

Signposts



Payal (Chopra) Mody
18 August 1961-10 July 2007

Payal joined St. Mary's in 1966 and after a sustained topper's record throughout her school career, went on to join Fergusson College in 1976 where she studied in the science stream till 1978. Payal joined the BJ Medical College in Pune, from where she successfully completed MD (Path) in 1998. Payal was an ebullient student in school and college, taking an active interest in sports and cultural activities.

After marriage she joined her husband in the US, where she qualified to be pathologist. She soon made a major career change by joining the Travellers Group in their IT department. Her two children, Nihit (17) and Namita (16) are studying in the US.

Payal contracted a malignant ailment in 2001 and fought a valiant battle against it for six years before succumbing in 2007. She passed away in Pune at the home of her parents Dr. BsKs and Dr. Baji Chopra on 10th July 2007.



Deepika (Bhatia) Mangwani
(16 June 1964 - 27 May 2007)

Deepika was in the batch of 1980. She went on to Fergusson College, after which she studied architecture, and worked as an architect, interior designer and landscape artist in Pune. Deepika passed away in June 2007 after fighting a long and valiant battle against cancer for the last nine years of her life. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1998 when her younger child was just four months old. In the last year of her life the cancer spread to her lungs and brain.

Deepika's indomitable spirit through all those agonising years never failed to amaze us - she was always cheerful and full of energy and enthusiasm almost up to the end. A wonderful and giving person, Deepika was unfailingly warm and generous. She leaves behind her husband, Sunil, her 12-year-old daughter Monisha, and 10-year-old son Saeesh. Deepika, we all miss you.

Miss Tehmi Irani

An institution in SMS, she taught French for more than 30 years, and was also Vice Principal for a few years before retirement. Miss Irani passed away in August 2007.

It was very sad to hear of Miss Irani's passing. She was my class teacher for both the 10th and 11th and I think I gave her a really hard time! I have wonderful memories of those years at St. Mary's. Teachers like Miss Irani are few and far between. God bless her.

Vinita Ullal

My deepest condolences to the SMS institution for losing such a valuable person as Miss Irani. I remember her as our vice principal for a while when I was in ninth standard. I was always scared of her strict code of discipline and in awe of her, and will always remember her.

Kavita Rathi

My heartfelt condolences to her family. I remember her fondly. The discipline we imbibed from her remains unmatched. Pray her soul rests in peace.

Sangeeta Wagh

I was very saddened by this news. I am very grateful to her and she certainly was an institution!

Mrinalini Mehra

This is very sad news. May her soul rest in eternal peace. She had the fortitude of a strong pillar. I still remember how she finished teaching us 'Julius Caesar' although her retina was detached and she could not read. That was a dedicated teacher.

Zenobia Patel

She was a hard taskmaster but a wonderful teacher. Even so many years later I still remember the basics of the French language as she taught them. Though stern in demeanour, she was also very loving and I can never forget her. I met her a few months before she passed away and her spirit was still as indomitable as ever.

Radhika Wadia

Vignettes

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St. Mary's School OGA Newsletter-January 2008

Celebrating 140 Years of SMS



On January 6, 2007 we organised a reunion to coincide with the 140-year celebrations of SMS. After a beautiful service in St. Mary's Church, we moved to the spectacularly lit school grounds for our own celebration. It was heartwarming to see old friends meet and reminisce about their days at school.

As a special gesture the OGA felicitated Mrs. Matthew and a few old teachers like Miss Lawrence and Mrs. Edwards, who came down

for the occasion from Bangalore, with commemorative mementos. Groups of old girls got together to sing rousing renditions of their house songs, and it was as if the years just rolled back. An audio visual on the history of the school brought back a further rush of memories and there were few dry eyes at the end of it.

Old girls caught up with classmates and teachers over a sumptuous meal, promising to meet again the following year.

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Take Things Ahead!



Wish you all a Bright and Prosperous New Year. The year 2007 has flown by and it is time for our third alumni meet. On behalf of the committee I welcome you to our gathering, and hope you all have a great time meeting friends and old teachers.

Our website (www.stmaryspune-oga.com) was launched recently and will help keep alumni updated on yearly meetings and events, and find old classmates. It is up to all of us to ensure that the website remains up-to-date and active, so do send regular feedback at info@stmaryspune-oga.com. We would also welcome donations from old girls to help us maintain the website, and keep the newsletter going. Cheques can be drawn on "St. Mary's School Old Girl's Association" and mailed to Maria Latiff, Latiff's Frozen Foods Pvt. Ltd, 2434 East Street, Nr. Cafe Coffee Day, Camp, Pune 411 001.

