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# Maya Puwath

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Mahamaya Girls' College  
Alumnae Association of North  
America

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Dear Members,

Seasons Greetings!!! I wish everyone a wonderful holiday season with blessed time with family and friends and a happy, healthy and prosperous 2016. In this time of giving and reflecting on our blessings, I urge you to consider donations to those less fortunate as well as supporting initiatives through MGCAANA.

Vajeera Dorabawila, Issue Editor

## Message from the President of MGCAANA

Dear MGCAANA Members and Friends,

Greetings of the Season! It is also the Season of Giving.

I am pleased to inform you that MCGAANA made the annual donation of \$ 100 to a local charity with the approval of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee. This was made to Dystonia Research Foundation, which is also under the umbrella of Tyler's hope in Gainesville, Florida. Dystonia is a neurological movement disorder characterized by involuntary muscle contractions.


On behalf of MCGAANA, I invite all our Mayan friends to help Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund by making a donation, however small it may be. A dollar will go long way in helping under privileged children in our Alma Mater. So far, VSTF has raised about \$14,000 and our target is \$ 20,000. We hope


we can reach this target, especially with your help. Again, on behalf of MCGAANA, I thank ALL of you for your support.

This year also we organized a 5K run in Gainesville, Florida to raised funds for MGCAANA. This is a practical and a satisfying way to raise funds.

## Message from the President of MGCAANA (continued)

We are looking forward to see all of you and your families at the Annual General Meeting and Dinner in Maryland in May, 2016.

Our objectives for the 2016 will mainly focus on increasing membership , and fund raising activities. Your renewal of membership plays a major roll for our charity work with the help of other volunteer

nations. I urge all of you to renew your membership for 2015-2016. Please read carefully on our membership page in MGCAANA website since we have done few changes. You can become a member by paying for 2- 5 years now.

May you all have a peaceful and a Happy Holiday Season and a very Happy New Year!

Sriyani Dissanayake  
President, 2015/2016


### Seasons Greetings!

Here we wish you all the merriest Christmas and the happiest New Year!




Hand made greeting cards are a creation of MGCAANA member Mrs. Indrani Gunawardana.

Dear Mayans 

In this season of giving ry you find peace and happiness in your heart! May all your dreams come true! May you all have a greatest time with your loved ones! May you showered with good health and happiness all the time!



2015-2016 MGCAANA  
BOD Members and the utive Committee

# Remembering Mahamaya's Beloved Principal Mrs. Soma Pujitha Goonawardena on her 100th Birth Anniversary: A tribute to Her Selfless Service

Mrs. Soma Pujitha Goonawardene nee Cumaranatunga was born on June 6, 1921 in the village called Katukurunde, close to Galle. She was the niece of Munidasa Cumaranatunga, the famous Sinhalese, Sanskrit and Pali scholar in the 20th century.

She was an outstanding teacher at Visakha Vidyalaya, Colombo, during Mrs. Susan Pulimood's time. Sir Bennet Soysa, the Manager, Secretary and Chairman of the Board of Trustees who managed Mahamaya, persuaded Mrs. Goonawardene to accept the position as Principal.

Mrs. Goonawardene as we addressed her (never used the word "madam" in our time) assumed duties as Principal of Mahamaya Girls' College on May 1, 1951 and held that position until January 14, 1972.

## Golden Age of Mahamaya

There is no dispute about Mrs. Goonawardena's tenure as Principal, was beginning of the golden age of Mahamaya. Mrs. Lilitha Fernando and Mrs. N.K. Pilapitiya, who followed after her, continued to be excellent principals and for Mahamaya's good fortune, the golden age continued, during their principalships.

