



EIGHTY CLUB

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EIGHTY CLUB MELBOURNE, INC

1ST QUARTER

JAN-MAR 2010

P O BOX 2645, ROWVILLE, VIC 3178

NEWSLETTER NO.116

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FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

Recently, I invited a friend to join the Eighty Club and he asked me what exactly we did. "Do you have a Club house where I can drop in for a drink?" he asked. After having explained to him, in detail, what this Club was all about, I wondered whether there were members out there who did not know about everything we did for the less fortunate members of our community back in Sri Lanka. In case there are, this editorial is meant for them. First, we do NOT own a Club house or any real estate nor do we wish to. Our Committeemembers are consumed with the desire to help the poor and needy and so, they who work so hard to raise funds for our welfare programmes, do so tirelessly and without the Club paying even for a cup of tea for them to refresh themselves with. In other words, every cent raised is for the cause. All Committee members pay full price for our fund raising lunches and dances and there are neither concessions nor complimentary tickets for them or their families and friends. And so to what exactly the Club is engaged in:

1. We pay a welfare benefit of Rs.2000 per month to a carefully selected total of 200 individuals. Carefully selected to ensure that they are truly deserving of financial assistance. If those individuals live with spouses, they are paid an additional Rs.1000 per month and if the couple support a school going child or physically or mentally challenged sibling we pay them a further Rs.300 per month as a Family Allowance. These amounts are all we can afford, at the moment but, depending on your generosity, it may be possible to increase the quantum of these payments in the future.
2. Two bonus payments, depending on our financial position, is paid mid-year and before Christmas. So far, these have been paid every year.
3. An Emergency Imprest of Rs.20,000 is maintained with the DBU where those who walk in off the street and are in distress are financially assisted on the spot and never leave empty handed. Most common requests are for money to buy medication and/or food.
4. Those who undergo cataract surgery are reimbursed the cost of their implants up to a maximum of Rs.5000 which is the total cost of the implant. The surgery is performed at no cost at the Eye Hospital. Helping persons to regain their sight is a source of great satisfaction to us all.
5. Welfare beneficiaries who come to collect their allowances are given a mid-morning snack of a meat/fish bun from Perera & Sons to satisfy their hunger.

In addition to the above regular assistance, this Club is always ready to consider special cases where assistance has been requested and has helped, in the past, to repair houses, build wells, pay off loans etc etc.

This is a great Club doing great work. So, if you know someone in your circle of friends and/or relatives who is prepared to spend \$30 a year on charity, please tell them all about us and what we do and invite them to become members. \$30 a year as membership? In other words just \$2.50 a month. Surely a cup of coffee costs more than that!

CARING FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Doesn't time fly? It seems like it was only yesterday that we were celebrating Christmas.

Another successful lunch was held in January and my thanks to the coordinators for their good work. Thanks also to the boys in the band Jeremy Kreltsheim, Rodney Jansz, Geoff Koch and France Smith. The majority of those attending were very appreciative of the music and as a result the boys have agreed to give us a repeat performance at our next lunch on the 14th of March.

Please remember that it is events such as these luncheons that help us raise the funds required to keep up the good work that we are doing to help our less fortunate brethren in Sri Lanka.

A number of our members have asked me to research the availability of organisations that provide assistance to those who are looking to move to retirement villages or aged care facilities.

Marie and I were in a similar position not too long ago in trying to find accommodation for a family member. A very good friend of ours, who also happens to be a member of our organisation, provided us with the name of one such organisation that was able to help us find what we were looking for.

These organisations are known as Aged Care Placement Agencies and do charge a very reasonable fee for their services. They meet with you and discuss your requirements, and return at a later date with recommendations for suitable residences. They also assist with appointments to visit these establishments.

I quote from the documentation that I have been provided:

What makes for a good placement:

- 1 **Finding the right facility** - Just like finding the right school, car, home, choosing the right facility is a life changing decision. The right facility needs to cater for the individual care needs of the resident both in the short term and long term.
- 2 **Geographic preferences** - Placing the resident in a location they are familiar with will enable them to maintain their network of friends and encourage visitation. Keeping them sociable will increase their morale and self esteem.
- 3 **Financials** - Having the right advice is very important. Placing a relative into care can often cause additional stress for the families, because of the "means testing" and the enormous financial commitment. At Health and Aged Assist we will arrange for a licensed aged care financial adviser to provide the right financial advice. This is part of the complete placement service we offer, and we remain committed to the individual and their family until well after the placement has been effected, to make sure that both family and resident have received the best possible outcome.

This advice was provided by Health and Aged Assist who were the organisation that assisted both ourselves and the member who put us in contact with them. There are many such agencies that can assist members of the club

Should you require further details please feel free to contact me.

Please note that the Eighty Club Melbourne and I do NOT accept any responsibility should you choose to consult such an agency. We merely pass on this information.

