



THE OLIPHANT

No. 175

WELHAM BOYS' SCHOOL

November 12th, 1995

Think About it

Good Teaching is one-fourth preparation and three-fourths theatre.

--Gail Godwin

EDITORIAL

So this is really what it feels like! After days of prolonged anticipation, the announcement by the Head relieved me of my burden of hope, but went on to instil in me a greater sense of responsibility than ever before. What makes my task rather more important is the standard that the Oliphant has attained in the last one year. The Head too acknowledged the hard work put into the publication by the outgoing members of the Editorial Board. I sincerely hope that the new Editorial Board manages to maintain the high standard of the publication and even tries to better it.

The Founder's Day Celebrations went off pretty well, what with all the old boys, the parents, the plays and exhibitions and the general atmosphere of revelry. The exhibitions were appreciated by all as also the plays both by the seniors as well as the juniors. It was indeed a pleasure to see the turnout of the exies, as their presence adds a certain something to the celebrations.

Unfortunately, the Doon School Founder's day celebrations coincided with that of ours and somewhat weakened the expected crowd during the fete, and I'm not speaking of the parents!

Our Chief Guest was Admiral V.S. Shekhawat, the Chief of Naval Staff. His and the Principal's speech were listened to with rapt attention. We were delighted to be the recipient of beautiful photographs of naval ships, a present to us from the Chief Guest. We are indeed grateful. The students need to be commended on the excellence of their presentations in the exhibitions and this includes the work

done also by the Junior and Middle Schools. I was sure I was going to experience the common editorial hassle and that being, the art of taking up space. Therefore worried and slightly subdued, I went to the Staff Rep. for advice and was told to have an Ed to Ed chat with Sudeep. The latter's advice to me was most simply put as, "Freak out". So here I am ladies and gentleman, doing my level best to freak out.

The twelfthies are busy studying and we in the eleventh are busy marvelling at the will power and dedication to duty which some of them have. The end of term is approaching and with it are the dreaded exams. A crisp word of caution by the Head has prompted most of us to consider the possibility of some serious study.

On a more serious note, one of the pioneers for peace in the Middle East, Yitzak Rabin was ruthlessly assassinated by a fanatic. It is a pity to witness such ugly spectacles of inhumanity in a world where the scarcest amount of decency and integrity to a cause is so very hard to come by. May his soul rest in peace. Maybe someday, the world will eventually right itself, and then, we may begin to appreciate rare individuals such as he, who operate on noble grounds.

I seem to be running behind schedule for this issue so I suppose I had better wind up my piece. Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Sudeep and his team for a splendid year's work. We do hope that we will continue to receive their contributions for publication even after they leave school. So amigos, till the next issue, Adios.

--Rumaan

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Ed,

I was very happy to read Sarthak Pany's letter about the direction of the play in the last issue of the Oliphant. I don't know if I am a 'philanthropist', because I always get involved in a play with a cast of more than a hundred students, as I cannot ignore their enthusiastic appeals to get 'any', even a minor role in the play. This time, however, I was compelled to refuse an eager eleventhie, as my cast comprised students upto the seventh standard only.

It is indeed a 'Herculean Task' managing such a large cast alone, and it should be borne in mind that whatever responsibility I had assumed was for the honour of Welham.

The one thing I really appreciated during my tenure in the U.K. was 'Teamwork'. On the other hand, here, occasionally it's 'Your Baby' - YOU must deal with it. Why is this so? It should make no difference whether a junior or senior activity is being conducted especially where the Founder's Day Celebrations are concerned. Isn't it time we realised this, and more staff and students assisted, (including the Prefects) without the Head having to tell them to do so?

I am grateful that 'my' plight has gained some attention, especially the attention of a senior boy. I sincerely hope, that in the future, more senior boys will come forth with their advice, as I greatly admire and appreciate the original and innovative nature of the young. If the play was a success, I can sincerely state that it was so because of these admirable qualities that you boys possess. Thank you, all my colleagues and all students, for your involvement in this production.

Yours gratefully,

Mrs. Nilima Basu.

Ed : We agree that the play was a success but surely this was because of close co-ordination and effective teamwork by all those involved. If all were to involve themselves in one activity the resultant result would be chaotic.

