

# The Tadpole

W G A A N E W S L E T T E R

## OFFICE BEARERS

### 2013

PRESIDENT—Hema  
Badhwar Mehra

VICE PRESIDENT - Anjali  
Sapra

TREASURER—Renee  
Chandola

SUPPORT GROUPS—  
Sujata Kulshreshtha

MEMORABILIA—Parbeen  
Kaur

SECRETARY—Shivani  
Anand

EVENTS—Sabina Sharma

THE TADPOLE—Manvi  
Sinha and Hema Mehra

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

REUNIONS 2

DIASPORA 4

MEMORIES 6

WECARE 8

6

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Exies,

This has been a year fraught with meetings and partings. Of reunions and goodbyes. A year in which connections have crossed barriers and created history.

We have come together as a mature body of alumni that has acted responsibly and with great maturity in the face of emergencies. We have come together to help one of our own in need and we have shown selflessness and complete dedication in the hour of need.

I can safely say that our alumni body is one that is strong, rooted in Welham values, united on all fronts and also one that Welhamites across the globe can forever feel justly proud of, for we

have achieved much together.

As the WGAA we have helped School with various projects. Supporting causes, sponsoring events, helping old staff members through our WeCare benefit, and providing scholarships for girls that need help at both Himjyoti and Mr. Martyn's School.

We have also been invited as an alumni body to be present at the School's Investiture ceremony and participate in the prize giving ceremony, which ended with inducting the School Leavers into the Alumni Body! This has become part of Welham tradition now and has become an event that will remain part of the School calendar.

We still have much to achieve, but together we CAN!

*Hema Badhwar Mehra*



AARTHA SHANTI PHALA VIDYA

## WELHAM GIRLS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Suite - 4A, Plaza M-6 Jasola, New Delhi-110025  
(Society Registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860)

[www.welhamgirlsalumni.com](http://www.welhamgirlsalumni.com)

Email : [hemabadhwar.mehrab@gmail.com](mailto:hemabadhwar.mehrab@gmail.com)

## RENUNITED WE STAND!

## CLASS OF 1993

## 20 YEARS LATER

Let's all try getting together for our 20<sup>th</sup>! Most of our teachers were not going to be around by the 25<sup>th</sup> so why not get together before then? That was the sentiment a year ago, which snowballed in to the reunion of all reunions, gathering our batch of '93 from around the world- The US, Singapore, Vietnam, Mumbai, separating women from their jobs, their children (a difficult task for some first timers) and clingy husbands (not as difficult for us!). Ultimately 36 batch mates (including 5 brave husbands) made it for the reunion.

Most of us met for the first time in 20 years on Sports Day, and the dhun, dhun, dhun of the march past leant us the necessary nostalgic backdrop for such an occasion. Oh the goose bumps. We were all transported to a different time, when life was simpler, when the weight of the world wasn't on anyone's shoulders, a time of perpetual laughter and endless chatter. And so it began. "There's Shilpee! She looks exactly the same! Look at Ms. Sen! Mrs. Varma! The kadhi is YUM! Where's the chikki? Look at the amazing bathrooms! I can't believe you have a 16 year old, you LOOK 16!" Excuse me for the copious usage of exclamation marks, but that's what the weekend felt like! A series of exclamation marks!

How could time have stood still, when 20 years had passed? When full lifetimes had been lived? At one point in the weekend, I looked at the girls all around me, while we stood in the garden under 'Nasreen,' the one part of school that was exactly the same as when we left. We had collected for our class photograph. Everyone was talking at the same time, hysterically laughing and beaming from ear to ear. Old jokes were cracked, faulty memories were being jogged. And though it felt like time had stood still, it hit me, the girls of 1993 were now the women of 2013. Wow.

Thanks my batch of '93, and thanks my dear Welham for a spectacular weekend!