Finally, Marie and I wish you a very Happy Easter



WELFARE BENEFICIARIES AT THE CHRISTMAS PARTY



ETIENNE + MYSTICA HANDING OUT HAMPERS ETC



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY IN 2010

MAY 23RD STRING HOPPER PILAU LUNCH

VIOLET & ERROL JACOTNIE; LEONIE MARTENSTYN; AUDREY FERDINANDS

JULY 4TH ZODIAC DONATION

MARIE & RODNEY DE KRETZER; TREVOR COLLETTE; JILL AMIT

AUGUST 29TH STRING HOPPER LUNCH

GEORGE & BERYL ROBERTSON; JENNY & ANNESLEY YOUNG

OCTOBER 17TH TO BE DECIDED

LARAINÉ MULLER; PAM FORSTER; RODNEY & MARIE DE KRETZER

DECEMBER 10TH OR 11TH DINNER/DANCE (GRAND)

ARLENE & TONY SCARNIVEL; SHIREEN & EARLE FERDINAND

LUNCHES WILL BE AT THE GOOD SHEPHERD HALL, WHEELERS HILL. HOWEVER, DATES, VENUES AND MENUS MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. RESERVATIONS MAY BE MADE WITH THE CONTACTS NAMED ABOVE WHOSE PHONE NUMBERS WILL BE FOUND ON THE FRONT COVER OR WITH ANY OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBER.

**BOOKINGS CANCELLED THREE DAYS BEFORE THE LUNCH
MUST BE PAID FOR IN FULL.**

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We extend the hand of friendship and a warm welcome to the following new members:

Brian MACK of Picnic Point, NSW

Jennifer KELAART of Knox City, Vic

Claire GAMAGE of Ontario, CANADA

Nanda & Eileen RANATUNGA of Vermont South

Eric & Ingrid HARMON of Lysterfield South

Dave & Coreen SPITTEL of Hampton Park

Rodney & Mignon INGLETON Kingsford, NSW



THIS CURIOUS BUT MEANINGFUL SIGHT WAS OBSERVED IN THE RUBBLE OF THE HAITIAN CITY OF PORT-AU-PRINCE AFTER THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE.

WHILST BUILDINGS ALL AROUND IT HAD BEEN REDUCED TO RUIN, THIS CROSS AND THE IMAGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED STOOD TALL, PROUD AND UNBROKEN. PASSERS BY WERE AMAZED AT WHAT THEY CONSIDERED "THE MIRACLE OF PORT-AU-PRINCE."



SOME OF OUR WELFARE BENEFICIARIES ENJOYING THE TASTY MEAT AND FISH BUNS THAT WERE DISTRIBUTED TO THEM, FOR THE FIRST TIME, WHEN THEY CAME TO COLLECT THEIR WELFARE BENEFITS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER. THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS GENEROSITY BY WAY OF DONATIONS, THE CLUB HAS INTRODUCED THIS SNACK WHEREAS. IN THE PAST, THESE DEAR OLD SOULS HAD TO WAIT TILL THE LATE AFTERNOON ON AN 'EMPTY STOMACH'. MOST OF THEM MADE SHORT WORK OF THE 'MUS PAANG' WHEREAS OTHERS WERE SEEN TAKING THEM HOME TO BE HAD FOR DINNER PERHAPS?

SOCIAL NOTES



Good Friends, RITA & BERT VAN GEYZEL celebrated FIFTY years of wedded bliss on Friday 8th January 2010 at the Golden Sands Reception Hall in Melbourne. Family, relatives and friends enjoyed a sumptuous dinner and danced the night away to the music of a popular disc jockey.

May God shower His Blessings on this wonderful couple and may the years ahead be filled with good health, happiness and peace of mind.



GREETINGS TO PAT AND LES BLACKER OF YERONGA, QUEENSLAND ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR 70TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY. THE EIGHTY CLUB SENDS ITS FELICITATIONS TO THIS WONDERFUL COUPLE ON ACHIEVING THIS RARE MILESTONE IN THEIR LIVES. MAY THE GOOD LORD BLESS AND KEEP THEM AND SHOWER THEM WITH GOOD HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND PEACE OF MIND.



THE EIGHTY CLUB TAKES PLEASURE IN CONGRATULATING INA AND ANTON BLACKER AS WELL AS PRIMROSE AND MERVYN WERKMEISTER ON CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF WEDDED BLISS. MAY GOD BLESS THEM AND GRANT THESE TWO WONDERFUL COUPLES MANY MORE YEARS OF HAPPINESS TOGETHER.



CONGRATULATIONS TO MELROSE AND HOLMONDOLEY WILLENBERG ON THEIR CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF MARRIAGE. WE AT THE EIGHTY CLUB WISH THAT GOD WOULD BLESS THEM AND KEEP THEM TOGETHER FOR MANY MORE YEARS TO COME.



The Eighty Club takes pleasure in wishing Melody & Brad King and Leanne & Shane Isaaks a very Happy Anniversary. May God Bless and grant them many more years of wedded bliss.



WARM BIRTHDAY GREETINGS TO:

SHIREEN FERDINAND; IVOR DE KRETZER; MARIE SCHOORMAN; KRISTINA DEKKER; BRAD KING; LEANNE ISAACS; ROSEMARY VETHECAN; EILEEN FERNANDO; ANTHEA MULLER.