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WELHAM NOW

1. The following boys have been inducted in the Editorial Board of 'The Oliphant' for the year 1995-96 :-

Chief Editor : Rumaan Kidwai

Computer Designer & Desk-Top Editor : Ashish Gupta

Literary Affairs : Abhinav Agarwal

Welham Now Correspondent : Siddharth Choraria

Ringside View Correspondent : Gurkirat Aurora

Nature's Diary : Digvijay Lamba

2. The following boys were awarded colours for the year 1995-96 in the following sports:-

Atheletics

Vishwas Kohli

Ritesh Tiwari

Akshi Saxena

Rohan Sood

Manish Kumar

Nikunj Gupta

Volleyball

Abhishek Mohan

Gautam Khullar

Shailendra Singh

Football

Manish Kumar

Prashant Singh

Surya Todi

Gaurav Kutwal

Akshi Saxena

Hockey

Prashant Singh

Surya Todi

Manish Kumar

Rumaan Kidwai

3. The school was represented by Nawaz Khan and Rumaan Kidwai at the Chukkerbuty Memorial Inter school English Debate. Nawaz spoke very well whereas Rumaan captured the prize for the Best Rebutter.

4. The school athletics team participated in the Dehra Dun District Athletics meet held in the Doon School. Akbar Ali, Kumar Abhijeet and Sashwat Prasad collected medals.

Ideas or suggestions regarding the functions to be held to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of our school in 1997, will be greatly appreciated. You may hand them over your suggestions directly to the Head or to any member of the Oliphant board.

--Editor

LITERARY AFFAIRS

Founders' Day Speech of the Principal- Mr.S.Kandhari

"Admiral Shekhawat, Members of the Board of Trustees, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my happy duty to welcome all of you to our Founders' Day. Unfortunately for the first time ever, our Chairman is unable to come owing to ill health and on behalf of all of us I wish him a speedy recovery.

It is a great pleasure to welcome our Chief Guest, Admiral Shekhawat and Mrs. Shekhawat. A consistent thread running through all my Founders' day speeches has been that the school's aim is to help develop the 'complete man'. I was delighted therefore when you, Sir, kindly accepted General Bakshi's request to join us today, not merely because you and I share both a schooling in Dehra Dun and living in cantonments when young, but because you epitomize 'the complete man'.

Winner of the Gold Medal at the NDA, Admiral Shekhawat also made a mark as an outstanding sportsman - setting an all time record of being awarded five blues. He has climbed Mount Annapurna and has done much rock climbing in Europe. Today he keeps himself fit by playing vigorous and competitive tennis.

His career has been marked by many important landmarks; he pioneered the submarine arm of the Navy and was awarded the Vir Chakra for gallantry in 1971.

Two other dimensions to his personality are firstly his role as an educator (not merely as Chief of Naval Staff) but during his stint as Deputy Commandant NDA and, secondly, his deep interest in non-conventional medicine. And as if he was not busy enough as a Chief- he reads widely.

In short, Sir, I hope you will be a role model to our students.

Today we are gathered to commemorate our Founder- Hersilia Susie Oliphant. I'd like to read an extract from an obituary that Mr. Gibson wrote in 1963. "Known as Hersilia or Olyy to her many friends, and lispings variations of 'elephant' to generations of Welham

Boys', Miss Oliphant was a real 'character'- and how refreshing it is to know people of character in these days of spreading uniformity. She had private means and might well, specially in her seventies, have allowed herself a restful retirement; but this was not Miss Oliphant's idea of how to enjoy life. She used her own, her mother's, and everybody's funds she could beg or borrow to build up the school to which she devoted the last quarter-century of her life; and more important even than funds, she devoted her boundless energy and love. No difficulty was too great to overcome for the benefit of her boys and school. If those of us who, during the past few years as Trustees for her school were at times doubtful whether some improvement could be afforded, she made it in spite of us, and faced us with a fait accompli at our next meeting, to be digested with one of her excellent lunches. There might be no money to start a girls school, but a girls school was needed and a girls school was started. Miss Oliphant was a doer. She leaves no children born of her flesh, but she leaves a great family of those she lived for: teachers who were happily married from her school, the large family she adopted, and hundreds of old boys. We hope that the work that she started continues as in the motto she chose for her school : 'From Strength to Strength'."

