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2010

# Maya Puwath

BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF MGCAANA



*"Keeping away from unwise and unwholesome friends, and seeking the company of only those who are wise. Giving honor and service to those that are worth recipients. Living in an appropriate area of residence, with a record of good living, in one's own past. And with perfect mastery over one's own self. Vastness of learning and erudition, together with skills. And perfect discipline in conduct, and delightful propriety of speech. These rank among the highest success-generators. "*

*~From the Mahamangala Sutta (the great collection of success-generators)*



*" For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils."*

*~~~William Wordsworth~~~*

*Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence"*

*~ ~Aristotle~~*

*"Obstacles are things a person sees when he takes his eyes off his goal."*

*~~E. Joseph Cossmon~~*

*"They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel."*

*~~Carl W. Buechmer~~*



Dear Readers ,

*It is with great pride and joy that I write yet another editorial for Maya Puwath.. MGCAANA has stepped into another year and is growing right before our eyes. The organization that was created by four determined members has now grown in size and we are now an organization with a little over one hundred members. MGCAANA concluded its sixth successful Annual General Meeting in Valencia, California and is proudly moving along to another successful year.*

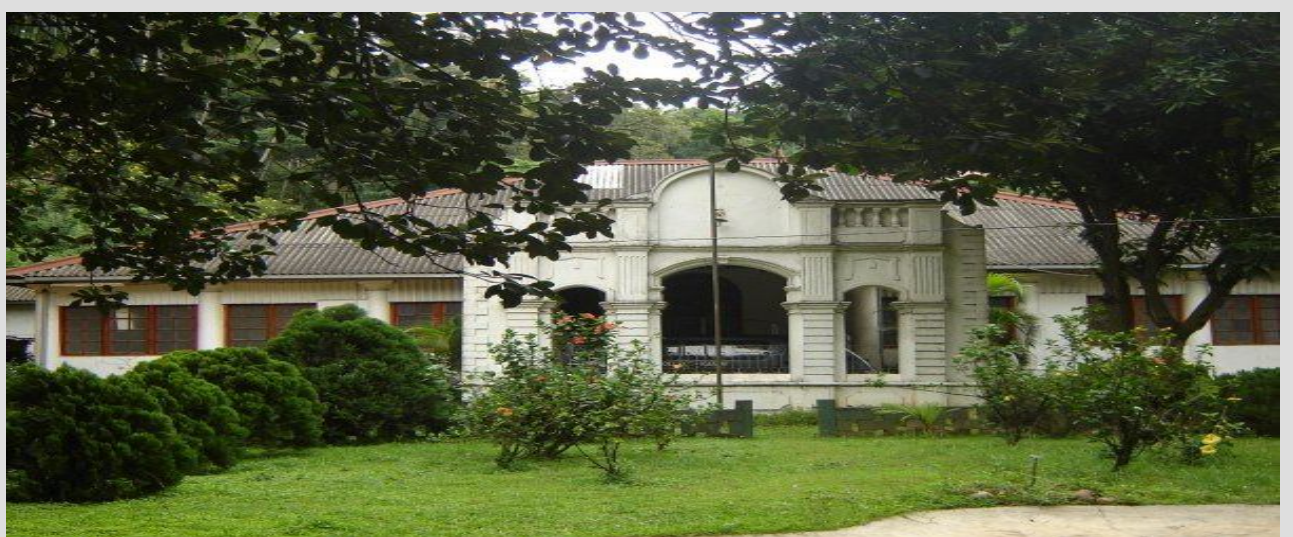
*Seven committees together make MGCAANA run smoothly and efficiently. The members and chairs of these committees work tirelessly to fulfill different needs of the organization and ensure smooth operations. The endowment committee, the newest committee of MGCAANA is working toward creating a foundation in Sri Lanka to help financially disadvantaged students. The fundraising committee works on different projects to raise funds. The committee has completed a raffle ticket drawing and is continuing the batik project to raise much needed funds for MGCAANA. The host and travel club was formed to help Mayans find temporary hosts when visiting the U.S. /Canada or Sri Lanka. The membership drive committee is focused on attracting new members for MGCAANA and continuing to work with current members of the organization. The newsletter committee brings a bi-monthly newsletter and keeps all our members informed of current activities of MGCAANA. The scholarship committee has been dedicated to rewarding our scholars by awarding two scholarships to MGCAANA members pursuing higher studies. Last but not least, the website organizing committee works hard to maintain our web content, and provide useful and important info about our organization.*