IN GOD'S HANDS

EBELL – *David Victor. Husband of Mavis. Father of Geraldine, John and Charlie. Grandfather of Donelle, Sharon, Jason, Wayne and Raquel.*

DE KAUWE – *Ivor Valentine, aged 94. Husband of Maisie (nee Bastiaensz); father of Herschell, Geraldine, Romaine and Nigel. Father-in-law of Faye, Dian, Wilhelm and Aileen. Brother of Shelley (dec), Elmo, Cordelia, Granville (dec) and Trevor (dec). Grandfather of 11 and great-grandfather of 3.*

On behalf of my family, I would like to express our thanks for the support, messages of condolence and presence of all those who attended the Rosary and celebration of life of my father IVOR VALENTINE DE KAUWE at St. Gerard's Church, North Dandenong.
Herschel de Kauwe

LAPPEN – *Marie Therese on December 25th, 2009. Wife of Ken and mother of Patrick, Rozanne and Andrew. Mother-in-law of Jacqueline and Kenneth. Grandmother of 6.*

SETHUPATHY – *Anton Marion on December 25, 2009. Son of the late Anton and Laetitia Sethupathy. Husband of Christine and father of Bryan. Father-in-law of Michelle. Grandfather of Ashleigh and brother of Joseph (Sri Lanka) and Father Clement (dec). Brother-in-law of Marie Sethupathy.*

SMITH - NELIYA BLANCHE (nee MOTTAU). *Widow of the late Aelian Lynne; mother of Beverly, Howard, Suzie, Philip, Vanessa and Mark; mother-in-law of Stephen, Jan, Gerard, Angela and Jackie; sister of Moira, Sheila, Esme, Mavis and Pamela; grandmother of Maria, Kristina, Natalie, Jason, Amanda, Jarred, Lauren, Denham, Leanne and Hannah; great-grandmother of Katie. Funeral was on Monday 11th January 2010 at General Cemetery Borella.*

WILLENBERG – DARRYL *Departed this life on January 22, 2010. Husband of Noeline (Van Rooyen), father and father-in-law of Rozanne and Paul; Adrian and Vicki and grandfather of Stephanie.*

WINTER – ROY. *Husband of Anne, brother of Terry (Sri Lanka) and brother-in-law of Sandy (Sri Lanka), Gillian and Ranjit, Marie and Rodney and Errol. Uncle of Rajeev, Alaine, Ishani, Craig, Christine, Timothy, Alistair and Bernard.*

VALE DAVID EBELL

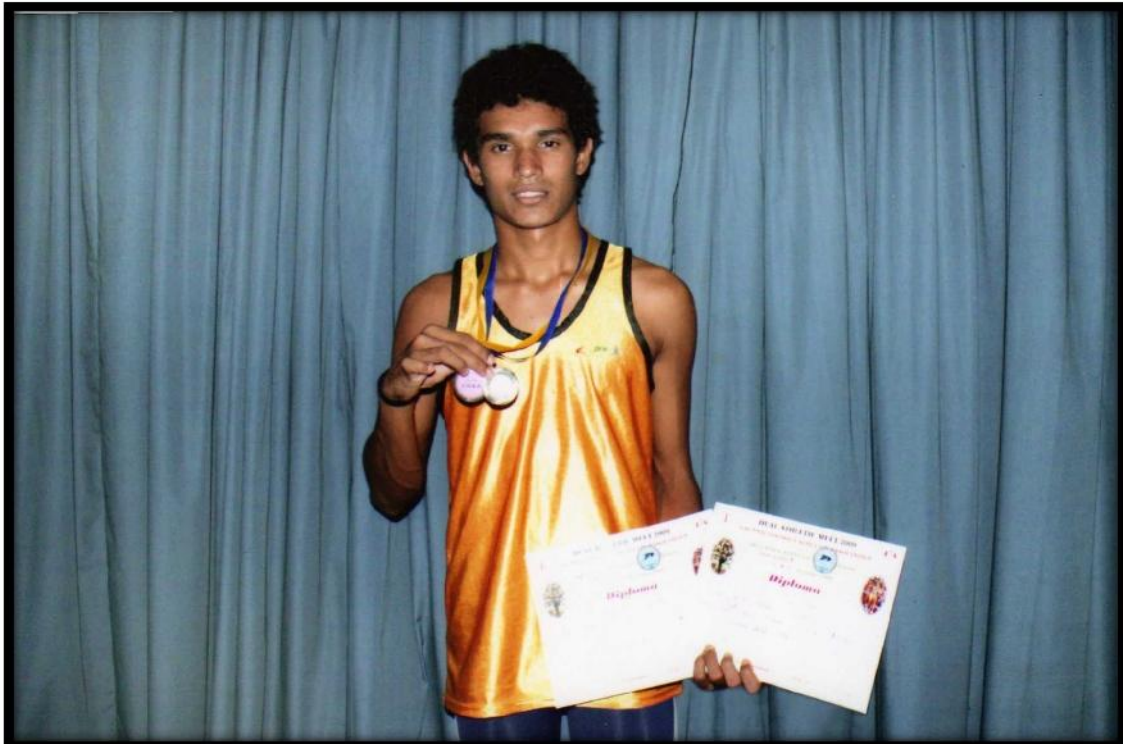
By Vernon Keily

David Ebell lived to the grand old age of 94 years and departed this life, as a worshipping Christian at the Millward Nursing Home, where he spent his last two years, well cared for.