Shimona Shahi Rana—B-510, Class of 1993

## LETTER TO MY ALMA MATER

I almost did not come to the reunion. Fraught with guilt like a child who has not visited home in the last 20 years I feared all the changes that people talked about, feared that my nostalgic bubble about my childhood would burst if I went back to school, feared a loss of relevance since I have no children I want to educate at Welham, feared meeting myself in school 20 years on —had I lived up to my potential and feared most of all that the kadhi chawal would not taste as good!

My fears vanished the moment I landed in school, rushing to see all my friends from the batch of 1993, the familiar walls of No.12, the bajri, the tadpoles, Ms. Datta, Ms. Sen and there was Mrs. Jugran rushing to hug me. This was my family. I was home, this was my turf and it was the same despite all the new buildings and the unfamiliar faces. The same warmth, the same excitement, home in every sense of the word, welcoming and all embracing. There was something I had left behind here and I claimed it that day. I saw my childhood in every girls face, when they showed me the art, the puppet show, the amazing founders day program, the science project, their trekking badges, the school magazine. What a privilege, and what a foundation this education had laid for me.

A remarkable thing Priya Seth said to me one day in Bombay when we were talking about workplace angst for women. 'We never grew up thinking we were women. In school we did everything. We played men's roles in plays, we picked up benches, we did the A/V and the needlework and cooking classes and science quizzes. It's only when we graduated from school that the gender difference was actually a challenge that the world threw at us in different walks of life.' Welham made us fearless, Welham made us question defined roles, Welham made us into strong women who had no limits or boundaries in what they could achieve.

I listened to the school captain's speech and she was so full of compassion and idealism and passion to be good. I am proud that Welham continues to send women like this into the world. The Welham values of citizenship are values that our country needs more than ever today. Sometimes, the path is tough for women like us but we have to believe that we make the world a better place.

Coming back to school reinforced for me that there was a resource, an unconditional, never diminishing reservoir of support I had, and each Welhamite has—the Welham family. Those in school and alumni and teachers past and present. This is the family that is bonded together with the essence of the Welham education. I left grateful and proud to know that I still carry Welham as an indelible part of me everywhere I go. I don't need a reunion, I am, and always will be a Welhamite.

Bharina Shakur—O-264, Class of 1993

*How could time have stood  
still, when 20 years had  
passed? When full lifetimes  
had been lived?*



93 batch reunited!

*Welham made us fearless,  
Welham made us question  
defined roles, Welham made us  
into strong women who had no  
limits or boundaries in what  
they could achieve.*

## REUNITED WE STAND

### CLASS OF 1998

#### BACK IN SCHOOL: 25 YEARS LATER

A memory that stays sheathed in gold  
 Blueprints of my adolescence  
 Lie amongst tadpoles and innocence  
 Kurry chawal lunches and kuttu dinners  
 You taught us to dance and to be winners  
 Cocoa mornings, when the sun was down  
 Lights out at 9 pm, else the matrons would frown  
 School songs and fads that youth bloomed and fancy faded  
 Peacock thrones and memories in trunks now jaded  
 Friends we laughed with, fought with, grew  
 Friends who didn't judge you - friends who knew  
 Scattered as they are like dandelions in the wind  
 Their faces, their voices stay etched in my mind  
 What once was our wonderland is now folklore  
 Oh to be in Welhams once more

Bhavana Gupta—Class of 1988



Friends who didn't judge you - friends  
 who knew  
 Scattered as they are like dandelions in  
 the wind  
 Their faces, their voices stay etched in  
 my mind  
 What once was our wonderland is now  
 folklore  
 Oh to be in Welhams once more



## THE DIASPORA

## POWERING AHEAD

Dr Yasmine Hilton nee Ghandhi (H-162, Class of 1968) was appointed Chairman of Shell Companies in India in 2012 – the first woman leader in the Indian Oil and Gas Industry. In November 2013, Yasmine was ranked by Fortune Magazine as the 14<sup>th</sup> most powerful woman in India, the only person in the top 50 working in the energy sector. Despite her hectic schedule, Yasmine set some time aside for The Tadpole.