*The editorial committee warmly welcomes the new Board of Directors and the committee members. We hope to work closely along side the new office members.*

*We would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the out going members of the Board and Executive committee . Thank you for your contributions to this organization and hope you will continue to support our efforts in the future. As the editorial committee is a unit that does not change annually we work closely with the BOD, specially with the president. And the past president, Himashini Diyabalanage worked quite closely & tirelessly along side us. Thank you for giving us all the support we needed and for making our job a little less stressful.*

*We are proud to note the positive response of our readers depicted by the great articles we received for this edition. Hope you all will continue to support Maya Puwath by sending in your articles. Happy reading!*

*Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa*







Message from the Newly Elected President

*It is with great humility that I write this message to all of you as the newly elected President of MGCAANA. MGCAANA completed another successful year under a team of dedicated Directors and Executive Committee members and held its 6<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting last month. It’s wonderful to know that our beloved organization MGCAANA has stepped into its seventh year!*

*I would like to thank the outgoing Board of Directors, Executive Committee members and various committee members for a job well done, and welcome the new Board of Directors, Executive Committee members and committee members for another exciting year ahead. Each one of these members was elected by your vote to serve on the Board, and we thank you for being part of MGCAANA on its journey. Without you, our members, MGCAANA will not be a possibility. MGCAANA has continued to succeed and thrive because of the dedication of its members and the great causes we stand for.*

*As we delve into another year, we are hoping to go farther with our Endowment Program and hope to start new fundraising projects and continue our Scholarship Programs. Please look forward to a survey we will be sending out in the next few weeks. We want to hear from you so please feel free to give us your feedback. We value our members and look forward to your support and dedication in the coming year.*

*MGCAANA was the dream of four dedicated Mayans who knew that they could make a difference; they believed, persevered and nurtured MGCAANA to what it is now. Together, each one of you has helped MGCAANA grow and thrive. Thank you for being part of MGCAANA and for supporting all our projects and endeavors. We are glad you are on board for another year of progress. I would like to leave you with a quote by Margaret Mead, a great American anthropologist, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.” Together, we can all make a difference for MGCAANA!*

*Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa*

*President 2010/11*

*Congratulations to the newly elected Board of Directors and Executive Committee Members for 2010/11:*

*Dasmanthi Chin – Board Member*

*Geetha Eragoda – Treasurer/ Board Member*

*Hashini Mohottala – Vice President/ Board Member*

*Himashinie Diyabalanage – Board Member*

*Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa – President/ Board Member*

*Sumudu Leelananda – Board Member*

*Supipi Auwardt – Secretary*

*Vajeera Dorabawila – Board Member*

*Vihara Dharmaratne – Web Manager/Board Member*

How to stay connected...

Do you have a recipe, vacation spot, joke or an old memory from Mahamaya that you wish to share with MGCAANA members? We would love to hear from you, please write to us at : mahamaya\_alumnae@yahoo.com

To see more pictures from the 6th AGM join :

· MGCAANA’s Yahoo Group: Mahamayafriends(

Go to http://groups.yahoo.com and search for “mahamayafriends”, then click on “Join Group”)

· Join MGCAANA’s Facebook page and group: “MGCAANA”

Thank You ...

Thank You to our administrative committees of 2009/2010

Dear outgoing President Himashinie Diyabalanage, the Board of Directors Dasmanthie Chin, Vihara Dharmaratne, Sumudu Leelananda, Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa, Erandi Suriyarachchi, Gayathri Samarasinghe, the Executive Committee, the Newsletter Committee, Fundraising Committee, Membership Drive Committee, Website Organizing Committee, Endowment Committee, Scholarship Committee, the Advisory Board: Please accept our heartfelt thanks to all of you who worked so hard throughout the year to make our Organization so successful.

Welcome to our new administrative committees of 2010/2011

Dear incoming President Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa, the Board of Directors and Executive Committee members consisting of Supipi Auwardt, Dasmanthie Chin, Vihara Dharmaratne, Himashinie Diyabalanage, Vajeera Dorabawila, Geetha Eragoda, Sumudu Leelananda, Hashini Mohottala, and all other committees mentioned above: We warmly welcome you to a brand new fruitful year with us in MGCAANA! Congratulations to all of you!

