

# THE DOHNAVUR POST

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## *A Tribute Issue to Mr. Edison Daniels*

*Mr. Edison. R. Daniels* — The first thing he did when he entered the 10th standard classroom was to draw a giant goblet on the black board. Then he asked us to open our books to the first poem - Lochinvar (by Sir Walter Scott). That's how it began. Nobody ever forgets their first class by Edison Sir. His casual lectures on trees and birds during the trek to Naraikadu, his snake petting advice, and his attention to detail in any task he undertook - all of these are only a speck of his rich, highly cultured personality. But the singular most inspiring thing about Mr. Edison Daniels was his work ethic. Repeated practice, a consistent routine that lasted many weeks, and several hours of doing the same thing over and over and over again -that was his working style. With his retirement, it's going to be difficult -almost impossible - to fill his shoes.

For quite some time, the alumni community has wanted to honor Edison Sir's commitment and service to the school. This issue of the Dohnavur Post is a result of that desire. It is a tribute to the legacy of this great man we are proud to have had as a teacher.

Long live his tribe!

I SURVIVED  
BOARDING SCHOOL



**SVAA**

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# TO SIR WITH LOVE



**Peter**, the Star writer of the post, is a food technologist by trade and he serves us delicious pieces of writing while teaching his college students how to cook up delicacies for the processed food industry. He lives with his family in Coimbatore.

I've been a lecturer for a decade now and I keep constantly asking myself how I got myself into this profession. On a good day, I love my job and everything that comes with it and some days, I feel like pulling off my necktie and walking out into the sunshine. But the more I ask myself, the more confident I am of the answer. I am what I am because of my Schooling.

I've watched a lot of students graduate from SV, a few of them end up in the college where I work and there is this erring similarity in all of them. They are horrible in their studies (with the exception of a few), they are lazy and postpone any work assigned to them and they often lead an easygoing – lethargic life. Having

read the above description, one would imagine them to be losers and failures. But that doesn't seem to be the case.

Walk into any institution of higher education, you wouldn't see our chaps' names on the academic excellence list but they still would have made an impact in the place where they studied. They would be better known as rockin' footballers, rock stars, the romantic who never left a girl, a lovable poet, the darling of the class and more so the "life of the party". So evidently, we learnt more from our school than to have a successful career; we learnt to live life. Looking back at my school life, everything pivots on music, literature and romance – all of which are closely linked with dear old Teddy.

**Music:** I've always loved music and singing, for which I have to credit my parents. But in school I kept in touch with this love only through the choir and that's where Edison sir comes in. I remember a fine Saturday morning, we were all seated in a class for our choir practice and sir had to go out for some work. We waited quietly for a while and then the itch started; our tails slipped out and we

began fooling around the place. Someone took down the guitar that sir had left behind and began to play, and we were having fun. Now, I never got to learn the guitar but then there were girls in the pack, man and I had to do something to impress. So taking the guitar from my friend, I then proceeded to mock tune the guitar (that was the best I could do since I couldn't play a chord). There was a rustle and I left the guitar by the board and ran back to my seat. Edison sir walked in and took the guitar to play, and a horrendous sound came from the guitar. He got wild (like he sometimes does when it comes to music) knowing that he had left the guitar tuned and someone had fooled around with it.

We had a code of honor in those days, we wouldn't rat on the culprit when quizzed by our teachers and so the same penalty was melted out to everyone. We knelt down under the bright sun, till I cracked and admitted to the crime. The belting I got that day left an unforgettable impression in my heart. It was not the beating but something that sir had said to me before punishing me. The lesson I learnt was that it wasn't

enough to love: for if you loved something you would respect it. I had loved music till that day but today, I respect all that music stands for. But it wasn't always so serious at the choir practices. One of the things I cherish most about school life was the time we spent at Edison sir's house once we became seniors. We were opened to a new world of music, we sat hours and hours at end listening to good music over the tape

recorder and I believe most of our musical tastes are so refined today because of that exposure to music that we got.