David married Mavis Ernst in 1943 and they raised a very loving family of two sons and a daughter. He was a family man and therein lay his main interests and joy. Also in his five grand children and four great-grand children.

Educated at St. Thomas College, Mount Lavinia, where he boxed, he started his working life as an apprentice engine driver in the CGR and progressed to the position of Class Driver, qualified to drive the new diesel motored trains on the Matara-Colombo route.

The family migrated to Australia in 1962 and David started employment as a Storeman with International Harvester until 1967 when he was employed at the Housing Commission until retirement in 1980. Finally, the family moved to Doncaster where, over a little tipple, old friends were always welcomed and regaled with his reminiscences, particularly of his "Railway Days".



Handsome Hilierian Oorloff, sponsored by Spencer Mack, with the awards he won at the dual Athletic Meet between India & Sri Lanka held in India on the 15 & 16 December 2009.

Hilierian won Bronze in the Javelin and Silver in the Discuss events, both under 20 years. This is extremely commendable as he is only 18 years old.

FROM THE MAIL MAN



From Liz & Fritz Ohlmus of Canberra:

Thanks once again for providing us with the opportunity to help in some small way to provide a better life for the disadvantaged in Sri Lanka and for all your hard work in supporting this effort. It was great to meet some of you at the Buriyani lunch last August. Our best wishes.

Thank you Liz and Fritz. Supporters like you make our work worthwhile. Editor.

From Etienne Jayatunga, Administrative Secretary, DBU of Ceylon.

The parties for the children and the Welfare Beneficiaries were fabulous and I know for a fact that the kids all had a wonderful time, although the teenagers were a little bashful to receive gifts from St. Nik! I am sure they would have all

gone on a shopping spree soon after and bought their little necessities for the season. Thank you so much for thinking of all these kids – it is really wonderful that those who left our land many, many years ago still keep up the sponsorship and it means so much to these children. I have sat in this seat for nearly 10 years at the DBU and I have seen the difference that these sponsorships have made to the kids. The majority of them are very, very keen in their studies and want to do well and succeed in life and it gives one a sense of satisfaction to see this taking place. My heartfelt thanks go out to each and every sponsor for their generosity.

It was only last morning that a young mother came with her two little children, both boys, and burst out crying saying that she has nothing to give them for Christmas. According to her story, her husband had left to go to Saudi Arabia three years ago and she had not heard from him since. She was struggling to bring up these two boys on a meagre salary of Rs.10,000 a month. Immediately, I thought of my two sons and what good appetites they had at that age! I hear these stories all the time and I do whatever I can to help. I always think to myself and I voice my opinion as well, that if every family who can afford it, helps one other family to come up in life, the world would be a different place! We cannot help all, but we can help one other. I hope I am not saying too much, but this is what I strongly feel and this is why I feel so humbled that the Eighty Club helps so much to uplift their less fortunate brethren in Sri Lanka. Thank you and thank you once again.

The WBs party too went off very well. They were delighted with the hamper that all of them received. Each and every WB received a hamper. The hamper consisted of a packet of milk (400 gr.), a kilo each of rice, dhal and sugar and also a packet of chocolate biscuits. It was a little heavy for them to carry, but they all took it with a smile on their faces! Many of them who missed the party came yesterday and collected the Rs.2,000 Christmas bonus and the hamper and they were all very, very happy. This was made possible because of your kind generosity and also the DBU members had been very generous with their contributions as well. Our President, Mr. Nigel Austin, was instrumental in helping with this cause as he even wrote personal notes to the members. I think I have now done my little share for Christmas and I will now concentrate on the more important things of welcoming the Christ child.

What a wonderful letter, Etienne. It encapsulates the vision that we in the Eighty Club have and, with the help of our members, I am sure we can go on to do bigger and better things for those less fortunate members of our community over there. Editor

From ANTHEA MULLER, Welfare Chair, DBU of Ceylon.

Yesterday, we celebrated the Welfare Beneficiaries Christmas party, and it was a tremendous success. I managed to give each of them a Hamper containing milk powder, dhal, rice, sugar and a packet of biscuits and, of course, they got a Christmas bonus too. I organised a Band, Darlan and his combo, to be in attendance and also played some games. They danced the bails and I also organised the selection of the best dressed lady and best dressed gent. A fun time was had by one and all.

Thank you Anthea. I have no doubt that you and your team would have brought a great deal of joy to the Welfare Beneficiaries who look forward, so keenly, to this annual event. Editor.



EDWARD DERRICK KELAART

15 JANUARY 1926 - 21 FEBRUARY 2010

Derrick or "DK" as he was known to his siblings and close family members was born in Colombo, Ceylon to Edward and Estelle Kelaart. He was the the eldest of three brothers and three sisters.