Annual General Meeting at Los Angeles on Saturdav, July 3, 2010

Thank you to awesome Eragoda family for hosting the Annual General Meeting in Los Angeles! Geetha, Charitha, children Shalini, & Damitha, thank you for working so hard on this project for nearly two months and getting it done at the super highest level. Geetha, you are an outstanding organizer! You attended so vigilantly for every little detail, which made this event so successful and memorable to all of us. We don’t know what we could have done without you!

**Thank you** to the Principal of Old Orchard Elementary School, Valencia, CA., for letting us use their beautiful school hall for our meeting.

**Thank you** to Mr. Asoka Herath who opened his beautiful mansion to us to have our AGM dinner. Your hospitality made us feel so comfortable and welcomed.

**Thank you** to LA resident alumnae, Nanda Leula, Niranjala and Mihiri Tillakaratne, Indika Ranawana, Ayanthi Fernando, Pushpa Gunasekera, Pradeepa Subhasinie Iddamalgod: Thank you for your unconditional support all along.

**Thank you** to all the attendees who came from far and near: Himashinie Diyabalanage from Boston; Massachusetts, Nernanjika Dissanayake, husband Sanjaya Amaratunga, children, Chethana, Chayana, Chilana, father-in-law Mr. Amaratunga from Iowa, Nernanjika’s friends Vijitha and Vasu from Phoenix, Arizona; Harshi Waters from Oregon; Arushie Nugapitiya from Los Gatos, California; Savitri Gunaratne and her daughter Imanie from Southern California; Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa, Waruni Mahadiulwewa and their mother, Malini Mahadiulwewa from Fresno, California; Nanda Leula and her grandson, Pradeepa Iddamalgod and her husband, Ayanthi Fernando and her husband, Indika Ranawana, her husband and daughter, Niranjala Tillakaratne, her husband Mr. L.B. Tillakaratne, and daughter Mihiri Tillakaratne, all from Los Angeles; Gayatri Samarasingha, her husband Prasad Gankande, brother Upul Iranga Samarasingha and Gayathri’s friend Karen To from Salt Lake City, Utah; Dulanjalie Dhanapala from Fort Collins, Colorado; Sujatha Werake, husband Mahinda Werake and son Madhava Werake from Seattle, Washington, nephew Thilan Ganegedara from LA; Pushpa’s son Varuna Gunasekera from LA.

**Thank you** to you our talented actresses who brought our school days back to life just before dinner: Himashinie, Nernanjika, Harshi, Pamuditha, Waruni, Ayanthi, Indika, Niranjala, Mihiri, Gayathri, Savitri, and Shalini, you were so wonderful on the stage! Thank you Ayanthi and Niranjala for your hilarious skits.

**Thank you** to the photographers Iranga, Prasad, Madhava, Ayanthi, Gayathri, Himashinie, Mihiri and others who recorded the event that helped us share our wonderful moments with rest of the Mayans all over the world. We received many positive responses to the photos from Mayans living in other countries.

**Valued members and their families and friends:** Your participation in our meeting and the dinner made a great impact on each other. It brought pure joy of meeting old friends, get to know new friends, and we all felt oneness as a big Maya “family.” We hope to see more members at our next AGM. **Thank you!**

~ Sujatha Werake



The wonderful hosts of the 6th Annual AGM Dinner in Valencia, CA  
From L-R: Shalini, Geetha and Charitha Eragoda

*Leadership is doing what is right when no one is watching.*

~~George Van Valkenburg~~



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Song By W.D. Amaradewa



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1. What’s the largest coffee growing country in the world?
2. What is Aurora Borealis commonly known as?
3. Which ecosystem covers the largest area of the earths’ surface?
4. Which is the country where reggae music originated?
5. What ethnic group was largely responsible for building most of the early railways in the U.S. West?
6. Which countries are separated by the Mac Mohan line?
7. Who wrote *Breakfast at Tiffany's*?
8. With which sport is the ‘double fault’ associated?
9. Which is the smallest ocean in the world?
10. What planet has a storm system called the Great Red Spot?1.