Literature: My love for books came from my dear friend Daniel but my love for writing came straight from the class room. I am a sucker for praise and in my 11th or 12th we did an essay on "Paradise Lost". Edison sir had prepared a summary of the poem and many stuck to what was

given by him. However, a few wrote the essay based on what they understood from the poem and the summary put together. I was one of the ones who had taken that road less travelled and was quiet apprehensive when the corrected papers were handed back to us. Sir had this brilliant teaching technique where he took time to explain to each student how to improve upon the essay they had handed over. When my turn came, he just looked at me and said that the essay was well written and that it was good that I had stuck to my creativeness. I have been writing off and on for quite some time now but I always remember that essay and the praise I received from sir. It reminds me always to use my words for that's the best bet I have. To this day, I suspect none of sir's students at school have ever used English guides to do their essays. Edison sir has always encouraged us to go solo, using our unique style and charm.

Romance: All Svian's are great romantics. Our sense of romance

and chivalry came from learning the English language and also from the songs that we learnt. You could see a few heads turn from the boys section towards the girls during the sing song when we sang "I am on the top of the world and looking down on creation and the only explanation that I can find, it's your love that I found ever since your been around". Interestingly, Edison sir had tweaked the words to read "God's Love" instead of "Your love" from that popular song of ABBA's. However, the fire of youth and the romance in us made us tweak the song back to its original version. Svian's were downright chivalrous even in the face of danger. I didn't truly appreciate this word when I studied English but the thought must have been deeply embedded in my heart for not long after that, it did surface in the oddest place. During my 12th standard internal practical exams, I picked a practical exam paper and was walking to my bench when one of my female counterparts asked me to swap

papers. Now I did not have a clue of the answer for the question I had in my hand and more so the question paper she was now extending out to me. But you see the guys of our time - our brains just went haywire when the damsel was in distress and when it included a tear, logic would just get flushed down the toilet. Long story short, we swapped papers and got caught in the process. We were punished suitably for the exam fiasco with my punishment having to do with more kneeling out in the sun. These punishments I believe didn't do much help in improving my complexion but it gave time to contemplate on that strange emotion that had led me into an outright clownish act. The sun was not of any help, nor was the pain in my knees but my dad in his weekly letters to me sorted out the issue to me when he wrote "the exam hall is no place for chivalry".

To my dear sir who has taught me the most interesting and lasting things in life

*"Happy Retired Life"*

The Newsletter is run by a virtual team sitting in different places ranging from a plush office in Ohio, USA, to a cramped one-room apartment in suburban Bangalore. The writers range from a Missionary in Northern India to a Trade International Trade specialist. The newsletter is by the alumni, for the alumni and to the alumni of SANTHOSH VIDHYALAYA. The purpose of the newsletter is to create a literary culture around the school and its associations. Through the months, many alumni have written from various batches and we have all enjoyed reading them. All alumni are welcome to write for the newsletter about their life, work and love. Write in to us on how you enjoyed reading the newsletter and tell us how we can improve on this.

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# MY INNOCENT FIVE



**Roslin** works as a media analyst in Bangalore. Her favorite author is Nawal El Saadawi. Roslin is quite active on social media and interacts regularly with her friends and fans via poems or photographs. She finished school in 2011.

Big stone pillars and tiled houses – all are red,  
“This place looks beautiful, Daddy”, I said.  
The lady asked, “Is she going to study here?”  
Mommy held on to me tightly, “Yes, Please take good care of her”.  
The lady took all my things and pulled me in,  
Mommy and Daddy smiled with pain within.  
“We are going to get you snacks, dear – we’ll not be late”,  
“NO,NO, PLEASE DON’T GO”, and somebody closed the gate.

“Children! LINE-UP and go for eating, a commanding voice I hear,  
Girls are making music with their tumbler against the plate with cheer.  
Dinner is over. “It’s prayer time, children?”  
I sat for the prayer with closed eyes and mouth wide open.  
It was bed time and I cried with much fear,  
I did not want to sleep without my parents anywhere near.

There were many like me who cried that night,  
The lady came and switched off the light.  
Silence, Fear, Darkness, Pain and Sigh,  
I got used to it as days passed by.

