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The Dohnavur Post is a newsletter run by the alumni of Santhosha Vidhyalaya, Dohnavur, India.

Santhosha Vidhyalaya, set in sylvan surroundings with the Western Ghats for backdrop, is a residential school providing quality Christian education.

For private circulation only.



From the Scribbling Desk...



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Hi All, Greetings from the Newsletter Team. Hope you've been having a great time. Christmas is here and I'm reminded of how Christmas starts by end of November at school. I miss Christmas at School. The carols in the morning prayer, the winter chill, the constant coughing, the mist in the early morning, the 'frozen' hair oil, the Jim Reeves tapes, the Christmas play practice, the Choir Carol Rounds... the list goes on and on.

The Kitchen Project is progressing well. All of us want to do something for the school. This is a great way to synergize our efforts. I trust the

project brings a lot of interaction among the alumni which was otherwise lacking. I trust it'll open new avenues for us to affect life at school. Let us put all our efforts together to see it finished. Hurrah!

This issue was designed by Bramwell who lives in Chennai. My friend Fenyl at Bangalore was kind enough to let me use his computer for the work. Thanks Fenyl.

Have a good time reading. Merry Christmas!



Looking Through the Rearview Mirror...

The Routine

Jemima Samson

Never knew how it all worked, but however they did, whatever they did, they did work wonders. I go back to those good old days of the 80's. The school was just a few years old then. The girls' hostel just had five rooms, the kingfishers, the wagtails, the magpies, the parrots and the bulbuls. Oh yes it was only twittering and chattering all the time.

We had a wonderful warden

Aunty Fanny, who tried with all her might to rear the best brood. Oh no, it wasn't easy easy with her. Tweet tweet she would blow her whistle exactly at 6.00 am in the morning. What a pain it was waking up from those beautiful dreams of knights and princes in shining armors. They would all vanish instantly the moment Aunty fanny came into our rooms, making sure to give a tap with her magic wand on each of the

beds.

Once out of bed we would be given 15 minutes to be in the morning P.T. session. A strict P.T. leader Prema who wouldn't spare any of our moves and made a point to see that we got our daily dose of exercise. (phew! We did sweat a lot, but thank you Prema we all did have sveltering figures)

Then the next thing in the morning was to run with our

In this Issue:

- Jemima, part of the first batch, gives us a glimpse of the good ol 80s
- We plucked out a few pages of Steve's journals penned during his trip to Daniel Ponraj's mission field
- Karen takes us back to Christmas at school
- David Livingstone talks about his favourite music
- Jesus Encounter—A narration of an event from the book of John

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buckets to the water pump and line up, yeah the perfect spot for gossips and making fun of each other, the usual girl stuff of who was after whom (woooo!!! sure there were lots of handsome hunks in the school then). We never got tired of such discussions. The world wouldn't be enough to write down those enigmatic conversations.

Finally with all the make up (pond's talcum powder) and hairdo's (only pig tails and pony tails tied up with blue ribbons) done we would all be deep in meditation with our "God and me". Sitting down for meditation we would be squirming in our places as to when the breakfast bell would go. Once that went it would be a quick prayer and a dash to the dining hall. Hmm nothing unusual, just the usual ven pongal, idlis, upmas, puttus and the foot long bread with a glass of

milk.(the dining hall monitor's duty was to see we all gobbled up our daily dose of milk, yeah plenty of calcium see!)

All energised with the breakfast we would be in line in front of the dorm waiting to be checked by the dorm leader of the day (an inspection from head to toe to see that we were perfect but not overly done - any extra fashion would be sent back into the hostel to rectify). Yes we then marched on into our respective classes, looking ahead into a day of uncompleted homework, appraisals and sure those eager glances of behind the pillars, through the windows and past those doors.(the world would have been a bore without those).

It was the perfect place for us. It helped us realise, grow and evaluate ourselves.

We went through the same routine, day after day, week after week, month after month oh yeah and even year after year.