Continuing in the tradition of the Kelaart family, he was sent to Royal College for his education. Poor eyesight from an early age deprived him of playing competitive sport, much to the chagrin of his father, the famous All-Ceylon cricketer.

What he missed out on the sporting fields of Ceylon he aptly made up on the dance floor. He was a champion in this his chosen 'sport' and it was here that he met the love of his life, Sheelagh, who was also a dancer of note.

The war years saw him employed as a wireless/Morse code operator by Cable and Wireless Ltd, which was then staffed predominantly by members of the Burgher community.

In 1956, he migrated with his family (wife, Sheelagh and son, Roger) to Melbourne. Soon after arriving he worked for a small firm and then joined the Victoria State Government. Realising that an Accountancy qualification would be necessary for advancement within the Public Service, he studied for five years (part-time) finally obtaining his degree and appointment as an Auditor in the Service, a position he held until retirement.

Accepted into the Masonic fraternity he was later accorded the rank of Worshipful Master in addition to being its honorary auditor for many years.

Taking up golf on a social basis he was proud to display the trophies he won - in fact he stopped playing only after a debilitating stroke that rendered him incapable of active sport. The 2009 AFL Grand Final was watched from his hospital bed and it was a shame that his beloved Saints did not win the Premiership.

Tragedy struck in 1997 when his only son, Roger, passed away at the age of 43 leaving a wife and two young daughters.

In conclusion, I would like to add that my brother was a kind, gentle man who was loved by all. In fact I never ever heard him swear at home or on the golf course!

Vale, my brother
Ivor Kelaart

COINS IN BOTTLES

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|---------------|
| M & P Forster | 25.55 | Aloma & Michael Kelly | 20.25 |
| Bryan & Electra Driberg | 270.00 | Anonymous | 11.15 |
| Spencer Mack | 31.05 | Vivian de Kretser | 24.00 |
| Vivian Mack | 25.00 | June Mack | 37.00 |
| Melrose & Cholmondoley Willenberg | 25.00 | Anthony & Rosemary Koelmeyer | 36.70 |
| Deanna Vancuylenberg | 20.00 | Homi & Marjorie Jilla | 25.75 |
| | | TOTAL | 551.45 |

MUSIC LESSONS PIANO/KEYBOARD/GUITAR - START FROM \$20 FOR 45 MINUTES.
CONTACT NOEL 0403055630 OR 9796 4557

REPORT FROM THE STUDENT SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR.

This report features the success stories of a few of our sponsored students; their achievements while of a diverse nature represent their triumph over adversity. The ECM and especially the sponsors take great pride in seeing their efforts resulting in such fruitful results and reinforces the conviction that our mission to help the less fortunate is truly worthwhile.

Shereen Perera

Shereen has completed her final examinations at Medical College and is awaiting her call up as an intern. . The time lag between success at medical finals & commencement of internship is estimated at about 12 months. In the meantime Dr Quintus De Zylva is trying to fix her up as a research assistant while she awaits her intern call up. Shereen is currently sponsored by Mike Silva & Hugh Foenander who will continue the sponsorship till such time as she obtains paid employment. Dr Audrey De Jong also part sponsored Shereen during her medical studies.



Cheran DeLa Harpe

who is sponsored by Beulah & Elmo Vollenhoven, and is currently on a scholarship in Singapore, has sent in a short account of his progress. He says:

"I'm currently under the Ministry of Education (MOE), School based/A* star scholarship.

I came to Singapore on the 27th of December 2007, after which I finished my secondary level education at St.Joseph's Institution (SJI), Singapore. My secondary school life was a 2 year period which ended with the O/Level exams held during the months October/November 2009.

follows:-

1. University of New South Wales 2008 International competitions and assessments for schools ENGLISH - Participation
 2. University of New South Wales 2008 International competitions and assessments for schools SCIENCE - Credit
- Other non academic related achievements include,

- St.Joseph's Institution - Certificate of Appreciation for the contribution to St. John's Ambulance Brigade. (2009).
- St.Joseph's Institution - The Teo Cheng Guan Innovation & Enterprise Trophy. (2008)
The trophy presented to students who displayed outstanding innovation and enterprise - The innovation involved the conceptualization, soliciting for sponsorship and setting up of a Mini-Bar as a fund-raising project at the school-based Kindred Spirits Concert in support of the Catholic Aids Response Effort (CARE)
- St.Joseph's Institution - Catholic Service Societies Investiture commissioned as Vice President of the Society of St.Vincent de Paul (SVdP). (2009)
- St.Joseph's Institution - Certificate of Distinction for the outstanding achievement in St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP). (2009)

For my O/Level exams held during October/November 2009 I was able to attain 6 distinctions in the subjects Elementary Maths, Additional Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Geography and two B grades in English and Combine Humanities (Social studies and English Literature).

Currently I'm at Catholic Junior College, Singapore pursuing my 1st year in A/Level and 3rd year in Singapore.