I got a class teacher to teach me A to Z and 1,2,3..  
I also got friends to play under that tamarind tree.  
We never had snacks, so we collected the tamarinds in hunger,  
“You want to get fever and bunk class?”, Warden asked in anger.  
To escape from punishment we had this one sweet way,  
“Madam madam, Day day after tomorrow is her HAPPY Birthday”.  
We laugh, we tease, we gossip, we blame, we fight, we cry, we share, we steal,  
Those were the sources of happiness that made us together, I feel.

April is the sweetest month, ExZams over and it’s summer vacation,  
Every place was crowded and all the vans were headed to Tirunelveli station.  
“My parents have come ey, I am going home ey, Happy Holidays everyone, bye, bye”,  
Standing alone, searching and waiting without patience, Now all I wanted to do is cry.  
Suddenly I saw a woman looking very familiar running towards me,  
Is she my Mom? She is smiling, she must be.  
Mommy kissed me with tears and Daddy lifted me up my feet,  
“Mommy, Daddy, did you bring me PANDAM to eat???

# A Tribute to Teddy

Every once in a great while someone crosses your path, walks part of life's journey with you, befriends, influences and invests in you, leaving you forever changed. Many people give a gift to appreciate the work done by the teachers, however, there is nothing more valuable than a few words of thanks that can make the teacher feel they have done a worthwhile job. Teachers rarely understand the impact they have on a student's life. I guess this is because we, as students, float in and out of your lives in a sea of names and faces. However, sir I am so proud of you and want to thank you because as an educator and a music teacher, you took the time to encourage me to reach my potential: to play the piano with enthusiasm, to be able to write and talk correctly, to strive to break down the walls of fear and instead build upon my dreams of doing something against the grain. Most of all, you made music fun to learn. Your love for music has influenced me to become a better student and person. You have taught me to be prepared with my instrument and music and most importantly with a smile on my face and a positive attitude. I know I can accomplish anything with hard work, dedication, and practice. You have invested the seeds of music and language within us which we cherish now. Many students I see outside SV have spent a lot of money in learning an instrument. Seeing and hearing all these, I thank God for you and for giving me the opportunity to have learnt the stream of music from you freely. Also I never forget the hours you spent with us for practice after the school hours with a smile on your face. I thank you, as my English teacher, who read through paper after paper over the years. You taught me that it's rare to produce something great on the first try. You stressed how it is important to work ahead of time (even if I still haven't fully managed this), and this way every good idea you have can be fully fledged out. I know that years from now, I will still continue to look back at my higher secondary years and remember you, sir. You were my teacher, my mentor, my example and ... my hero. You have made a difference in my life in a lot of ways and still do. You taught me to open up and write from my heart. Because of you I developed my strong passion for music and writing, and it's because of your class that I can write as well as I do today. Did you have a great teacher inspire you and change your life? We all did.

I know there are not enough words to describe my gratitude and my thankfulness to you, Sir. However, I want to thank you for inspiring me to be the person I am now.



**Emmanuel** finished school in 2015. His parents (Samrajan Sir and Beulah ma'am) still serve at the school. Emmanuel enjoys writing microtales and many of his tales are published on his Facebook page. Apart from writing, he also enjoys reading authors like John Greene and Markus Zusak.



# THE CHANGING OF DREAMS

**Gladys** finished school in 2013 and works as a Safety Data Analyst in Pune. The last book she read was *The Other Side of Me*, by Sidney Sheldon. While at school, she belonged to the legendary Walker House.

In leisure hours,  
At the office desk,  
Rewinding your thoughts,  
To the times you once spent,  
To that first day,  
Everything was new,  
You had to find the way,  
There was no one you knew,  
And yet you got through.

Unnoticed passed the time,  
In lectures halls and practicals,  
In making pals.  
Between swiftly changing seasons of the year,  
Rare moments captured,  
Making dreams and memories,  
Silly fights and sweet talk,  
Only nurtured  
Every walk of life.

And suddenly men and women dressed in black,  
Photographs and shiny caps,  
Certificates in hand,  
Bidding farewell, heading for jobs,  
'We'll stay in touch, we've got Facebook'  
To jobs we went, and office desks,  
You landed into what once was a dream-  
The future.