I trust that all of you will agree with me when I say that our Welham community may take pride at having lived up to the school motto.

Though we may justifiably be proud of what we have achieved in the last decade it is time that we looked inward at our own defects, examined the flaws in our education system and then make a concerted effort to prepare for the 21st century.

Education, if it is to be worthy of that name, is concerned with continuous self-renewal and therefore must be a radical bent. This means that our educational pattern needs change. Though everybody agrees that 'we need reform', alas, a proviso is often added 'but

no drastic changes'! But as someone said the tree in May does not resemble the tree in December-- drastic change is a must.

Give another thought to the plight of the student in India: a syllabus that imposes a heavy work load and one main goal- only MARKS. Thus there is no real time for co-curricular activities and of course little time for laughter.

As it is, many students lack the self-motivation and desire to learn and our classroom-based education further discourages many from learning. For much that is taught is irrelevant to the real life situation and much that is taught is obsolete the day the boy graduates from School.

As we know, 'it is better to lack a teacher than to lack the desire to learn' so what counselling, what environment, can we create to stimulate the desire to learn? I'll be grateful for your advice. But obviously it cannot be stimulated by 'private tuition' nor by continuous learning by rote.

What changes should we make so that our students may confidently and happily move into the global village of the 21st century as purposeful, upright and compassionate human beings?

An oft-repeated goal of many schools is that of turning out 'all-rounders'. A worthwhile aim we would say. But it does lead to parents and teachers not valuing the striving for excellence in a sphere, wherein the child may show talent, but in not an academic sphere. Eccentricity too is neither accepted nor tolerated. Thus, often a child's focus is lost to him because the school, in its pursuit for 'all-rounders' makes him abandon his special skills. We at Welham will have to try and restructure our schedule and curriculum to cater to these special needs.

Yet another dimension is that of aesthetics: appreciation of art, nature, style and taste get lost in the pursuit of marks. You have to only look around contemporary society to see the loss of aesthetics reflected in the general debasement of taste. I entreat you to encourage the young to have an appreciation of beautiful things, to passionately want and strive for a clean and pure environment and above all to have a sense of wonder. Achieve this, and the young will take daily delight in simple pleasures

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and develop into good human beings.

One offshoot of this lack of aesthetics came out loud and clear in yesterday's entertainment: my Monday Assembly after the parents Sunday visit, when I have to chide the boys about litter. The parents, of course, are absent but not the ugly reminders of their visit. So it refreshing for me yesterday to see that the juniors appreciate a neat campus. So the young ones at least, have got the urge.

To turn to a higher human dimension: 'the element of reflection and introspection' which is a most important component of 'teaching-learning'. Where is the place or time for this in our single minded pursuit of high marks? (What is considered to be equivalent to academic excellence?)

Much of the current educational scenario is gloomy, but there is a silver lining: many schools and the Ministry of Human Resources are thinking radically. Thus, you'll see that within a few years all good colleges will NOT depend upon ISC or CBSE marks for the 'cut off' but will have their own tests/interviews. Now this for India will be a radical change.

Last year in my speech I mentioned a study conducted by the US National Association of Secondary School Principal's where it was found, 'a students predictable success in life after school is not the rank in class nor his average marks but the degree of involvement in co-curricular activities.

I'm quoting this short para because on Monday by pure happenstance I read the 9th October issue of Time magazine where a complex elaboration of the above view was presented by a team of researchers. A most thought-provoking, invigorating and somewhat controversial article whose chief thrust is 'It is not intelligence that may be the best predictor of success in life, redefining what it means to be smart.'

So, this statement, to some extent vindicates what all public schools stand for but, it also means that we teachers have to come to grips with a new concept and a more difficult one- the need to adopt a literacy programme designed to help children learn to manage anger, frustration and loneliness. Perhaps we should also work towards developing greater

self respect and self reliance in our students.

Recently I attended the Round Square Conference in Brisbane as an observer. We from India were struck by the fact that students were not spoon fed at all and they did the work and tasks allotted to them with total self confidence and no question of asking others to run errands, etc.