Sent in By Himashinie Diyabalanage

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1. Brazil
2. Northern Lights
3. Marine Eco-system
4. Jamaica (in the mid to late 1960's)
5. The Chinese
6. India and China
7. Truman Capote
8. Lawn Tennis
9. The Arctic Ocean
10. Jupiter

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Enrichment of Vocabulary. (age group: 2 1/ to 5)

Our children who live here do not get much exposure to Sinhala unless the parents make a conscious effort to converse with them in Sinhala at home.

To enrich their vocabulary and to make it fun for them to learn by themselves or with their siblings and friends, here is an activity that parents can do with their children.

Classified Picture Cards:

Prepare a set of picture cards using cardstock paper or a similar quality paper. Card size 3”X4” is good. Use magazines to cut out appropriate pictures of objects. Also, you can use the internet to find pictures or, draw them yourself. These pictures should be of a single object with as little background as possible. That helps the child to focus only on the picture. Paste each picture on each card that you have already prepared. The picture cards that you can prepare are endless. The pictures can be classified according to any given area, such as wild animals, domestic animals, fruits, vegetables, buildings, workers, ships, body parts, furniture, instruments, tools, flowers, cooking utensils, planes, to name a few. Each card shows just one object to be named. Name of the object need not to be written on the card. Have the cards categorized by the subject and have them ready in each box.

aliya, naya, kotiya, girava, sinhaya, maaluva, muva, etc.

ketalaya, henda, saspana, gaaruppuwa, pihiya, heliya, muttiya etc

This exercise can be done on a mat on the floor or on a table with a child or a group of children.

Presentation with one child:

Take one card out of the box at a time, show it to the child, and ask him/her to name it.

If the child knows the name of the picture, give him/her the card. If he/she does not know the name, put the card to one side.

When all the cards are done, take three cards out of the ones he/she did not know, and practice the three words for that day.

Introduce more cards if the child is interested in working with the cards.

Presentation with a group:

With a group of children who have had the presentation and are at the same level of vocabulary development. Make sure that there are enough cards in the box.

Ask one child at a time to name the card shown him. Make sure the children understand that only one child is asked to name the card at one time.

As he/she names it, give the child the card. Ask the child to place the card in front so that others can see the card.

3. If the child does not know the card, keep it a side and ask him to name another one.

Try the previous card with the next child.

When every child has at least one card, check if the card are clearly seen in front of them. Now it is time to exchange cards. You name the child. You say, “Kanthi, Oyage ‘girava’ deela aliya ganna.” The child has to recognize “aliya”

If he/she does not recognize “aliya,” ask the child with the picture of “aliya” to exchange his/her picture with “girava.”

Continue the game. Make sure they use their magic words, “please, and thank you” in Sinhala.

After the game is over, put the cards in the box and store them.

Men at some time are masters of their fate

~~Shakespeare, Julius Caesar~~



Mahamaya Girls' College Alumni Association in North America — 6th Annual General Meeting



L-R: Waruni Mahadiulwewa, Ayanthi Fernando, Neranjika Dissanayaka, Geetha Eragoda, Shalini Eragoda, Himashinie Diyabalanage, Nanda Leula, Sujatha Werake, Arushie Nugapitiya, Gayathri Samarasingha, Dulanjalie Dhanapala, Harshi Waters, Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa, Niranjala Tillakaratne, and Savitri Gunaratna.

PICTURES FROM  
THE 6TH AGM HELD IN VALEN-  
CIA, CALIFORNIA  
&  
THE DINNER FOLLOWING THE  
AGM  
HOSTED BY ;  
THE ERAGODA FAMILY



BOD and Executive Committee members present at the AGM.  
L-R: Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa, Gayathri Samarasingha and Himashinie Diyabalanage



MGCAANA members at the AGM...