On an idle Tuesday afternoon,  
In leisure hours,  
At the office desk,  
You find yourself,  
There is a smile on your lips,  
You are merely remembering the moments  
You once lived.  
And  
Surprisingly  
What seems like memories,  
Now that is your dream.

04

## A BLANK PAGE ... ... A TRIBUTE TO MR. EDISON DANIELS

A blank page, and all it takes is just one sentence to give it some meaning. Words can flow freely in the mind, but the white page staring back at you is a challenge. Sometimes, all you've got is mere words and sometimes, words are all that are more than enough.

I've loved words. For as long as I can remember. But the passion for perfection and a love for the English language was embedded in me by Edison Sir. Poetry took on new meaning. The sacredness of a simple comma, a period, persuaded pause for long and deep thoughts. Robert Frost, Robert Brown, William Blake and W.B Yeats—my mind takes great pleasure in just whispering their names—and their poems and ballads sing on in ultimate perfection as my mind stops to affix the commas and punctuation due the sacred sentences.

Today, I am a poet. Today, I am a writer. Today I am a creative thinker, making a living out of words. I may not be great at it, I may not be popular for it, but by heaven, I enjoy writing every word I do. Passion is contagious, and for someone who resolves problems through writing, who communicates better through the written word, passion is everything.

Tucked away in a school in the middle of a little jungle, what did an errant punctuation matter? But that it did, changed lives. It changed mine. The perfection that was demanded of me by Edison Sir, I demand the same of myself today. The very bread I eat is layered with words of perfection, each crumb that tumbles to the ground, exudes the grace of a ballad. I owe the passion to the language to Edison Sir, the holy anger at a missing apostrophe and where a lower case almost meant demeaning the very word itself.

I have no use for abbreviations. I have no respect for words that cannot be fully spelt out. I have little respect for people who do not take the time to write out each beautiful letter the way it is meant to. The world needs more people like Edison Sir, who, years after graduation, may have faded from memory, but whose stubby fingers silently correct each word, each synonym and noun I use.



**Karen**, the resident writer of Down the Memory Lane column lives in Bangalore with her husband Nikhil. She makes a living as a writer. Karen passed out of school in 2001.

Short sentences, simple words, those are the best ones. They always outdo the superfluous, big, long words. The significance of the task he carried out with full purpose has resounded in me. Today, I write these words and may they sing the praise of the man who helped me love them, hate them and live them.

You are only as good as your teacher and I've been taught quite well, I must say. All those energies, those intonations, the stresses and powerful words we learnt, didn't go to waste. In fact, they went way beyond that. A new world was born, a world where the children spoke the language they learned with a finesse that is hardly matched outside in the world. I learned to speak, I learned to write and I would have been able to do that anywhere. But I learned to love—love the words I spoke, the words I wrote, the words for what they are—and that is something you don't get just anywhere.

**A BLANK PAGE IS AN ENEMY. ALL YOU DO IS THROW SOME WORDS AT IT AND IF THEY'RE GOOD ENOUGH,  
YOU MAY END UP CHANGING THE WORLD EVEN.**



# Rustle in the Backyard!

The alumni community across cities has been busy meeting up and having fun. Here are some photos from the events in Chennai, Bangalore and Delhi.

## A glimpse of what happened at the Alumni Meet at Dohnavur in September 2016

The Alumni Meet at Dohnavur was anticipated with much excitement as it would be a great opportunity to visit the school and reminisce the old times. It would also be a great chance to meet the old teachers and share stories. Least of all it would be one golden opportunity to munch on the famous chapathi and beef curry.



The theme for the meet was aptly chosen as Small Beginnings to bring out the humble beginnings of the alumni association and also understand the impact we have and can create in society.

The arrival at the venue was reminiscent of our childhood trips back from vacation. Those who took trains were greeted by the vans arranged for pick-up.

The winding narrow road to school with the scenic Western Ghats fluttering like a long flag on the right side brought back memories from my first trip to school.