I have dwelt, perhaps too long on educational issues and not on the many interesting and rewarding incidents during the course of the year. So, to your relief I'll turn to issues nearer home.

The Board has sanctioned funds for the construction of good quality staff housing. The plans are with the MDDA. Our plans for a small pavilion were submitted in May 1994 and it was only last week that we received the sanction! Lets pray that this time the sanction comes fast. Especially as the inflationary pressure is leading to escalation in the prices of building materials.

In running a school it is always the team and not the individual that matters. I'd like to thank the Board, Parents, the Staff and the boys' for their co-operation. Soon I hope to add the that list- Old Boys- who are now beginning

to make their mark in life. In 1997 we celebrate our Diamond Jubilee and that I hope will be organised by our Old Boys, of course with some help from us.

Here I would like to felicitate our fellows at Chandbagh- The Doon School who celebrated their Diamond Jubilee today.

I trust that you have our printed report for the year with you- it lists some achievements of our present and old students and some of the salient events of the year. Please do write in and let me have your comments.

I'd like to end by reading an extract from one of our school prayers:

Creator of life and light, we bless Thee this day for the beauty of this world, for sunshine and flowers, storm, cloud and starry night, for the first radiance of dawn and the last smouldering glow of the sunset. We thank thee for physical joy; for the ecstasy of swift motion, for deep water to swim in, for the goodly smell of rain on dry ground, for hills to climb, and hard work to do, for all skill of hand and eye, for music that lifts our hearts in one breath to heaven, and for the hand-grasp of a friend.

I now request Admiral Shekhawat to address us."

Founders' Day Speech of the Chief Guest- Admiral V.S.Shekhawat

"I am delighted to be present here as the Chief Guest on the occasion of the Founders day celebrations of the Welham Boys' School.

Welham School, of course, is a widely known institution with a well deserved reputation for high quality education and for striving to imbue the noble values of life which are so often given scant importance in our country today. I have been an instructor in our Naval training establishments and also the Deputy Commandant of the National Defence Academy dealing with a wide cross-section of young men, so I speak with some experience of contemporary youth in this matter.

As Head of the Indian Navy it is my responsibility to maintain our ships, submarines and aircraft in fighting trim for any possible requirement at sea in peace or war. Needless to say this cannot be achieved without well trained, dedicated and motivated young men

and women.

It should be obvious therefore, that apart from ensuring the hardware of the Naval Fleet, I spend, a considerable amount of my time looking to the physical and mental fitness, determination, morale and the overall well being of my officers, sailors and their families. In the simplest terms it involves understanding their minds and guiding them in a desired direction. I shall turn to the subject of the mind again later.

As a small boy a little over 50 years ago, in August 1943, I was escorted by an equally unlettered relative, from a small town near Delhi to the first of my several boarding schools, not far from where we are now; Colonel Brown's School. My full repertoire of English with which I was prepared before despatch was "What is your name?" and the answer "My name is Vijai Singh". Apparently this was sufficient for me to

acquire adequate knowledge in the Infant II class, as it was then called, to be able to pass the final examination and move up to Infant III in about two months' time.

I must add however that on hindsight, I had a reasonable knowledge of history, geography, mathematical tables, etc. from the Urdu 'madrassa' that I had been attending in that little town. I remember to this day what was taught to me then and I sometimes ponder that our 'desi' educational system with minimal facilities- reed pens, black ink which we made ourselves by burning almond shells, and the slab of wood called the 'takhti' which we prepared each day with a clay coating, could not have been so bad after all. The monthly fees were four annas (25 paise) or a lump of 'gur' (jaggery) in lieu!

In today's system a child is subjected to unnecessary stress from a very tender age, and the entrance examination for the bewildered and wailing infant is as much a test of the parents' ingenuity, connections and purse as of the child's suitability. Is there such a thing as suitability for a child to find a place in a decent, basic educational institution without fuss?