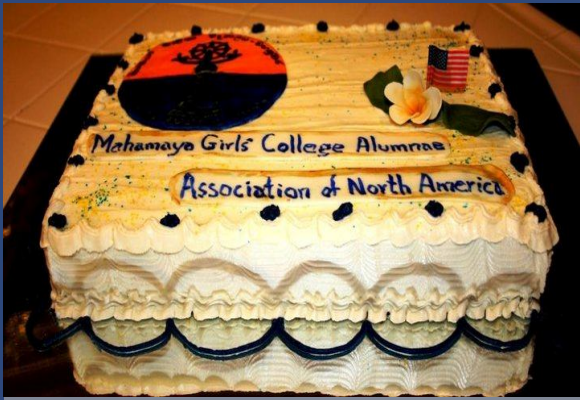
Lighting the traditional oil lamp



Taking a break at the AGM for snacks and tea



Steering Committee—L-R: Arushie Nugapitiya, Sujatha Werake, Neranjika Dissanayaka and Harshi Waters



Celebrating MGCAANA's 6th AGM



Lined up for a delicious Sri Lankan dinner....



The scrumptious dinner prepared by our host Geetha Eragoda



Entertainment for the evening, a skit performed by (L-R): Harshi Waters, Neranjika Dissanayake, Waruni Mahadiulwewa, Ayanthi Fernando and Sujatha Werake



What a Wonderful AGM!

6<sup>th</sup> AGM in Los Angeles, CA on Saturday, July 3, 2010

Once the BOD confirmed that the 6<sup>th</sup> AGM would be held in Los Angeles, CA, I contacted Geetha (Eragoda) Akka, (Nee Karunatilake) who had been a prefect and a very active member of the Mahamaya OGA during her stay in Sri Lanka and was currently residing in LA, and asked if she would be willing to host the event for us. She agreed without any hesitation, in fact, with a hint of excitement in her tone, and I knew immediately that the event was going to be something memorable. As a matter of fact, my whole family was looking forward to the event full of excitement, especially, after enjoying the previous AGM that was held at my place, in Des Moines, Iowa.

From the day I called Geetha Akka, she started planning for the event. She gave phone calls every day for nearly two months to several of us to discuss even the smallest details of the event, every step of the way. She found two wonderful places to have the meeting and the dinner party without any cost to MGCAANA. She started preparing food weeks ahead. Her husband, Charitha Aiya and daughter, Shalini had been a great help to Geetha Akka, when none of us were around.

After much planning and many phone calls, on July 1st, we flew down to Phoenix to meet our dear friends, Wijitha and Wasu, who were more than happy to join us to attend the event and of course for a “small” tour in CA. The next day, after driving 6 hours from Phoenix, we arrived in LA, and when I finally got to visit Geetha Akka (supposedly, to help her make appetizers, etc.) it was past midnight and I felt really bad as she was still making stuff with the help of her daughter, Shalini, and another friend .

On the morning of July 3<sup>rd</sup>, when I entered the meeting hall, it was like a “shra-ma-da-na”, individuals voluntarily performing various activities. The tables were already covered with table clothes that had our school colors, blue and gold, the flags were up. The flower arrangements were very beautiful. The whole setup reminded me of school prize giving ceremonies of yesteryears. Mrs. Werake and our Honorary member Prof. Mahinda Werake from Seattle, Harshi Waters from Portland, Himashinie Diyabalanage from Boston, Gayathri Samarasinghe from Salt Lake city, Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa and her sister Waruni along with their mother from Fresno, CA, were already present. Arushie Nugapitiya from Los Gatos, CA and Dulanjalee from Denver, CO, also joined us a little later. Geetha Eragoda, Shalini Eragoda, our oldest member Nanda Leula, Niranjala Tilekeratne and her daughter Mihiri, Savithri Gunaratne and her daughter, Ayanthi Fernando and her husband were also there from Los Angeles. Since the Inaugural AGM in 2005, it was the first time that all four of us, the founding members, Mrs Werake, Harshi akka, Arushie akka, and I were together again.

The meeting started at 2:00 pm(PST) with the traditional “Magul Bera” music, the traditional lighting of the oil lamp, singing both the US and Sri Lankan national anthems and the Mahamaya school song. Mihiri coordinated all of the photographers who were busy taking group photographs. Prasad Gankanda (Gayathri’s husband), another honorary member, and Madhava Werake (Mrs Werake’s son) provided the technical support while Gayathri’s brother, Upul Iranga Samarasinghe, stood as the official photographer. Charitha Aiya, Geetha Akka’s husband, of course, was very busy doing a good job handling the various responsibilities placed on him.