*Tadpole:* How would you describe your approach/philosophy in your professional life?

*Yasmine:* My approach to my professional life has been always to deliver what I promise. Within Shell, earning this reputation has helped me get opportunities that would otherwise not have arisen. For 15 years of my professional life I worked four days per week so that I could raise my children in a way that I found to be balanced. Shell is an excellent employer, understanding on this aspect and it played out well for me. Equally I have a passion for developing talent and this has been a key part of my Shell career. I have been able to - and continue to mentor many women who have made similar career choices to the ones that I faced. I hope to help them overcome some of these obstacles and reach their potential.

*Tadpole:* How can we encourage more women in science?

*Yasmine:* There are plenty of women interested in science, but we still don't see enough of them coming through for employment in the more technical areas. That is a gap, and starts early on where often stereotyping still happens all too often. Inspirational teachers and role models in the home and at school will help unlock further potential. Enlightened employers and companies are also the way to encourage this further. Shell used to find that most of its scientific and technical intake were men but this is now changing as attitudes improve. It is a matter of some pride to me to be the first woman to head up a multinational energy company in India and I am hoping this will encourage others to do so.

*Tadpole:* Abiding memory or impact of Welham?

*Yasmine:* I was shipped off to Welham at the tender age of eight as my father, an Indian Naval officer had an itinerant career. My abiding memories are good and bad - getting up to do PT at 0530 and being forced to drink those cups of milky chocolate are ones I prefer to forget. I enjoyed the sports, debating, acting, Sunday movies and of the course comradeship you only get from a boarding school. I still have good friends that date back to my 8 years in Dehra Dun. H/162 is still indelibly etched in my brain and I learned a lot about resilience and independence at school.

## TADPOLE 360 - SCORING A GOAL

24 year old Jyoti Ann Burrett (O-615, Class of 2007) has made it to the Indian Senior Women's Football Team.

Jyoti was selected to the team in May 2013. She played as striker in her first game in Palestine in the same month (Women's Asian Football Cup Qualifiers).

So where did Jyoti build her foundation in football? On the athletics track and the hockey field at Welham! Welham Athletics coach Ritika Kapoor got the athletes to cross-train with football on Saturdays. And Jyoti's commitment to hockey later bolstered her tactical skills in football. But let's not discount the ball practice she got at home with her brother.

The former School Athletics Captain says at Welham her "life was all about running" and today that's her "biggest strength as a footballer."

Jyoti got serious about football at the age of 18 at Delhi University. As a student at St Stephen's College, she was selected to the Delhi University Women's Football Team. She went on to play for the Delhi State Team for 3 years.

In 2011, Jyoti enrolled at Exeter College (University of Oxford, UK) for a Masters program in Sports and Health Sciences. She made it to the Exeter Women's Football Team and a year of intense training followed. The training and exposure paid off – Jyoti was selected to the Indian Women's Team soon after she got back from the U.K.

Jyoti's next big challenge is at the Asian Games in Incheon, Korea (Sep-Oct 2014). We're sure every Welhamite will be rooting for her!

*I enjoyed the sports, debating, acting, Sunday movies and of the course comradeship you only get from a boarding school. I still have good friends that date back to my 8 years in Dehra Dun. H/162 is still indelibly etched in my brain and I learned a lot about resilience and independence at school.*



## THE DIASPORA

## A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW

**News Flash: January 16, 2013**

**Special CBI Court sentences former Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala, his MLA son Ajay, and three other officials to ten years in prison on charges of illegally recruiting over 3,000 teachers in Haryana by using forged documents.**

In his judgment, CBI Special Judge Vinod Kumar notes that Rajni Sekhri Sibal (in her role as Director-Primary Education, Government of Haryana) “was the only person, who had enough courage to withstand the political pressures exerted upon them. Rest of the bureaucrats closed their eyes, turned their faces, crawled before the political bosses and many cooperated and aided in execution of the conspiracy.”