When Mrs. Goonawardene took over the school in 1951, Mahamaya had been classified as a Grade 3 school, ranking well below the other girls' colleges in Kandy. The student numbers in school were on the decline as the parents were pulling out their children to send them elsewhere. Mrs. Goonawardene took immediate action to prevent the situation. She set up a firm progress in academics, extra-curricular activities, and discipline. She worked hard to maintain a Buddhist religious background in accordance with the expectations of the founders. To improve the quality of the classroom teaching, she hand-picked the best teachers. She prepared the students to compete with other schools. She improved the standard of English. She was an expert in Sinhala language and grammar. She taught several subjects in classroom including Sinhala grammar. I was fortunate to learn Sinhala grammar from her.




## Remembering Mrs. Soma Pujitha Goonawardena continued (2)



With her vision to see Mahamaya Girls' College as a leading girls' school in Sri Lanka, Mrs. Goonawardene saw the urgent need for teaching science. She introduced the subject of science into the curriculum. In July 1952, she managed to make provisional arrangements to build Mahamaya's first laboratory and supply its equipment. She recruited a science graduate to teach Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology. Later some more dedicated science teachers were recruited. She wanted to expand science education. For that, she raised much needed funds by organizing carnivals in 1952 and 1953. With that money, three large and modern laboratories were built with six additional classrooms in a two-story building in the back of the main building. In 1956, a university entrance class (later known as Advanced Level) in science was established. During her time at Mahamaya, a rise in student performance in public examinations confirmed the school's high level of classroom teaching in mathematics, biological sciences, and arts. Students got entrance to University Medical, Engineering, and Science and Arts faculties and Mahamaya started becoming the most sought after girls' school in Kandy mainly in late 1950s, the first part of 1960s and after. University entrance for the arts subjects had already been established before science.


Mrs. Goonawardane's vision was to give a well-rounded education to students. She focused not only on academics, but also on physical education, oratory, English elocution, student societies, aesthetic and literary studies. One of her alumnae, Mrs. Manel Weerasinghe (nee de Silva) was hired in 1959 soon after she returned from Physical Education teacher training in India, to take over the physical education in school. Mrs. Weerasinghe received the full support of the Principal to carry on her duties. Mahamaya started becoming national champions in Netball in early '60s. Athletics, Basketball, Tennis, Badminton, were given due place. Inter-house sports meets allowed almost every student to take part in sports. Debating teams were formed. Debating teams literary societies not only gave the students to experience public speaking, they led to interaction with other schools. Aesthetics gave students a chance to perform and express themselves. Kandyan dancing Western music were introduced as part of curriculum. Sinhala and English drama productions were successfully performed at inter-school competitions. For elocution, the teachers from Wendy Whatmore Academy of Speech and Drama came from Colombo once a week. She created opportunities for students to be competitive and to succeed in this new highly competitive world.


## Remembering Mrs. Soma Pujitha Goonawardena continued (3)

Maintaining discipline was crucial to her. She was a strict disciplinarian, who taught her students moral values by example. She treated every child equally, no matter what kind of family she came from. Always, she expressed her pleasure or displeasure with carefully selected words, never raising her voice. Most of the time, her stern look was enough to discipline a student. She had so much compassion towards her students and staff. She was the first to come to school and the last to leave the office. She closely supervised the girls' hostel. Her vision, wisdom, dedication, determination, dynamic energy, and courage made Mahamaya grow with astonishing rapidity. She sought advice from the best minds in the country in managing the school.

Mahamaya was a semi-government school until December, 1960. In 1961, Mahamaya became a government school. Under the government administration  she continued to maintain the standards of the school. She restructured the school to gear for the future.

Many of the students who graduated from Mahamaya served Sri Lanka and other countries as doctors, engineers, geologists, scientists, researchers, administrators, teachers, professors, housewives, and in other numerous careers . Most of a  she gave the students the tools to be excellent daughters, wives, and mothers, with the best training in Buddhist tradition.

After 21 years of unprecedented service to the women's education, Mrs. Goonawardene left Mahamaya as one of the best educational institutions in the Central Province, retiring in 1972 at the age of 57. She was appointed a Consultant and Director of Education in Colombo, where she worked for the next four years. She fell ill in 1980. Later  she went to England for treatment and to be with her daughter Suroo. She passed away on March 28, 1983 in London.