I would like to encourage some of the younger "old girls" to participate in the reunions and serve on the committee, and bring in new ideas for all of us to share. Now that we have an organisation launched, please support it and make it a success by attending the meets, and sending us news of yourselves and friends. Keep in touch, and do spread the word about the OGA.

Veena Vora
President, OGA

Celebrating 140 years...



Evelyn Devadawson leads the school song



Miss Hyams receives a memento



Special guest Miss Lawrence



Mrs Matthew with Mrs. Singh and Mrs. Menon



Mrs. Edwards talks about the old days



Friends meet over dinner

News from Old Girls

SMS is and will remain with me all my life. It has left me with deeply embedded values, ideals, a sure grounding of faith, and taught me the importance of integrity and the need to follow the right path.

I was in SMS from 1974-1977, a boarder, in St. Peter's House and extremely proud of my red tie. After passing out in 1977, I went on to do an MA in English Literature. I also then learnt German and after going through many long stints in Germany, did an equally long International Teacher's Training (1990). I started teaching at the Max Mueller Bhavan at New Delhi, where I worked for 9 years. I then moved to Bangalore in 1996 and have since then been teaching in the Max Mueller Bhavan here.

Asha Dhongade

My mother Doris Muriel Murray, now known as Doris Bryder, was at St Mary's from 1928-1934. She was Head of School for two years, on the school Tennis Team and also school pianist. She is currently living in Sydney, Australia and is in good health for 90 years of age!

Her younger sisters were Gwendoline Edith Murray, who passed away 20 years ago in Ottawa; and Lorna Jeanne Murray, currently living in Hayes Middlesex, England. Since the girls' mother had died, Lorna was taken in by the school at a very young age and was looked after by the School Matron Mrs. Munro. Betty, Mrs. Munro's daughter, was also at the school. At 93 she is still a dear friend of my mother's today - living just round the corner from her in Sydney, Australia. These two St Mary's 'Old Girls' go on many community outings together and people are always amazed at how they giggle over memories and by their constant stories.

Cynthia Faulkner

I joined St. Mary's sometime in 1944 or 1945 and left in 1956 to finish my last two years of schooling in Bombay. I still remember the first day at school. My mother left me by the "jungle jim" and the first person I met and became friends with was Shirin (Rashid) Damania with whom I am still in touch.

St. Mary's gave us the best education that we could ever ask for. Even though at the time we felt that the nuns and teachers were very strict with us, looking back now I realize one just cannot get that type of education anywhere! The teachers and nuns at St. Mary's taught us real values that we have been able to carry into our later years and which have stood

us in good stead.

I was given an opportunity to show off my vocal chords in the school choir for years and I loved it. And, because of my stature in my younger days, I was given the privilege of acting as the 'plum pudding' in all the Christmas plays! I am presently residing in Corte Madera, California (just outside San Francisco) where I work for an organisation that monitors the air quality in the Bay Area.

Nirmala (Neel) Advani

I belonged to the Class of 1975 and am now a single mother of three teenagers. When the oldest turned 14 I took up a job in the school office of an Elementary Public School. I worked there for four yrs and for this past year have been working at The Boeing Company in the capacity of Executive Assistant.

Ameeta (Thakore) Chainani

I live in West Australia - five hours away by plane. We had our OGA reunion on 14 April 2007. Ten old girls attended an afternoon tea hosted by Mignonne Goes (Smith). As usual it was lively chatter and reminiscing on life in India and our years at St. Mary's. We have happy memories of playing instruments and singing in the school choirs, and participating in art and craft, sewing, cooking, sport, and socials. Above all we are grateful for the introduction to the morals and values of the Christian faith, and for the academic excellence.

Deirdre Lyra (Stann)

The most exciting and fruitful years of my life were spent at St. Mary's School. The honour of being Head Girl of this prestigious institution in the year 2002 has not only boosted my self-esteem but has also enhanced my leadership qualities. I have such fond memories of my days in school, the fun we had practicing for inter house competitions, sports day, speech day and the like. St. Mary's moulds you into such a strong, independent human being that when you leave this institution, you are ready to face life's challenges with an open mind. I can speak endlessly about St. Mary's, but would like to sum it up in one phrase: "Its simply the best!"

Gillian Pinto



favourite with many of us was condensed milk, boiled to thicken just like caramel - delicious stuff! Whoever shared their tin of condensed milk with others was a very popular girl for the rest of the week.

