

REMEMBER? by Roger Hatch

It started as an idea of a few with vision
Then grew into a lifelong mission
The idea to create a school by the sea
Which turned into a blessing for you and me
For numerous boys entered through those gates
And well rounded men left, prepared to meet their fate.

We were given a flag of beautiful blue and black
A crest that stands out even when the flag is slack
We were given an anthem called the college song
A song which we sing true and strong
It sends a chill down every boy and man
For it's the calling of a brotherhood – The Thomian Clan.

We entered in shorts, carrying a bottle of drink
Looked down on by seniors as the missing link
In orderly lines we moved around
Staring in awe at the Big Club ground
We were aware that we had entered Hallowed gates
Closer we huddled and held hands with our mates.

The teachers stood tall with voices of thunder
With a shout they would tear us asunder
Our lives were sacrificed to timetables
Our innocence testified to by our uncarved tables
Umbilical cords cut and made to fend alone
The making of a Thomian began...right to the bone.

Remember PAT that insufferable twat?
See Pat Sing, See Pat Eat, See Pat do that?
Remember 6+4 and carry the one?
Remember some mad bugger who had a Hot Cross Bun?
Remember Rufus the cock of the farm?
Remember the prayers to keep us from harm?

Remember the terror when we heard that clink?
It was the Head mixing his drink !
Under those stairs in that dark space he lurked
Quiet and high till his chain we jerked
Then like a nightmare he would appear with a cane
And the piss would flow like a drizzle of rain!!!!

Remember the lunch interval? Football in the dust?
Tasty Achcharu from a bowl of rust?
Crispy rolls and Portello by straw
Gal Seembala and mangoes raw
What poison we ate; were we ignorant or bold?
No screwed up immune system and not even a cold.

Flanders Field had noxious fumes; we all know that
But no fume equalled the gas of the big clubs Lat
A hundred stood in line waiting to leak
One required lungs strong as teak
A gulp of air and a dash to the bowl
Breathe in there and for you bells would toll.

Remember the Cartman – Basheer by name?
Who in his own way earned his fame
What wares he had to dazzle us boys
Gum, Chocs, Birdcalls and the most wonderful toys
Remember the Bombay Mittai man with tinkling bell?
Remember the Yo-Yo that hurt like hell?

Everyday had excitement for us we reasoned
Rubber bands with paper pellets seasoned
Seembala seeds loaded to a wooden zip gun
A hit to the back of the ear would stun
Remember the ‘Flick’ with finger-tip?
The best place to hurt was between ass and hip.

The years rolled on and we found our feet
With confidence we claimed our table and seat
We had our patch on the Big Club Ground
And under those trees nobody pushed us around
We formed our friendships into a fiercely loyal gang
We lived each day with a bang.

Then came March and the excitement grew
For THE BIG MATCH had the school all askew
There were tickets to get and bus rides to book
We bought our Flag, Rattle by hook or by crook
What a beauty our Flag with Silver dust on the crest
That Blue Black and Blue Gollywog on our chest.

Remember the Boy's Tent on the Oval grounds?
The Royal Tent out of bounds?
How we booed and cheered as the case may be
Seniors leading us much to our glee
We saw our Clan; Past, Present and Future under that tent
We smashed the overhead tukarung roof till it was bent.

Then came the time to the Lower 4th we went
Under a ton of books we were bent
A new place a new life a starting of age
Far away from all as in a cage
Gone were the kid gloves and the tolerance of fun
We now had Senior teachers who caned our bum.

Life suddenly took on a different hue
This was the world where you earned your due
This was the beginning of a serious life
Follow the plan or you ended in strife
Just around the corner lurked the O'Levels we heard
Study and pass or be a turd!!

The Upper 4th we entered in a daze
The toilets in front of us smelled of Jayz
The staffroom perched on that slight hill
Eyed by our 'watchers' at the window sill
No more Monitor's books could we carry
It was file paper with an index to tally.

Our batch had evolved into characters of a play
We had a joker, a genius, a carver and a lover of a fray
We had the generous, the crafty, the arty and the brave
We had the neat, the pig sty and the man from the cave
No matter what mantle was carried by all
It was all for one – and one for all.

The 5th Form was the best for the rioters of our batch
It had an air of bedlam that we all jumped up to catch
What a bloody party every single day brought
What a deadly game to riot and not be caught
We enjoyed ourselves and kept everybody at a hop
The target of every college cop.