During my school days in many cantonment towns and also subsequently as a cadet in the National Defence Academy, then located at Clement Town in Dehra Dun, I must have been subjected to many speeches by visiting dignitaries, none of which I remember. Obviously they made little enduring impact on my mind. It will indeed be a surprise therefore, if you in your turn remember anything of what I have to say, in the years to come. Nor is it so important that you should, come to think of it.

What I do remember from my various schools, going back over these long years, are the quiet places, the friends one made, interrelated happenings of one kind or another, the dormitories, dining halls and the food, mostly bad, the Principals and the teachers, some aloof and stern, others more indulgent and approachable but all of them figures of authority, responsibility and in one way or another examples of learning and human qualities.

Most of all I remember the games we played literally from morning till nightfall on holidays, the goals scored or saved, the matches lost or won and the determination to do better

next time. As a rule, the mind remembers pleasant associations and tends to forget unwelcome ones. That is why perhaps guest speeches are so easily forgotten and game and sports activities long remembered!

Fifty years ago, life was rather simple and easy paced. Undivided India had a manageable population living mainly in rural areas, and hardly any industry. In schools, the pressure of studies was bearable and considerable emphasis was placed on participation in games and sports in the correct belief that it fostered qualities of friendly competition, endurance, fair-play and learning to take victory and defeat, success and failure, in one's stride. There was much emphasis on team effort for the common good, even at the expense of the individual.

Today, everything is much more complicated. Life has become extremely competitive with more and more people struggling for fewer opportunities, as they see, in every sphere. There is a disproportionate emphasis on book learning at the cost of the surer knowledge from the book of life itself, and the opportunity to play games and benefit from participation is denied to most children. Indeed many parents actively discourage their wards from playing, lest it affect studies. They perhaps never heard the old English saying 'All work and no play make Jack a dull boy.' And the Latin phrase 'a sound mind in a healthy body' remains as valid today as it was centuries ago when first uttered.

I suppose it is customary on occasions such as this to offer some advice to the young folk to assist them in their journey through life. Advice, of course, is meant to be heard, not necessarily to be followed, and with good reason.

Each of us is on an individual journey through life. That journey is actually two concurrent journeys. One of the body, engaged in its routine activities for survival, earning a livelihood and progressing in the material plane. The other is the journey of the mind, which is partly occupied in attending to the mundane requirements of the body, but is mainly journeying on its own, contemplating and pondering on many issues of life and death, good and bad, right and wrong, seeking some guiding light to help us along our earthly course in

safety, peace and tranquillity.

We have each to work out our own equation with life and they are lucky who at a young age begin to acquire a system of values by which to live. It is not a terribly difficult thing because nature has programmed us to distinguish what is right from what is wrong. It becomes complicated only when we do not listen to our own conscience or inner voice. One simple rule which can stand one in good stead is 'When in doubt, do the more honourable thing'.

Therefore, I do not venture to give you any advice as such. You will, no doubt, arrive at a framework for living without much external help in the noble environment of this fine school. But I would like to share with you what worked for me, now that I can look back over this half century since I was in school myself.

First of all, I have always been an eager reader and any spare time I had was spent on reading something meaningful. This has resulted in some insight into numerous matters, not all of significance, but which the mind has a way of recalling whenever relevant in conversation, in thinking or at work.

This reading led me naturally into enjoyment of poetry, interest in philosophy, mythology and the Classics, foreign languages and so on, with their enriching contribution to the mind.

Philosophy and poetry, especially about nature and the sea, have been my particular favourites, providing comfort in difficult times and a feeling of being a part of all humanity through all the ages of mankind.

I like to recall a verse from H.W. Longfellow from my school poetry book, which I have with me still:-

*"Let others traverse sea and land and toil
through various climes,
I turn the world round with my hand reading
these poets' rhymes,
From them I learn whatever lies beneath each
changing zone,
And see when looking through their eyes, better
than with mine own."*

Reading also fosters the habit of introspection, examining ideas thrown up, thinking

and reflecting over matters and so arriving at a correct understanding of things. It encourages a contemplative frame of mind and opens it to the experience and wisdom of others, both greater and lesser than ourselves.

The Greek philosopher Socrates had observed that :- "The unexamined life is not worth living."