I'm taking H2 Mathematics, H2 Chemistry, H2 Economics, H1 Biology and General Paper as well as Project work as my A/Level subjects.

For my future I'm not quite sure yet as I prefer two contrasting fields which are Bio-chemistry and Social science.

My choice would greatly depend on my A/Level results and the eventual experience I would gain in those fields. -

Cheran Royden De La Harpe-

Trevor Collette

Coordinator Student Sponsorship Scheme

EIGHTY CLUB MEMBER, MRS. MARIE KELLY, WAS HAPPY TO INFORM US THAT **SHANISH DION SAPARAMADU**, A LAD SUPPORTED BY HER FAMILY, HAS PASSED THE ELEMENTARY GRADE IN SPOKEN ENGLISH, WITH HONOURS, IN 2009 AT THE INSTITUTE OF WESTERN MUSIC AND SPEECH, SRI LANKA. HE IS A PUPIL OF MS. SHAMINA S. M. IQBAL.



Horror Home In Madiwela

By Raneer Mohamed _ Photos by Laiith Perera

Many of the inmates are confined to their beds. The ceiling is all they see. She could be your mother; she could be mine. And we will imagine that everything is fine. But the Doreens, Lornas, Miriams, Hingerts and Graces living in SSVP Friendship House situated on Thalawathugoda Road, Madiwela are looking for an escape route from this place they called a 'hell' — and they seem to have no one to tell as they remain trapped in here. Some of them have children somewhere, and others have no one but their own lonely souls for company. The home situated on the main road is not a plush residency. Few of us expect that kind of luxury in our old age. But a kind word, a touch of warmth and understanding, blended heavily

with patience can make that change so essential to wipe the tears of these ladies in their 70s and 80s, who are trapped by their own immobility and helplessness. The dreary surroundings are blackened with the unhappiness within, misery lies heavily in the air. The comparatively youthful ladies show signs of long years of songs, cakes and wines...of family photos, pedicures, manicures and varied hairstyles and hair-cuts. But time seems to have overtaken them. The parties are over and the music has stopped. Loneliness has come into their lives at a time they desperately need a hand to hold and a voice for comfort. But all they hear are the voices of the three females in authority and they shudder softly the moment their backs are turned.

"Save us," they whisper softly, their grey eyes welling with tears. "Please help us," they whisper as they struggle to get up and struggle to walk. "When you go away, we will have hell to pay, they will massacre us," another lady tells me, her grey hair as limp as her spirit. "Hush!" they say in unison," but in a final desperate attempt, whisper. "Please save us."

Being bedridden is a state that we will never imagine for ourselves. And they didn't either. But many of these senior ladies remain in their beds. Some are bedridden, some are not. "They hit me here" says one senior lady. "They hit me here with my own walking stick," says another as she holds her stomach gingerly.

"They scraped my face," whispers another. "If you give us a gift, they will take it away from us when you are gone. We are not even allowed to keep a cologne, and we like these things very much," said another, her pleading eyes and unhappy face saying even more.

Another fragile old lady sits on a chair. She is counting on her fingers — perhaps counting the days to get away. "She is not of sound mind," whispers a lady in authority. Many of the inmates have been reduced to skin and bone. I walk further into the home. There is a small room. It looks like a hen-pen. There is a padlock on the door. "What's in here?" I ask the ladies in authority. And they open the door. Surprise, Surprise, inside is another 80 year old. Her eyes are small blobs of grey. She cannot see. If she could, she will notice why it is so suffocating and hot inside. There is no window, no ventilation holes. Once the door is locked, the inside is as secure as a spacecraft. And in here sleeps old Doreen. It is no wonder that she keeps asking for ice-cream.

She cannot walk for there is hardly any room. She can sit on the bed, that is the only great freedom of movement that she is allowed. "She cannot see, so we keep her locked in here," offer the ladies in authority, as they drive home the padlock. Poor Doreen, as if being imprisoned by her lack of vision is not enough, seems imprisoned by her helplessness too.

Miriam lies in bed. She is unable to move. Miriam has never been married. "I have a sister," she says. Miriam is but all skin and bones; her eyes are expressionless. She is wearing an old blouse which is held together in front with a single safety pin. Her grey hair and heavily sunken eyes, emaciated body and her inability to move gives one a profound fear of old age. But Miriam thinks young. "I am not yet 30," insists Miriam, just like many of us. But with an old bedpan and the wounds in her stick-like legs as her only view of life outside, Miriam's life is not just bleak, it is miserable and seems worse than black death itself, that seems to lurk in different corners of this home.

"They once broke my finger," says another lady in desperation. "They hit us, please save us," she pleads.

"They give me endless trouble. I am from a good family. My mummy and daddy are both dead. I have no one, that is my problem," says this 80 year old in tears as she claims a distant relationship to a one-time politician.

She seems to be in a desperate hurry to get it all off her chest before someone stops her. "Do something to make us free, darling. Please, she is harassing us," she cries, limping around. She is happy that unlike the others, she can at least limp around. The inmates are talking about the matron. But she was not in. "She is lying," the two other women in authority insist with a smile.