In the evening, everyone with their families and friends, gathered at the house where the dinner was held at. The members, Indika Ranawana and Subhashinie Iddamalgoda, who couldn’t attend the meeting, were there as well. When we arrived there, Geetha akka and her helpers were busy getting appetizers and the dinner ready. She did not forget to decorate everything, even the lights that were placed outside around the pool were in school colors. Literally, everything was arranged in grand style. The variety of foods that was served was much more elaborate than a buffet at a five-star hotel. We had about 60 people to enjoy the grand dinner with so much food. For quality control purposes Geetha Akka always made sure that she prepared the food and everything by herself. Geetha Akka, you were amazing! How did you prepare all those mouthwatering food ?

The fun began with the skits. Mrs Werake and Ayanthi provided the scripts for the skits. Mrs. Werake even provided school uniforms, sewen by her. I wore a uniform after 20 years, and the feeling was great. Harshi Akka demonstrated how good an actor she was. Oh!! We can not forget Mihiri’s acting as Mrs Robinson, with a British accent. It was hilarious and we had so much fun taking part as well as watching. I learned a lot about things that had happened, both before and after my era. After the dinner, outgoing and incoming presidents cut our traditional cake. We also cut a birthday cake to celebrate our oldest member Nanda Leula’s 88th birthday. Then, the “sing-along” session started and went on past midnight. By the time we left the place, it was around 1 o’ clock, the next morning.

I would like to convey my special thanks to Geetha Akka, her husband Charitha Aiya, daughter, Shalini, and son Damitha for hosting the event so beautifully with so much enthusiasm, love and warmth. Thank you for your contribution and hospitality (not just the things that made this AGM the most memorable to me, but also everything extra to make my whole family feel homely and comfortable), which was truly beyond my expectations!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank and pay gratitude to our President Himashinie Diyabalanage, the BOD and the Executive Committee members, and Mrs. Werake for all the numerous things they did to make this event successful. I would also like to thank all the members and guests for their contribution and attendance.

It was very nice meeting my dear old friends and chat about the good old days. The appetizers were delicious and the dinner was grand, and to say “the food was great” is an understatement. The entertainment provided was outstanding, not to mention the sing-along session. All in all, I enjoyed every bit of it, and could not have asked for more. If you missed the AGM this year, please plan on attending the next one to be held in Charleston, South Carolina, and I guarantee that you would not be disappointed!

Sent by Neranjika Amaratunga

***MGCAANA 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting: An honorary knight’s perspective.***

***July, 2010.***


***Santa Clarita ,California.***

Recently, I attended the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Mahamaya Girls’ College Alumni Association of North America (MGCAANA) at Santa Clarita, near Los Angeles, California. There was little chance I was going to miss this meeting. What sane person wants to miss the opportunity to be a member of an all-girls association? In my case, it was a different reason. The welfare of my marriage was at issue if I missed it. According to my wife’s own words, I was made an honorary member of the association. No one had honored me with anything until this day, so this was a big deal to me. At the meeting, it was easier than I thought. There were other helpless souls like me. The kind ladies knighted us all as honorary members and all we had to do was to nod in agreement to every proposal that came up at the meeting. We sat in silent futility, with the understanding that any attempt to quit on our part would sure to end up with us getting hurt. We assumed a countenance of pride for their efforts to change the world. We acted like we belonged. At the dinner after the meeting, we had a great time. Only in the end did we realize how wily these girls were to confer us the ‘honorary’ tag. They herded us towards the kitchen sink and we ended up washing the grimy dishes after their party.

Seriously folks, it was an inspirational meeting. Members have come representing the East, Midwest, Northwest and South of the U.S. Alumni in Canada didn’t want to miss their short summer, so they sent their regrets. I saw enthusiasm when the girls were rehearsing for their skits, which was probably therapeutic for the girls, as they were re-living their mischievous school days. Improvisation of the white gown and blue belt buckle, hair braided with pila gate in the school skits probably made the alumnae nostalgic. The skits also transported me to early seventies allowing me to visualize my wife in the school uniform (she is beautiful as ever still, although she had to scramble for a belt with the blue buckle that was two sizes larger than then). The honorary members meanwhile just sat there probably wishing they were some place else, watching Argentina vs. Germany in the World Cup. Yet, not one of them dared sneak a peek at their wristwatch.