The same old weekly routine of having a half day on Saturdays, where the after-

noons were meant for washing clothes and hair-cutting and the dhobi would arrive with the brightest and best of our clothes.

Sundays arrived with no P.T. in the mornings and oh what joy of getting that extra half an hour of sleep. Lining up and getting those coins for offering and singing hymns from those golden bells. Those breezy evenings of leisure walks around those rugged roads all caked up and dried. We sure did enjoy those but we grumbled all the while.

Sure enough they are all good old golden memories, they look like yesterday but its 20 years since. Memories yes precious memories how they linger...

Jemima is part of the first batch that graduated from Santhosha Vidhyalaya. She is a veterinarian by profession. She is married to Samson and they have two daughters, Benita and Bernice. Jemima now lives in Singapore with her husband who works with World Vision. She can be contacted at jemisams@gmail.com



Journals

Missions Diary

These are pages plucked from Steve's journals during his Mission Trip to Madhupur, Jharkhand.



3rd November

With my towering back-pack strapped on to my rather thin torso, Osborn (my class mate at SV) and I stand in the Katpadi railway station buying tuck for the train journey that would take us to Madhupur, Jharkhand. We are on our missions trip to Jharkhand at the invitation of Daniel Ponraj for the Jharkhand Students Mission Conference. By the time we board the train its 4.00 in the morning of November 3rd. The constant rumble and the occa-

sional tumble is a welcome break from the usual boring spring bed.

Train journeys are fun and as SV alumni we are no strangers to it. Time is in abundance and books come to our rescue. Osborn stuck to his staple Frank Peretti (The Present Darkness) while I had a salad of biography (Jim Elliot), theology (Go and Make Disciples) and doctrine (Lectures on Calvinism). After about 36 hours on the train, made up of reading, discussing, eating, looking at the landscape, clicking pictures with co-passengers et al we reach Madhupur to the warm welcome of Lima (Daniel's colleague).

Madhupur is a small town which used to be the holiday home for East India Company. Old ruining bungalows still stand in various places as reminders of the colonial past. Electricity supply is scarce and most businesses run on generators. It was wonderful to have a shower in the ice cold water in pitch darkness reminiscent of the 5.00 am wake-up time at school.

We made a brief visit to David Ponraj's (my class mate and best friend at school) set up Rural Handicrafts (www.ruralinnovations.com). The office was housed in an old colonial type bungalow built circa 1919. I was excited to see David's work.

5th November

With our limited computer knowledge we helped fix some laptops and computers in the mission station. The friendly Rev. Francis, the manager of the ministry and school, was very warm and took extra pains to make us comfortable.

By evening David Livingstone (my classmate) and his band arrived with their gears. Along with them came another enterprising young man Joseph Abraham who was great company to hang out with. Duke Jeyaraj the main speaker for the conference arrived a little later. Peter Christopher the famous cinematographer (famous for his production of the SV 25 years anniversary video) reached late in the night. It was like a re-union.

6th November

David Livingstone and his band got the Jharkhand students swaying to their tunes. The conference got under way. Daniel's vision is impressive. This could be called the first ever Students Mission conference in Jharkhand to send the students to their own people. Jharkhand's indigenous missions movement kick started giving way to platonic shifts in Indian

The Best part was to hang out with mission-minded young men. - Steve Jothiraj

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Missions. The energy and enthusiasm of the students cannot be matched. They would jump and swirl to David's music all day. Only 300 were expected, but 500 turned up for the conference. God is working in unexpected places as always.

7th November

The tea at the shack was served in clay cups with a distinct clay-pot flavour very much enjoyed by our bunch. The ever-present ingredient in the food was the Lentils. It even found its way into 'poori'. During food time we lived up to the expectations of SV kids. Our back and forth shuttle trips from the conference and stay was fun time. We were shuttled in a school bus. Today was the sports day of the conference and some of us ditched our formals for shorts & tees. David Livingstone's funny games were the attraction of the evening.