Contd. on next page

So many senior ladies, some of them mothers – can they all be imagining these things – the ones confined to bed, those struggling around this dull old house, can they all be imagining these assaults and beatings?

A donor to this home speaking on condition of anonymity says, “If you give anything to the ladies she (the matron) will take it from them as soon as you leave. That’s what makes me really angry. Not even a Cologne is allowed to be kept. They will hit them when they keep anything and even the Nestomalt is taken away. She has broken one of the ladies fingers and they are dragged from their beds.....” he said.

It is learnt that several petitions have been sent to various authorities about the conditions in this home. Stinking toilets, switching off of fans during day and night causing these senior citizens to suffer from mosquito bites and flies; gifts being sent off to different locations, tables laid on Saturdays and Sundays with the ‘ladies first’ courtesy violated.

A petition states that on Saturdays and Sundays the table is laid for “men” to eat first and the poor ladies are given the remnants. This makes us wonder where the men come in, because when Photographer Lalith Perera and I visited the home we did not see any male inmates in there.

The petitions go on to state.....‘the poor old ladies are being harassed and abused without mercy. They are also called ‘Greedy’.....’ They are not even allowed to talk to each other and water is limited for drinking as they have to be helped to go to the toilet. No TV, no fans are allowed to be used. Neither are they taken out of the bed so they stare at the ceiling the whole day. They are slapped and called ‘prostitutes’ in Sinhalese. One lady’s finger is broken. Daily these people are losing weight and dying without proper food. There is also a drug addict who is living there and harassing the ladies. To the people in authority, we were not journalists —when we walked into Friendship House and spent some time there, we saw the inmates, we saw the lives that they lead and we sensed their fears.....

We have heard of probation and child care service for children, and old age they say is but our second childhood.

So what about the tears of the old ladies confined to Friendship House. They seem to need friendship more than anything else in the world....

“They Get The Best Treatment” — Says Matron

When The Sunday Leader contacted the Matron of Friendship House and asked her about the ill-treatment, she said that we were making a mistake. “They are treated very well. There is a father and a sister who come in the evening and we all pray together,” she said in a soft voice.

“There is one lady here who is ‘mental’ and I think she has been telling these lies around. I have been the matron for 19 years. I have an open mind. I have cared for these people. I have buried these old people. I have a book of donors and I maintain books. You can come here and see these people,” she offered.

How could we tell her, that we had already been there and done that.

The above article was written by Ms.Ranee Mohamed and appeared in the SUNDAY LEADER of February 28, 2010. We reproduce it here, for your information, and without any prejudice. We trust that the authorities in Colombo have investigated the allegations contained herein and done something to alleviate the living conditions of the poor old souls in this Home.

LETTER SENT BY MISS SHEREEN PEREIRA, STUDENT IN THE SPONSORSHIP SCHEME, TO MR. MAURICE FORSTER

Dear Mr.Forster, Our final M.B.B.S results were out today and I happy to inform you that I have passed the exam. I haven't been offered a class but getting through was a great relief as a large number of students have been referred in various subjects. I ever thankful to you, my sponsors, all members of the Eighty Club and the DBU for helping me to complete my studies successfully from my school days. If not for the help I got I wouldn't be able to achieve this.

I talked to Prof.Malik's office and they told me to submit a CV together with an application obtained from the Karapitiya Medical faculty. They further told that there aren't any vacancies at the moment but there will be vacancies towards the end of April when our seniors get their internships. Our internship dates are not fixed yet and usually we will get it by November this year if they do overlap our internship with that of our seniors, if not it will be next yr. So, until then from now onwards, I'm prepared to work as a research assistant or as a demonstrator. I have applied for some posts in our faculty too and interviews are due next week and later.

I will hand over an application to Prof.Malik next week and will keep you informed of the progress.

Thanking you, Yours sincerely,

Shereen Pereira

(MORE DETAILS ELSEWHERE IN THE NEWSLETTER)



MY SUCCESS STORY

I am Shereen Pereira, a Burgher girl from Matara. I would like to tell my story to you from the very beginning; so that it will be more meaningful. I was born as the youngest child of a family with an elder brother and a sister. My parents were rather old when I was born so much so that my father, who was a Railway Station Master, retired when I was only 3 years old. My mother was a schizophrenia patient and it was said that she developed the disease only after my birth. Therefore my Aunt (father's younger sister) took responsibilities for me since I was one month old. However my brother and sister, who are 9 years and 6 years older than I, lived with my parents and were cared for by my grandma. Although we lived in the same house, I began to call my aunty "mom". It is still the same. My mother died just after I finished my GCE 'A' Levels: she suffered paralysis after a fall. She had flare ups of schizophrenia throughout her lifetime. And life was not very easy with her during our school days.

Ever since grades were given, I was the First in my class. I passed my scholarship examination with very good marks and entered Sujatha Vidyalyaya, a reputed school in Matara. All my expenses were paid by my aunt who was a widow with her daughter working as a Montessori teacher. For some unknown reason, my father didn't pay any of my expenses during my school days. So, as it was difficult for my aunt to handle my expenses, she contacted a friend of hers and, through her, Mrs. Anthea Muller of the D.B.U. Sri Lanka. She, in turn, contacted the Eighty Club Melbourne Inc. (ECM who helped me from form Grade 10. I still remember with great respect and love my first sponsor from the ECM the late Dr. Clifford Misso.