In the evenings during our free time we would help the Sisters make patchwork quilts and knit scarves and mittens and socks to send to orphanages and hospitals. We endured daily evacuation and air raid drills. When the siren sounded we had to stop everything and run and hide at a moment's notice. But War seemed so far away from us in Poona. We were told troops were engaged in fierce battles on the Burma/India borders to keep the Japanese forces from entering India. It was when only the Sisters at St. Mary's offered refuge and shelter to children who were victims of war that we children began to realise war was horror, pain and separation.



Boarders with the Sisters

hair, knotted, tangled and crawling with lice, brought tears to our eyes.

A large group of girls from Poland and few girls from Germany also joined us at school during those times. They were Jewish girls smuggled out of Poland and Germany by nuns and placed on ships destined for countries like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and India, where they would be safe from war. They were lovely girls, their ages ranging from 6-18 years. They had their meals with us and were included in most of our daily activities. At night they



Gran Monro with Sisters and staff circa 1945

We had girls who had walked through the jungles from Burma to India, dodging Japanese soldiers. Only the fittest survived. So many died along the trek. Starvation, sickness, snake bites and constant exposure to heat and damp took their toll on those brave walkers. I remember those unfortunate children arriving at our school. Their sad, tired eyes and faces, thin little bodies covered in rags, arms and legs covered in sores and bites from leeches, and their



With friends

slept on canvas fold up cots in the classrooms. Some spoke English. I remember with much interest and enjoyment the many concerts the girls gave. They wore their national costumes and sang, danced and played musical instruments. Crowds would fill the school hall for the concert evening and the donations collected at the door helped to cover the costs of the girls' schooling, board and lodging.



Dagdu with the school bus in 1947

Jen and I left St. Mary's in 1949 for Karwar where Dad was posted before we left for Australia. Although discipline was tough at St. Mary's, once I had left for good I missed the School, especially all the dear friends I had made over ten years.



Reflections from Sydney



Deirdre Heather Anne Mckenzie Thomson wrote to us from Sydney, Australia where she now lives. She was a boarder at St. Mary's from 1939 to 1949. Here are some excerpts from her reminiscences of life at St. Mary's, especially during the War years.

I was born in Sassoon Hospital in Poona on 24th November 1933, and was a boarder at St. Mary's Girls' High School from the age of six to sixteen. I enjoyed piano lessons, gymnastics, and dancing and drama performances. We had our own Guide unit. I was leader of the Pansy patrol and took my guide work seriously. We were very privileged children to have our Gran, Olivia Fearnley Monro, working at the school as catering matron. She kept a keen watch over me and my sisters Ros and Jen. She lived in a little cottage in the school grounds and her support and presence at the school were such a comfort to us. Gran gave St. Mary's School 35 years of devoted service before retiring and coming to Australia with us in October 1949.

The school was divided into three houses when I attended: St. Patrick's of Ireland, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Michael the Arc Angel. My sisters and I were in St. Patrick's house and wore green ties. I enjoyed our house picnics held on 17th March. There was a lot of friendly rivalry between houses especially on Sports Day held on 1st November (All Saints Day). Our kind day scholars provided all the food for us boarders.

After all our hard work was done and another school term had come to a close, we would pack our trunks and hold-alls excitedly the night before we were to leave on holiday. The following day we would board our blue school bus, christened 'Rhapsody in Blue' by us boarders, and head for Poona station to board the Deccan Queen for Bombay.

During the War years at St. Mary's, the Sisters would tell us girls repeatedly that small

inconveniences and sacrifices were to be made and endured by all pupils at school. The inconveniences we encountered were minute indeed compared to others parts of the world where children and adults were suffering grave hardships. We were indeed privileged children, safe and secure at school, far from danger.

As boarders we noted our rations at mealtimes were smaller and the qualities of sugar, rice and bread were below our usual standard of fare. Always being hungry, this was more than a small inconvenience. My poor Gran, who was in charge of all stores and the catering, was often the victim of criticism and blame. Little did any of us know how difficult it was for her to get certain foods and supplies, and then prepare menus on a much-reduced budget. Gran Monro, being an excellent book keeper, planner and manager, kept us girls adequately fed and took all our grumbling and complaints good naturedly. Rice and bread puddings became standard desserts, and today while I can still eat rice custard if I have to, bread pudding is a definite no-no!



Anne and Jenny

Some small inconveniences like the scarcity of sweets and chocolates just had to be endured. Squeals of delight would ring through the dormitories when parcels containing lots of goodies arrived from home. I loved the Rowntrees chocolates Mum and Dad packed in our parcels, along with treats like tins of jam, golden syrup, condensed milk, biscuits and crisps. The goodies would be labeled and stored carefully away in our Tuck cupboard, to be brought out after our evening meal and shared with friends. In this way small groups would make their tuck supply last longer. A