8th November

Down the Memory Lane...

Little Christmases

Karen Solomon

The Christmas excitement began a good one and a half months before the actual day.

Even now, as my cold fingers fly over the keyboard, occasionally warmed by the cup of hot tea, the memory of those celebrations that dominated the fag-end of every year are unsurprisingly vivid. We were lucky to have the double delights.

Christmas came a little early for us at school, after which we could go home and have another gala celebration exclusive with family and friends, and for some, with the church members thrown in.

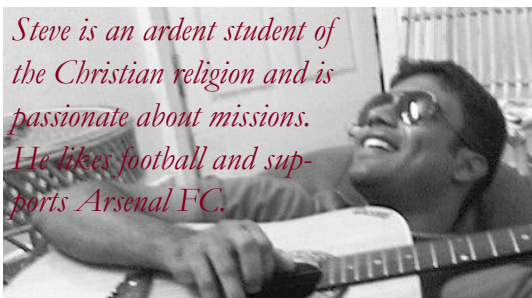
Cutting classes was never so much fun, especially when we were among the few eyewitnesses to decorations being put up at the auditorium. November would see boys and girls scurrying about from one class to the other, from one section to the other, for permission of course, to run away from the boring classes and into the frenzy of practice practice practice -- which for most was a succor from the sleepy everyday classes.

While the songs kept flowing and the English/Tamil dramas and dances being sometimes painfully repeated, the

The final day lived up to the hype. Student performances, dignitary speeches, feedback forms, missions call et al. More than half the delegates turned up at the altar teary eyed with sincere hearts for the Missions call. The candle light finale was a fitting end "light your candle, run to the darkness". As David Livingstone and Daniel Ponraj played the song 'Carry your candle', decisions were being made in the pew. God was at work.

I thank Daniel for inviting me. As much as HE worked in the students' lives, HE worked in mine.

Steve is an ardent student of the Christian religion and is passionate about missions. He likes football and supports Arsenal FC.



ENGAGE INDIA

Preaching where Gospel is not known

Engage India is an organization whose vision is to preach the Gospel where it has not been preached before. They don't stop with preaching but as well plant Churches, train indigenous leaders and as a consequence transform Societies. Their recent engagement Jharkhand Student Mission Conference 2009 held in the first week of November was a first of its kind. In the words of its organizer Daniel Ponraj, the vision is to "fire the student volunteer movement in Jharkhand state". For further information please visit them at www.engageindia.in



shiny colored papers slowly added dazzle to the then grey not-yet-painted auditorium. With all the bustle, somehow, the teachers managed to keep their flock together and any straying eyes would be brought back to attention with a reprimand. But on the whole it seemed a well-oiled machine. One unforgettable scene is the choir of little kids in their flowery white clothes singing their hearts out, while Mekara madam and Beulah madam screamed instructions on how to stand properly, till the day of the rehearsal.

Unfortunately for the other students, they could see the cemented auditorium in all its glory only on 'Christmas function day'.

'Christmas function' was one day we could not let ourselves look second best. However, the all-purpose coconut oil and Vaseline did everything for us then that today only Cover Girl mascara, Streetwear cherry lip gloss, Revlon's different shades of kohl, and Lakme foundation can do, not to mention sparkling eye wear and volumizing hair products. Just a swipe of Vaseline served lip gloss and chased away dry skin from the ankles, though coconut oil was as good as poison on such special days. Then came the array of *parfums*, talcum powder and evening musk - floral-scented rose, lavender fragrances and what not, that took charge of all the oxygen in the girls dormitory till it plugged all the alveoli in our lungs. With all the

shimmering clothes, high heels and our 'Golden Bells', we barely managed to hit the auditorium, without tripping or leaving anything behind.