Earlier in the day, the ladies started with electing the new office bearers of the association. Pamuditha Mahadiwulwewa (Maya ’00) from Fresno, California will steer the work in the coming year with an 8-member committee. We all should wish her well for I noted the incipient smile on Himashini Diyabalanage’s face - she was the outgoing president and what a relief it was for her! Then they shared the progress of their current programs. They discussed about the request for books from the Primary school. Everyone agreed to work on it. Creating a trust fund for the Vidya Scholarship was a primary objective of the group. The ladies were focused and serious in their discussions. They dedicated for the work at hand and joined in force to make a great alumni association so that their alma mater can become even greater. From what I found out that day, they were entrenched with a pervasive dedication to school’s ideals and theme. It was almost like the word ‘dedication’ was stamped in every page of the school curriculum they were taught. Mrs. Werake (Maya ’64), their advisor was fantastic. When she participated in the skits, the lovable and demanding teacher she was once, and not an ounce less of it still, her stern tone acting as the principal was almost real. A few men folks, enjoying Knighthood, but the their (K)night in the woods already, slid behind the crowd in fear.

Continued



*It is better to deserve honors and not have them than to have them and not to deserve them.*

~~~~~ Mark Twain ~~~~~



Representing the storied past and the assiduous dedication was the presence of the star of the evening, none other than the 88-year old alumna, Mrs. Leula (Maya '40). Her presence spawned great purpose and strength to the alumnae. She entertained the gathering with her description of the lamaa sariya (kota saariya) she wore to school. Most students walked to school during Mrs. Leula's days, as against today's three hour bus ride, packed like a can of sardines. Mrs. Leula was endearingly sweet and authoritative of the history of the school and its environs. In her days, a class had only 12 students. She lamented about today's class size which is stuffed like a truck full of coconuts! It was her birthday, too. Her grandson was a bit worried seeing the 3-inch thick icing layer she was eating. Geetha Eragoda (Maya '84) her honorary member Charith and their friend and the Honored member, Mr. (amiable) Asoka Herath (who himself once dreamed of attending Mahamaya, instead got banished himself to a Boys' School in Gampola) were great hosts of the evening. Shalini, proudly representing Mahamaya at UC Berkeley, helped her mother to put the event in order, like a weaver bird. As a Berkeley liberal, it was probably her idea to trick the Knights into washing the dishes!

Then at 2am, the unthinkable happened - the Mahamaya girls started singing. Their starting number sent chills through my spine. It was lo ada ninde! At 2am? The honorary members, the tricked Knights sitting in the Round Table (in Asoka Herath's kitchen) were already homesick dreaming of snuggling in bed, began to look at each other's face flabbergasted.

The enthusiasm of the crowd continued without any sign of abatement, nevertheless. Classes representing '40 to '05, starting with the charming soon-to-become-nonagenarian, ladies with aureate silver jubilee gracefulness and charisma about them, and the recent graduates - pretty and jubilant as ever, were in attendance, showing the reach of Mahamaya prudery, perseverance, strength and their allegiant solidarity.

Reminiscing the evening, I am certain, had they not bestowed upon me the honorary membership and the Knighthood, I would still have crashed the party. I would not miss it in the world: becoming a witness to the great fraternity of humanity and sisterhood these girls of Mahamaya – including my wife (Niranjala, nee Wickramasinghe, Maya '74) belonged (and my daughter Mihiri and I, now honored and privileged, to share).

Lokubanda Tillakaratne  
Los Angeles.

**Party like it's 1960 : An afternoon of love and laughter.**

By most standards, thirty-five years is a long time. Infants become adults, saplings become trees, and wars turn countries inside out. Alas, thirty-five years usually means for many lives, a new and different world with a few rare links to the past. But the obstacle of time proved to be no match for the 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964 and 1965 classes of Kandy's prestigious Mahamaya Girls' College. The ladies braved distances, travel inconveniences, shook off husbands and children and chores, to trudge through monsoon weather for an afternoon down memory lane.