Enjoyment of games and sports that I picked up at school and the NDA remains with me to this day and has been a most important element, not only for physical fitness but in facing with a sense of equanimity and balance, the many ups and downs that are sure to be encountered in life.

A love of the outdoors, walking and nature led me ultimately to the high mountains including basic and advanced mountaineering courses in Sikkim and a major expedition to Annapurna III in Nepal in 1961. I think of those exhilarating experiences and sights every day even now and at least for a brief and tranquil moment transport myself in imagination from the drab existence of our cities to the grandeur and solitude of the high Himalayas.

Here I recall a line from the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson on the joys of walking. He said :- "I never knew a problem which I could not walk away from." Meaning of course, the soothing and healing power of a good long walk.

Familiarity with the great planetary oceans and seas, in all their moods, which I have sailed over and under as a part of my professional life for the last 40 years, and the opportunity to travel to many lands, observe their culture and life and thus further enrich one's own, has widened my horizons immensely. It is a very precious and hard won hoard of riches from the sea, almost like a pirate's chest of gold and jewels! Except that these are in the mind and cannot be taken away by anyone else.

All these experiences have been shared with fine companions and true friends, of a type hard to find outside the military fraternity, because like tempered steel, they have been moulded in the burning crucible of physical hardship, danger, discipline, patriotism and self-sacrifice. Some of my dearest friends are those from our innocent youth together. If you are discriminating in your choice of compan-

ions you may be lucky to have them as friends 50 years from now as well.

Regardless of what our individual circumstances and experiences, might be, we can all strive to make ourselves better, keeping enduring noble ideas before us, so that even if do not rise to great heights, we can have the satisfaction of having performed our life's Duty to the best of our ability. This is a high achieve-

ment indeed by itself and no one can do more.

I end by thanking you for your patience and attention and wishing you, the bright young students of this wonderful institution, all the very best in your education, your personal lives and your future professions. To use a mountaineering expression, "May you go from peak to peak".

Thank You."

A REVIEW OF THE FOUNDER'S DAY PLAYS

THE ENVIRONMENT

The Junior School English Play exceeded everyone's expectations by the excellent acting of the boys' and the realistic portrayal of the environment as it is today. The boys' acting was much above the average and they managed to convey the message very clearly.

The music and the songs were also very good. Some scenes like the one in which a boy comes on stage and cuts all the flowers with a smug grin on his face, had the audience laughing. The credit for the original theme of the play goes to Miss Blair Davies who suggested it before leaving the school.

THE KEY HOLE OF THE EXCHANGE TEACHERS

This play is about the experience of two teachers, Mrs. Nilima Basu and Miss Blair Davies, who, as part of the Teachers' Exchange Programme visited two different schools. Mrs. Basu goes from Welham Boys' School, India to Mynidbach School in Wales and Miss Davies, in turn, comes from there to Welham Boys'.

In this play, the classroom atmosphere in Welham is compared to that in the Welsh classroom. Some scenes like the prefects punishing boys were very hilarious. Alok Kapoor played Sudeep's role, Aditya Vashisth, Manish's and Anant Dwivedi became the School Captain

in the play. There were also a superb dance by Abhishek Malla with his classmates and another by Vikrant Tomar with his friends. It showed that the teachers enjoyed the foreign lands and got to know about different cultures and festivals.

The acting was commendable with Shobit Agarwal and Arjun Sabharwal putting up a good show as Mrs. Basu and Miss Davies. The play was appreciated by the audience and it was obvious that this production was the result of concerted team effort.

'PERMIT KA CHAKKAR'

A large audience turned up for the Senior School Hindi Play 'Permit Ka Chakkar' directed by Mr. Shashi Bhushan. It lasted for only 45 minutes but had the audience convulsed with laughter all the time.

The main characters in the play were Adhir Bhat, Kartikeya Narayan and Kumar Abhijeet with Amit Sekhri, Gurpreet Gambhir and Aditya Jassi as supporting actors. The play was about a seth (Adhir), who, in order to get a permit, tries to console an old person (Abhijeet) whom he had earlier insulted, by reversing his role with that of his book-keeper (Kartikeya). This exchange is funny especially when the book-keeper starts to punish the seth. The efforts of the director and boys combined to present a hilarious comedy.

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