The auditorium seen through the banyan tree and William Carey Park in the evening, buzzing with music and muted whispers of the excited crowd looked the best party of our young lives. As the sun set slowly, the lights only added to the warmth of the joy in our hearts and our shivering arms. Each act is lapped up as it comes and no one dared say what they enjoyed most in more than a few words - the programme, the music, the eager looks flashing across the rows of clean-shaved boys and pretty girls or the anticipation of impatient parents at the back.

The jumpy crowd, still manageable till the



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end of the programme, bursts out of the open gates and into the cool late evening breeze, while cameras still clicked and flashed here and there. After numerous reunions, introductions and goodbyes, every one is still wishing to rewind the entire evening and play it over and over. In all the pomp and festivity, there are some who just sit quietly amidst the noisy crowd and really

think about the event that brought about the joy in our lives... the one major act of love that put the whole meaning into the celebration. I, for one, will never forget something I heard at one of those little Christmases at school -- *It's Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air.*

Merry Christmas everybody!

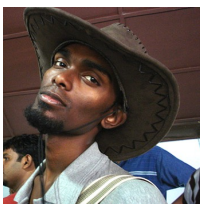
Karen passed out of school in 2002 and is

currently working as a sub-editor with Times of India, Bangalore. Apart from her new hair colour and liking to Michael Buble music she is trying to master the guitar.



My Top 5

David Livingstone



Dear SV'ites,

I am extremely happy to be able to share music with you.

My encounter with music began in the mission fields in Gujarat and was nurtured in SV. I still remember the Sunday morning sing song (where Edison sir taught us new songs), Sunday evening singsong in the then Girls dining hall, etc... My favorite time being Christmas; the Christmas carols, the instrumental music. I remember how we used to decorate the dorms and wait for the school choir as they came carol singing.

To pick my top five songs is going to be a tough task, since I have way too many favorites. I hope I do justice in picking just five.

No.1 - Shepherd of Love

"You sought and found me,
Placed around me strong arms that
carried me home.

No foe can harm me nor alarm me,
Never again will I roam"

This was the first song I learnt in the school choir and its always brought me fond memories. The words remain true to my life. I still sing when I am alone. Thank you Edison sir!

No. 2 - Prayer by Petra

This is the first song that made sense to me as I read into the lyrics. I found it to be a powerful song and took this song to be my prayer too. I specially like the words "keep the ones I love so dearly, fill their emptiness when I am gone". I am yet to find a song writer like Bob Hartman and Petra is my favorite band.

No.4 - Jacobs Dream - Halo

When I finally heard this song almost 10 years after I last heard it in school it took me back to the same senior boys dorm where it used to be played. I Still remain a huge classic rock fan. This is a song from their album "Heavens Calling". I remember we had to borrow this cassette from the school library. I'm wondering how our school library had this tape. Love the harmonizing in this song and it gives me a feel of the band Europe.

No. 3 - Goin home tonight by White Lion

I loved White Lion ever since I heard them in Std 5 (1994). This was the first song on their album "Big Game". When I listen to it now It reminds me of the days when I used to listen to this song in school during Christmas holidays thinking of the day when I'd be going home. Vitto Brata remains my favorite guitar player till date. I love the melodies on his lead solo's.

No.5 - Lifeline by Neal Morse

I love Classical music; I thank God for George Fredrick Handel, Bach, Beethoven. The changing time signatures, melody, moods are unparalleled. In contemporary music the closest I've found to western classical music is Progressive rock. Dream Theatre has mastered and redefined progressive rock. This song by Neal Morse can get anyone's attention. The drumming by Mike Portnoy (DT) is very evident. Neal Morse is a genius and I love the way the music intensifies as does the message.

The songs that almost made it:
Final Countdown - Europe

Africa - Toto

Dancing on the head of the serpent - Jerusalem

18 and life - Skid Row

Jump - Van Halen

David Livingstone is the lead guitarist for the popular Christian band in Chennai - Addicted to Jesus (A2J). He is a freelance guitarist and can be found playing for charity or missions all over India. A very popular guitarist in the Chennai music scene, he is right now contemplating missions as his next move.