2 P.M on July 18<sup>th</sup> 2010, the Ganga Addhara Hotel's ballroom lay beautifully set in a simple and delicate manner while rain thundered outside. A small group of women stood by the doorway and as the minutes ticked on, a small trickle of saris began to pile at the door, signing the guest book and moving slowly into the somewhat empty room. Yet somehow, within moments the ballroom was filled with booming laughter and gleeful exclamations as former friends and classmates rushed to embrace, recognizing one another at an instant as though the long years between them had not happened. In the breath of just those few minutes, the room was packed and absurdly loud. It warmed my heart to see these teachers, doctors, lawyers, wives, mothers, and grandmothers all filled to the brim with emotion as they looked upon their classmates for the first time since they had walked out of their school gates for the last time, over a quarter of a century ago. Though many have kept in touch via contacts found through a chain of family and alternate friends, most have been unable to do more than e-mail and call, having their own families and careers to attend to first. The years have taken many of the Old Girls abroad, up and away from the gentle city of their youth. Apropos, this did not dampen the determination to reunite. Only a few years back, Sriyani Dissanayake (nee Galahitiyawa) and Lalanthika Rajapakse, both of '64, had found themselves State-side. Though still separated by significant distance (Florida and New Jersey respectively) they communicated and talk of a get-together sparked. Lighting like a flame, the idea rapidly took form. Lalanthika hoisted the burden of organizing the event, working tirelessly alongside Sriyani to contact as many classmates as possible via all methods of communication. Calls poured into the phonelines of not only Lalanthika and Sriyani but also Jayanthi Wijesekera, Samantha Rajapakse and Srimathi Wijeratne and Padma Illangasekara (Mrs. Kodikararachchi), who had jumped aboard to assist with this monstrous task. Mala Dissanayake offered her home as a meeting station and it was apparent that this goal was soon to be a reality. Splitting the responsibilities of collecting funds, contacting the members of four separate graduating classes, and tending to the details of the event, the ladies demonstrated resourcefulness and ambition. Lalanthika spared no time booking a hall and setting everything in motion. After months of arduous planning, the pieces of the jigsaw had fallen together, and now gathered in a large ballroom were 75 of Mahamaya's Alumni, joyously and tearfully reminiscing. The dedication of the planning committee was clearly not in vain, their efforts shining brightly in the number of attendees.

Cameras clicked happily and smiles were abundant. Eventually the loud yells across the room and boisterous laughter quelled enough for class photographs to be taken as the photographer clicked away, and I did the same behind him with twenty or so personal cameras. The ladies then seated themselves and a hush fell over the crowd. Small speeches were made by Lalanthika and Jayanthi, followed immediately by a moment of silence for members of the four classes whose lives had been tragically lost over the years. Sorrow vibrated through every individual in the ballroom as the Alumni remembered their cherished departed friends: Chitra Yatawara, Subashini Samaranayake, Nalini Gunawardena, Udeni Dissanayake, and Padmika Ratnamudali. The school anthem was then sung with a level of pride and dignity I have rarely witnessed before in a large crowd, with every woman standing tall and singing boldly. Each of the guests was then invited to stand and say a sentence or two about herself and her family, opening the doors for jokes and marriage invites for those whose children were grown but have yet to leave the nest. The formalities ended with acknowledgements of the work done by the Mahamaya Old Girls' Association for current students and ways in which Alumni can contribute. The afternoon concluded with warm sentiments, finger food, information exchange, delightful dancing, and an incomprehensible number of camera flashes.

The event was undoubtedly a success, bringing old companions together to celebrate more than school, but life itself. Each of these former school girl's who blossomed into the unique and accomplished high-caliber women of today's society, set a standard for the rest of us. They proudly demonstrated that no matter where we go in life, what we achieve and whoever we may become, we must never forget the foundations that provided us with the tools to get there. We must never forget our beginnings; those who made our childhood memories sweet and treasured. We must never forget our mentors, our sisters, our friends. The day was a beautiful example of how precious friends are, and how resilient the bonds shared between classmates can be. Mothers, wives, grandmothers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, socialites, all became children once again on a rainy Sunday afternoon. For these women, time, distance, silence and hardship proved naught in the shadow of the iron-clad friendships formed back in those white-washed Mahamaya classrooms, so many years back.

Many thanks to those who contributed their effort and time in making this reunion possible. Your hard work has not gone unnoticed and all the Alumni are greatly appreciative for all that the planning committee has done.

Written by Upuli Dissanayake, age 19 and the only attendee under the age of 48. Daughter of Sriyani Dissanayake (nee Galahitiyawa).  
The author would like to note that the years designated for each class refer to the year upon entry into Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy.