A detailed reading of the evidence, events and judgment reveal just how bravely Rajni Sekhri Sibal (I.A.S. 1986 Batch) stood up to corruption.

Rajni (Welham: O-234, Class of 1975) stays away from the media but she made an exception for The Tadpole. Here are excerpts of the telephonic interview Rajni gave to The Tadpole:

*T*  
*tadpole:* It takes guts and courage to do what you did. How do you find the strength?

*Rajni:* All these years, two things have kept me going – a prayer Miss Linnell would read at morning assembly and a quote by my father.

Often, at assembly, Miss Linnell would read “Oh, Lord, make me an instrument of your peace” (The Prayer of Saint Francis - reproduced in the table on the right). I have that prayer on my table and I often turn to it. Welham taught me that once you chose to do the right thing, you have to maintain the conviction even if the path is tough.

My father lived by the Latin quote “ultima forsan” which translates to “perhaps the last hour.” The quote reminds me that each act could be my last act and I must do the right thing.

*Tadpole:* Corruption is widespread. You could be fighting a new battle every day. How do you deal with the grim reality?

*Rajni:* I was about 22 when I joined the Indian Administrative Service. At that age, you believe you are a fighter and you can change the world. Then you encounter many inexplicable things. Today, I pick the really important issues. I choose to do the right thing and I don’t look back.

*Rajni Sekhri Sibal is currently Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India*

THE PRAYER OF  
SAINT FRANCIS

Oh, Lord, make me an instrument  
of your peace Where there is  
hatred, let me bring love.  
Where there is injury, pardon.  
Where there is doubt, faith.  
Where there is despair, hope.  
Where there is darkness, light.  
Where there is sadness, joy.  
Oh, Divine Master, Grant that  
I may not so much seek To be  
consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to  
understand, To be loved as to love  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning  
That we are pardoned. And it is  
in dying to ourselves that we are  
born to eternal life.

## MEMORIES

## ODE TO MR. MANJIT SINGH

*Tackle tackle...dribble dribble....tackle tackle...dribble dribble...whissstttleee whistttleeee*

*Nina Das Dey—B 201 class of 81*



**TO MANJY BOY:  
FROM THE CLASS OF 1988**

Adieu dear Manjy boy  
we hear your last hurrah  
your flame flickers out  
but the light spreads far  
We quicken our steps  
and march our breaths  
Your flag flies high  
in the playground sky  
We salute the player, the sport that you  
are  
you leave in your wake, the scar of a star

*Bharna Gupta—Class of 1988*

**WE WILL MISS YOU MANJY BOY**

You could always hear Mr. Manjeet Singh before actually seeing him. Be it his Bullet that would echo down the road before entering #19, or his signature phrases "c'mon gurrls... whatchyou doing now gurrls," "okkk, smile now gurrls!" Click. He was an icon, a presence, a legend...and now that legend is no more.

Manjeet Singh aka Manjy Boy as generations of Welhamites lovingly called him, passed away on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at Artemis Hospital in Gurgaon, after battling a pancreatic infection. News of his illness spread rapidly through the Welhamite grapevine and brought an outpouring of love and support from all corners of the globe. He was a beloved part of generations of Welhamites lives, and they all wanted to know how their dear Manjy Boy was doing.

Mr. Manjeet Singh trained at the National Institute of Sports, Patiala, for both hockey and tennis. He was a renowned hockey player at the National Level. I still remember our whole team trying to guard him from the goal, which was impossible. He would simply dazzle us with his dexterity on the hockey field, weaving in and out past 10 girls straight to the goal! That would also explain why he used to get annoyed with those of us sports people that weren't big hockey fans "Shimona again you missed hockey for basketball? Come on gurrls".