Then to the Lower 6th our crazy batch ascended
Everybody prayed that our evil was mended
We tried ! God knows that's true!
But what can one do when we are a motley crew??
So we went through that year full of gall
Paying less attention to the syllabus and more to Odeon's call.

Upper 6th was when the magic of agriculture took us by storm
For the product of a leaf produced Matterhorn
This captivating and slender rolled beauty of white
Made us find every secluded corner to light
With an initial cough, cloud of smoke and a squandering of our meager wealth
We were told by the pundits of our batch....menthol is good for the health.

Then came the OL's and we were filled with dread
Cramming 8 years of school while lying in bed
Then came that ID card with our photograph that caused fright
Then came the notice....at Mount centre your exams you will write
In that centre collected our incorrigible band
Writing our O'Levels with fag in hand !

What a grand bunch of teachers we had
Each with eccentricities to warm the cockles of a lad
Some were terrors with a history to match
Some laid their sights on taming our batch
Some caught our attention and had us enthralled
Some had the horror of their nicknames called.

Remember the beauty of that singing room?
Melody from her fingers and chest in bloom?
We fought to be the first in the chorus line
Hormones astir and eyes on that neckline
It was the dawning of a realization then
Those mounds of promise would make us boys into men.

Remember the guy with the directional flaw?
Curls on his head and gritted teeth in his maw
A step to the left and a step to the right
Racing in the wrong direction with all his might
How we waited in ambush to scream that name
So that he whirled and slapped some guy who wasn't to blame.

Remember that treasure who was the king of scouts
He walked the corridor saying... move you louts!
Steady gait and pith helmet on head
He was brilliant - every one of us said
When he was angry we held the wall at his beck
Those foggy bifocals made him cane us on spine and neck.

There was that corporal short and dull
Polished shoes and crew cut on skull
He was the keeper of the books
Tried to intimidate us with his looks
Pity we weren't adults then for it would be fun
To see him try a pack drill, one on one.

Dear God, bless that lovable cigar chewing man
Rumpled clothes but what élan
Entering class he would declare
James Bond is here...beware!
What a smile and what patience he had
For we were horrors in his class ..every lad.

Good Lord ! Here comes beige suit and dark tans
Square jaw and enlarged facial glands
He sliced our ass with a fine art
If we forgot Amo Amaas Amaat
On Report, Conduct Report he was in charge of all
Smashed us after school in 5c ...one and all.

Remember that gem and the master of story time
We huddled all quiet... you could hear the fall of a dime
He told us of ghosts, witchcraft and held us enthralled
We never moved till he ended... even when the bell called
I remember him - national suit, smart and neat
He was the only teacher who held me glued to my seat

Remember the friend of us all?
Mr. Jinadasa, to us you always stand tall
What a friend to us you were through thick and thin
Advised us and helped us no matter what sin
No nickname we gave you and no disturbance did you see
Our attention, our respect and our loyalty was for thee.

Remember that mischievous hare?
He would enter class and present a dare
On that blackboard he would caricature draw
It was the fastest insult you ever saw
Not a word, not a hum and only a drawing stared at one
Everytime I saw that egg...I knew I was done.

Remember my friends that gentleman who wore his pants high?
That long fat thing hanging along his thigh?
Is that real? Is that really what we see?
It was we know.... 'cos we tapped his knee !
When allowed, he showed much charm
He caused nobody pain or any harm.

Remember that maestro of organ fame?
Tall, wiry and lanky in frame
High above the pews he would play
We would sing in unison before we pray
Clutching register he would glide with head down
If you knew him well....he would rather smile than frown.

Remember Sir Godfrey, the knight of the Gate
Smiling with patience awaiting the bedlam to abate
Then with genius he would talk us down
For that tolerance even now he wears our crown
Another good man and a Thomian to the bone
He should be voted to ascend the College Throne.

The cream of educationists laboured for our cause
Teaching, correcting and moulding without pause
We didn't know then but we do know now
They gave us our future with the sweat of their brow
Thank you Sir and thank you Miss
Its in honour of you that I pen this.

These are but a few to whom I have given note
Jokes aside on them we dote
I leave to others to place in ink
Of all who formed us....the Missing Link
Wherever we go or congregate
Burned in our hearts...Our Mates, Our Teachers and our College Gates!