The main purpose of this article is to celebrate her life in recognition of the light that she brought to the lives of Mayans. The other purpose is for the younger Mayans to learn and recognize the value of enormous work that Mrs. Goonawardene contributed to their education that young Mayans also shared in later years. 

She collected so much merit for her samsaric journey. May she attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana!

By Sujatha Werake

## APPRECIATION

Our loving alumna Nanda Dodampe Gamage's beloved husband Mr. Piyasena "Piya" Dodampe Gamage (1929 - 2015) passed away on October 22, 2015 in Ottawa, Ontario, where he lived with his family. Nanda (nee Hippola) and Piya were happily married for 53 years. They have two daughters and two sons-in-law Shantini and Robb Gardner of Cincinnati, Ohio and Nimali and Chris Brodbeck of Toronto, and two grandchildren Jinger and Ellington Brodbeck. Piya was a wonderful husband, loving father and grandfather. He was our alumna, Dakshika Bandaranayake's Loku Appachchi.



Piya and Nanda moved to Canada from Singapore in 1967. He was a chartered accountant by profession and worked for the Canada Revenue Agency for more than 20 years. He also worked as an independent tax consultant.

He became an extremely valuable member of the community wherever he resided. He was a father not only to his two girls, but to the whole community. He was a community organizer for many years. Piya was a founding member of Sri Lanka associations in Ottawa and Windsor in Ontario, and in Detroit, Michigan. He was a founding member and a leading supporter of the Buddhist Temple in Windsor, Ontario. He was a father-figure and mentor to many whom he knew. He embraced all, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, and social status, without any prejudice.

He lived a life full of love and compassion without borders. Piya shared his wonderful life with many people whom he attracted with his charming personality.

"The strongest man I know passed away yesterday... He beat death so many times over the decades, I started to believe he would never die. Those who knew him, know that his legacy is huge and widespread and he lives on in the hearts of the many many people he touched over his 86 years of life," his daughter Nimali wrote on her facebook page soon after his passing.



## Appreciation (continued)

He was brave as a patient, he tackled his illness with courage for many years. The last time, he was in hospital for five weeks. His loving wife Nanda gave her time and energy with much affection and care, to look after her husband when he was not in good health, which was a very long time. Piya will be greatly missed by many.

May he attain the ss of Nibbana!

Written by Sujatha Werake



**MGCAANA**

**UNDERGRADUATE  
&  
GRADUATE  
SCHOLARSHIP  
PROGRAM**

**2015-2016**



- This scholarship is intended to provide cost of books and material for a single semester for Mahamaya Girls' College alumnae pursuing undergraduate or graduate studies in the US and Canada.
- **The scholarship award amount has been increased to \$ 500.00 each, thanks to an anonymous donation from a beloved member of MGCAANA.**
- **One of these scholarships will be awarded in memory of Mrs. N. K. Pilapitiya.**
- The scholarship will be awarded to (a) student(s) demonstrating outstanding academic achievements, leadership ability, participation in extracurricular activities, and a significant level of financial need.

**APPLICATION PERIOD AND DEADLINE:**

- August 15, 2015 – December 31, 2015
- Applications postmarked after the deadline will *not* be accepted.

**AWARD NOTIFICATION:**

- By January 31, 2016

**APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:**

- Please visit our website at [www.mahamayaalumnae.org](http://www.mahamayaalumnae.org) to view and download the scholarship application.

If you have any questions about the MGCAANA Scholarship Program, please email us at [Mahamaya\\_alumnae@yahoo.com](mailto:Mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com)

**We look forward to reading your completed application!**



Greetings of the Season and Happy New Year!!!!

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**FOR THE 12TH AGM OF MGCAANA**

**MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND IN THE USA**

**VENUE: MARYLAND, USA**

**HOSTED BY OUR MARYLAND MAYANS**



**Formal invitation to follow**



A PUBLICATION OF THE MAHAMAYA GIRLS' COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA



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