I was lucky enough, with all the help, to become the first of the district at the O/L examination. After that, I commenced my studies in the Biology stream for my A/Levels. I got only one A and 2 B's at my first attempt which was not enough to enter University for Medicine from the Matara district. However, my aunt, together with my teachers kept encouraging me to repeat the 'A' level. I thank Mrs. Anthea Muller, Mr Neville Overlunde and Mr Maurice Forster of the ECM who had faith in me and continued assistance. In fact, at this stage, the ECM increased the allowance paid to HSC students and that was a big benefit to me.

I did my very best in the 2nd attempt and got 3 A's, becoming the 2nd best student in the Matara district and 36th in the whole island. With that result I entered the Colombo Medical Faculty in January 2004, and Mr Forster arranged for three sponsors, Mr. Mike Silva, Dr. Audrey De Jong and Mr. Hugh Foenander to jointly sponsor me throughout the period of my medical studies which ended only last December. Mr. & Mrs. Forster were there throughout; continuously keeping in touch with my progress and giving me extra assistance when necessary. Initially, I had problems finding accommodation in Colombo and had to travel to and from Medical College from the far away home of my cousin: reaching home late at night. How grateful I was to Mr. Michael Silva who got me a cell phone for my safety. In my 3rd year I got into an University hostel. Later, this caused me a big problem as I had to do a "Chummery"- where a single student provides food for the 200 odd students at the hostel for a period of 6 days. It was an unimaginable cost for my Aunt and I made a request to the Eighty Club to have 10 months of my payment arranged to be paid at once and, to my delight, it was granted. I am ever thankful to the Eighty Club for arranging that, because, if not, it could have affected my studies as well. I also recall, with gratitude, the book allowances paid to me at the start of every year and the extra assistance given when I had very high photo copying costs.

I was successfully completing my term exams and clinical appointments and sat the final M.B.B.S in December 2009. My results were out only last Friday (12th March) and to the happiness and satisfaction of all well wishers I passed the exam. My Aunt specially, my Dad and the D.B.U and all members of the Eighty Club were delighted to hear this good news. I think I was successful enough to make their dreams and hopes come true. This is my success story and I'm ever thankful to my Aunt and the Eighty Club Melbourne, the D.B.U. and all those nice people out there named and unnamed who helped me to achieve this. I hope to continue my post graduate studies in the Gynaecology and Obstetrics field and to become an Obstetrician one day. I hope this may be an inspiration to all the youngsters out there; never to lose trust and faith in yourself whatever happens or however you are born or treated. My thanks to those kind hearted people who are willing to help needy children like me. And above all I think this is a story of Gods unconditional love.

May God bless you all,

Shereen Pereira.

**OUR GRATEFUL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING
DONORS FOR THEIR GENEROSITY**

Donations received from 1st December to 17th March 2010

| Name | Amount |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Anonymous | 200.00 |
| Anonymous | 150.00 |
| Anonymous | 5,000.00 |
| 14 Anonymous Donations | 690.00 |
| Andriesz Remy Terry | 170.00 |
| Bellbirds Club | 180.00 |
| Buultjens Michael Jean | 20.00 |
| Caspersz Dunstan Barbara | 25.00 |
| In memory of Blanche Giffering | |
| Caspersz Dunstan Barbara | 25.00 |
| In memory of Ralston Caspersz | |
| De Hoedt Joe Shirley | 30.00 |
| De Niese Bryant | 40.00 |
| Ebell Mavis | 200.00 |
| In loving memory of David Ebell | |
| Edema Braebourne | 50.00 |
| -In memory of Ralston Edema | |
| Fernando Marcia | 20.00 |
| Gray Faye | 20.00 |
| Gray Derek | 20.00 |
| Harris Dimitri | 30.00 |
| Jilla Homi Marjorie | 50.00 |
| Martinus Oswald Maeve | 20.00 |
| Misso Marie Louise | 40.00 |
| Rode Dennis Barbara | 170.00 |
| Rodie Primrose | 200.00 |
| In memory of John Rodie | |
| Schrader Everard Peggy | 300.00 |
| In lieu of Christmas presents | |
| Schumacher Ivor Eileen | 50.00 |
| Tytler Harry June | 50.00 |
| Van Twest Eileen | 5.00 |
| Weinmen Eric Doreen | 20.00 |
| In memory of Ranee Vanden Driesen | |
| Willenberg Noeline | 30.00 |
| TOTAL | <u>7,805.00</u> |

*I could not complete this without saying "Thanks" and expressing my wonderment at the generosity of our members. I am stunned that ONE member saw fit to donate the magnificent sum of \$5000 anonymously. Is it any wonder that we can continue and perhaps enlarge on our welfare scheme when we have this sort of spontaneous support. From me, a humble
THANK YOU.
May God bless and reward you one and ALL.*