mr. K.L.B. Tennekoon's Sinhalese class which was next to the tuck shop? Yes, you would. Now Darwith was the tuck shop keeper. Correct. Oh yes! Come 2 p.m. Darwith arrives, arranges the bottles of toffee, muskat, rulang and then goes across the bathroom to fetch water.

3 or 4 boys in KLBT's class suddenly develop the anxiety to visit the toilet. KLBT has no option but to agree. The 4 boys creep into the tuck shop. Fill their pockets, shirts and even socks and run away. Do you know who those rascals were, Sir. I'll tell you,

William Molegodu, Horace Cook, M.B. ~~Werasitiya~~^{Werasitiya} and a chappie by the name of Noel Tittawela.

Now, if that does not come under Section 249 of the Criminal Procedure Code, I respectfully submit that you do not know your law, sir.

Then there were some others - who called themselves day boys - who lived across the street. To all intents and purposes they were boarders, did all what the boarders did and even more. They are what our parents used to call "bad influences".

The rules of exeat were even then in force and no boy could leave home after sunset. But the story goes that 3 boys who lived across the street would independently creep into the premises, carry foodstuffs with them, enter the dormitories and raise merry hell. This went on for some time. It took a Jim ~~Weerasinghe~~^{Wirasinha} in an athletic frame of mind to catch the culprits.

Criminal Trespass did I hear you say, sir? Indeed. Section 124, 2 years RI.

Under orders vested in me I hereby charge the following trespassers:

- Noel Tittawela
- T.W. Rajaratnam
- Barnes ~~Ratna~~^{Ratwatte}
- And.....and....Lionel F ~~Bernardo~~

I leave it to you to defend yourselves and I know you wouldn't need a lawyer - not because you intend speaking the truth but because you simply have no case.

But Trinity is Trinity and has been Trinity because we have and have had mischief makers, and rascals. It is they who having got their hides tanned turn out to be the pillars of decorum. It is they who later in life show rave loyalty to the college. It is they who later in life became the best products of the school.

The 3 Supreme Court Judges standing trial before us are no exceptions. And so gentlemen before you pass judgment on the indictments they face, may I in mitigation submit that by their singular achievements they have enriched the name of the college and Trinity is justifiably proud of them. This alone, I submit, is sufficient to grant them at least a suspended sentence.

Ladies and gentlemen.....(2 mins silence)

The silence which I just offered was because I happened to see **Mr. Vernon Jansze** my beloved master who later became the school's dreaded librarian staring daggers at me. To him, silence is golden and whichever path he traversed he gilded it with his own refined silence.

Now there are two categories of masters. Those who are a necessity and those who are a nuisance. Vernon Jansze fell into a third category. Which I would call the Necessary Nuisance category. For without him, the Library would be a market place, the book room a halters shop and the class room a playing field.

He was a disciplinarian and therefore was a real nuisance. Many were the occasions when seated in class after hours, we listened to the drone of arithmetic and watched the exciting rugby matchwith our minds eye.

But he was ruthlessly correct - as we later realized , to him we owe much.

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It was prize day and the play staged by the staff was the deep tragedy of Hamlet. Spellbound we watched the play. And then the ghost appeared - The Ghost of Hamlet was of course Bobby Moses and soon the deep tragedy of Hamlet became a roaring comedy.

Many people take after their fathers. Some succeed. Others fail. Bobby Moses a master in the Junior School took the cane and tried to wield it like his father. The student laughed and Moses cried. There he truly differed from his father.

He was once the Junior School Cricket coach and used to ask cricketers to dream of peaceful and successful happenings during the night before the match. One of his pupils at Arithmetic and Cricket was Hamid who later played in College Cricket XI. ?Dunnuwille and Ramaweera had shot the ^{Team} out for 60 runs. We were 50/9 at close of first day's play. Hamid at 0 was night watchman.

That night, like Luther King, Hamid had a dream. Moses had appeared to him in that dream and said Trinity will score 250 and Hamid will start off with a six. Next day, hamid swung wildly at the first ball and out for 0. Hamid lost his place in the side and they yet call it the curse of Moses.

Mr. Moses was a lovable man, he fathered his pupils and to his credit it must be said that even to the most concrete brain he was able to instill much knowledge.

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When George Nallathamby was at Alison they said, a bell was not required. He was the noisiest man in the school and he probably carried that title during his stay as master too. In class he was so loud that his voice even woke the many who were fast asleep in the adjoining class where Mr. Oorloff took English.

Mr. Nallathamby taught Chemistry and English in my time. Once when he entered the Chemistry class on the board was written :

Rabies are Jewish Priests
Christianity is the cure for them.

Then again in his English class, there were:

Milton was a blind poet, who wrote Paradise Lost
When his wife died, he wrote Paradise Regained

Mr. Nallathamby was a sports teacher and he enjoyed these pranks with the boys and was therefore a very popular personality in the College.

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On and off, the College Office used to receive some very interesting telegram. One read *Father died immediately, come suddenly.*

There was another which read "Deepest sympathies, great loss for the School. Tragic death. Regret inability attend Funeral."

The Principal Mr. Oorloff was confused. He telephoned the parent of the boy who had sent it and inquired as to the circumstances. "Why Mr. Ratnayake was shot, wasn't he? If I can only lay my hands on the Bishop." -the parent said.

Further inquiries revealed that the parent had only looked at the headline of a news item in the paper which read "Christopher Ratnayake of Trinity Canonised by Bishop Lakdasa".

Another day Cannon Ratnayake was rushed to the hospital at his own insistence. He diagnosed the ailment himself as a heart attack. The last bell was called and the Trinitians in the hospital gathered round the Cannon. They diagnosed it as too much of wind in the stomach. Drastic purgative measures were taken and the Cannon was ordered to walk back home!

Trinity was famous for nick names and shorter forms. Odayar would be called Oddi and Moses called Mossiah. There were 3 Edwards - one at St. Thomas, one at Royal and the other at Ted. In Royal, they call him Ted, at St. Thomas they called him Eddie and at Trinity they would surely call him Edda.

But it puzzles one no end. Christopher - Christo - Ratnayake - perhaps Ratna. But how, ever did he get that other name. He wasn't even a musician - otherwise he would have been the leader of the Band "Gabo and the Breakaways" - Perhaps he would tell us.

Ladies & gentlemen, talking in more serious vein, Trinity for many years have had reputed teachers. During the time when I was in school, the mobility of staff was depressingly great. It was the biggest problem that the principal had. One teacher joined in the morning and left in the afternoon.

4 But there were others who like the Giants of the older days like Leonard, AMK,,,,, Bra, Stood by the school for better or for worse. And so did the teachers who we bid good bye. Indeed they were the connecting links between us old boys and the school.

For when we came, we saw in them the old familiar faces bringing back nostalgic memories of the salted Parippu and the granite bread.

Truly they were teachers in the best sense of the word. Who leading the life that loves, that gives, that overflows to irrigate the complexity of education, lit the lamp of learning and by their radiance enriched the lot of the Best School of All.

It is with pleasure that I give you the toast of our honoured Guests.