Registration as usual was manned by class of 2010

who continue to contribute in many ways.

We had a fantastic array of souvenirs specially made for the meet. The souvenir coffee mugs that bore the popular chat phrases of our times disappeared like hot cakes. The keychain made especially for this Alumni Meet bore the stamp of the meet on one side with our beloved School's logo on the other. The T-shirt design was doodled by one of the friends of SVAA who brought out the key icons of our school days in canvas of the one icon that stands in the background of all our memories – the Clock Tower. It was a nice shade of grey with the brick coloured Tower Clock rising at the back.



The opening program featured a welcome address by Shim Mathew (1st batch) and the much-anticipated keynote speech by Nesa aunty. Nesa aunty recounted the humble beginnings of the School and how it has made an impact in so many lives through the years. The session ended with a heart-warming rendering of the School Anthem.

The next session was opened by Ponraj sir (Principal) setting the tone for speeches from former and current teachers. Thanks to Sam Prince who hosted this session wonderfully making it lively and engaging.

Some former teachers had come all the way to meet us (the old students) and readily took the mic to talk about the joy of seeing their former wards. The loudest of applause was reserved for Hindi Ma'am as she had impacted so many batches. It was a great feeling to hear the old teachers recount their experience and time at the School. The session ended with Shim recounting two incidents from his time which brought back memories for the old-timers.



After lunch May Malar Akka from the Dohnavur Fellowship consented to take us (a big group of 60+) on a tour of the Fellowship. Without tiring she took time to explain the important places and artifacts from Amy Carmichael's time. A big 'thank you' to her.

By evening, all of us were in the playground cheering for the Alumni team against the School team in the N.B. Thomas Memorial Football shield. The alumni team led by Paul Raja obliged and won the match lifting the shield this year.

The most anticipated hour of the day came as we all assembled in the chapel for a time of sing song and skit. The songs warmed us up for the climax of the evening - the Jambulingam skit.

We were literally ROFL as the guys enacted the hilarious plot imitating the old teachers. I felt this alone was worth the effort to come.

While we were still chuckling and walking out of the chapel, we were greeted with that trademark aroma of chapathi and beef curry. What a way to end the day!

After dinner we chatted into the night with abandon and needed prodding to keep our voices low so as not to disturb our neighbours.



Early next morning we attended the Sunday prayer along with the school students as Prince Josiah's

wife Idaline delivered the sermon.

This was followed by one of the most important programs of the meet - the Vision 2020 discussion led by Paul Raj. Two very important outcomes of this discussion was the goals of building a website and a corpus fund by 2020. We will take these goals further and discuss these with all of you later this year.

As the program came to a close, we were thankful to the Principal and school for letting us have the meet there. It was a refreshing experience to go around the campus visiting the places we used to frequent as a child. We didn't miss the chance to take selfies under the clock tower.

As the afternoon wound down, the crowd dispersed each to his own taking away a piece of the place.

As I returned, I could now see the hill ranges to my left trying to hold me back from leaving with its long arms stretching many miles. I recounted the words of the good old bard that I had memorized as part of school work as I sped away "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep."

The alumni community in Delhi NCR met at David and Sunila's home for a food and jamming session on October 7th. "It won't be a potluck dinner, it will be a pot-belly-luck dinner", Priscilla whatsapped to the group about two weeks before the meet. True to the prediction, the amount of food for dinner was a challenge-even to the infinite abyss that is the SV appetite. By 11:45PM everyone was grooving like a very bloated Elvis. Many jokes were shared, some promises for a more frequent get together were made, and pictures were taken. There is word in the air that a Carol singing session will be held before the end of this year.



# SVAA



The Dohnavur Riders are a group of young like minded people who meet up once a month and ride along to discuss educating kids. Most of the riders are from Chennai and Bangalore. Since their inception, this biking community has made 4 trips - to Alamparai, Pulicat, Nagalapuram falls and Yelagiri. Their biker jokes and "starting problem" are a subject of many videos and blog posts. To follow their work and cheer them, clock on the following links:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/4wr4nHARlYjBuAnkFqGnPv>

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