Outside Sychar (the Samaritan village), one woman's life changed for the better after a trip to the well...

Jesus Encounter

Steve Jothiraj

En-route to Galilee on a sunny day Jesus' shirt was wet and his throat was dry. It was lunch hour and the walk had digested the breakfast. There was a small growl in His stomach. While Jesus took a breather on the bypass the boys had gone into town to buy lunch. Jesus threw a pebble into the well to find the water level. It was quite deep. Couldn't get a drink without a bucket. Nobody would come to draw water at lunch hour. Let's wait.

There you could see her coming to the well. The buckets in her hand betrayed her destination. Nobody came to the well at lunch hour. A bunch of noisy kids came along with her. If you had the ear for detail you could hear the bangles. A large scarf veiled her face. Was it to beat the heat of the sun? Her cautious glances and hurried manner made allowance for suspicion to the onlooker.

Well, the first two paragraphs tell you the superficial story. There's more to it than meets the eye. The following tell you another story.

The woman came there not just with empty buckets but with an empty heart too. She had tried to fill it in many a well but in vain. She was a

'been-there-done-that' girl. Her kids did not trail her to the well rather she was pulling along the remains of broken relationships. Five marriages had taken its toll on her. Ask her and she'd say boys are all the same. Her current relationship was a superficial one (probably a live-in relationship). The scarf she wore veiled many a scar. The heat of the midday was not as scorching to her as the judging stares of the neighbors. She couldn't bear to hear the whispers that would be said just loud enough for her to hear. Probably that's why she chose the lunch hour to fetch water. She must have been at the end of her rope. The society had given up. The guy wouldn't own up. Lets look at what a Jesus encounter could do.

It must have been hours since Jesus had his breakfast but he wasn't concerned about his lunch. There by the well Jesus sat hungry for something else. His food is not Chicken sandwich topped with cheese rather it is to do the will of God and finish. Hear him say in John 4:34 "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." Soul winning was impor-

tant to him than lunching. Meeting with lost sinners like me was the first thing on his 'to do' list. He would do anything to meet up with us when we are lost. He is more interested in changing our broken lives than anything else. He is more interested in cleaning the mess. That's why he waited there that day throwing pebbles into a deep well. That's why he started a conversation with that Samaritan woman in spite of He being a Jew. That's the only reason the maker of rivers and seas waited there for the buckets of a lowly despised suburban woman. He saw the scars behind the scarf and wanted to heal them. He felt the pain from repeated falling and wanted to forgive. He wanted to mend the rubble from broken vows. And not just that. Look what happened to that woman on that sunny afternoon.

One trip to the well changed things forever. The next page is painted in a different shade. Everything changed after that encounter with the Jewish carpenter. The Samaritan woman left her buckets at the well and went into the town to tell the good news to others (John 4:28). Earthly things did not matter anymore to her. Buckets are better left at

the well. She had the living water in her now. She started looking at things with a tint of eternity. She started investing in eternity. She would go out and tell about Jesus to the same neighbours that ill treated her. She started looking at things differently. Jesus put missions into her heart. **Jesus will change the way you look at things.**

The society gave her a second chance. They listened to her witness. This is so astonishing since people in her part of the world did not have much regard for a woman and that too an adulterous one. Jewish system did not consider a woman's witness in the court. But now many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the woman's story (John 4:39). **Jesus will change the way people look at you.**

If you have messed up along the way try Jesus Encounter.

The Kitchen Project

The Alumni of Santhosha Vidhyalaya have joined together to synergize their efforts to improve life at their Alma Mater. As a start the Kitchen has been identified as an area for improvement and funds are being raised to build a new Kitchen with modern equipment. You can be part of the project through your contribution. For further information please write in to svkitchensponsor@gmail.com

We invite everyone of you to write in to us on anything that has inspired you, be it work, life, love or that exciting trip that you took recently.

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