He began his career as Sports Officer in Welham Girls' School where he served for almost 27 years. During that period he also held the post of Secretary, Hockey and Athletics, Dehradun. A passionate sportsman, Mr. Singh served in Mayo Girls for many years as Director, Sports. A large number of his students made it to the National arena in Hockey.

Even after he left Welham, he remained a fixture on our Sports Day. His daughter Malvika told us Welhams held a special place in his heart. I hope he knew that he held a place in generations of Welhamite hearts and memories too. He will be dearly missed by us all.

*Shimona Shahi Rana—B-510, Class of 1998*



## MEMORIES

## PASSINGS

Mrs S Mukherjee, who taught junior craft and Bengali at Welham from 1982 to 2007, passed away in Lucknow on November 20, 2013.

Mrs Pramila Pandey, who taught Kathak at Welham till the 1990s, passed away on November 18, 2013.

November 21, 2013

Dear Hema

This morning we received the news that Mrs S Mukherjee, who taught junior craft and Bengali from 1982 to 2007 passed away in Lucknow. She developed some respiratory problems after catching a chill at a party about 10 days ago. Being a diabetic her symptoms aggravated and her kidneys failed. She was on dialysis, and went into multi organ failure last night.

Also Promila Pandey, who taught Kathak here until the 1990s, passed away after a being in a coma for some days. Promila leaves a bedridden daughter Lakaki and an unmarried brother. At least Mrs Mukherjee had a large and loving family and her children were able to reach on time.

*Note from the editor: So many more will leave us with memories—but the beauty lies in the fact that those memories will always bring a smile to the hearts that remember...that is the richness we we will be left with.*



**WE'RE ON THE WEB**  
[WWW.WELHAMGIRLSALUMNI.COM](http://WWW.WELHAMGIRLSALUMNI.COM)

## W E C A R E

Contribute to the **WeCare** initiative by sending a cheque in the name of **THE WELHAM GIRLS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**, and mail to the address given below. Do remember to put your name, house/number/batch, telephone number, email id, address, and pan card number on the reverse of the cheque or on the accompanying letter. All donations are tax exempt under u/s 80G of the IT act 1961.

Please do your bit for the old staff who have been so much a part of the School and its ethos and thereby helped make you into who you are today. It was your care and contribution that made it possible for us to help Manjy and his family...and we hope that spirit will carry us together in the future too.

Cheques to be mailed or couriered to ;

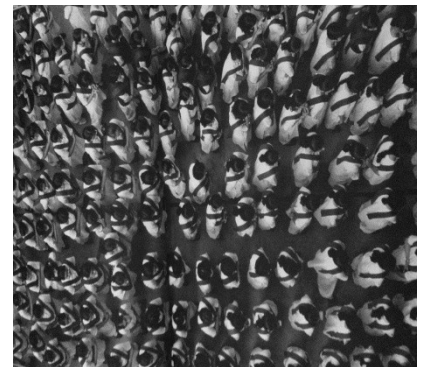
Sujata Kulshreshtha,  
WGAA (WeCare)  
A 32, Sector 56, NOIDA 201307, INDIA  
Tel: +91 9810222305

## T H E P O W E R O F I P L E D G E

The WGAA introduces a new concept of community service called I PLEDGE. This is a step all of us can take towards supporting the WE CARE effort. Many of us can't send in large amounts and small amounts seem insignificant—But here is a simple way of making a small contribution go a long way. PLEDGE your support and make a difference.

*Rs 10.00 per day or Rs 500.00 per month*

*For queries and I PLEDGE Support Forms  
write to [sujata.kulshreshtha@gmail.com](mailto:sujata.kulshreshtha@gmail.com)*



ONCE A WELHAMITE ALWAYS  
A WELHAMITE

Please send in your news, views,  
articles and ideas to The Editor at  
[hemabadhwar.mehra@gmail.com](mailto:hemabadhwar.mehra@gmail.com)

We look forward to sharing your  
stories in our next issue.